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The Universal Church of the
Kingdom of God in Madrid: a church
without borders

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

University of Warwick, Department of Sociology

January 2019

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Acknowledgements

Once upon a time, there was an idea for a research project outside my home country, Brazil. As with any idea, it is difficult to measure and cite, after a few years, all the people involved in the development of this project. The beginning of the idea to research Pentecostalism occurred to me during one of the amazing classes given by Professor Fernando Londoño, while I was doing my master's in Religious Studies (or the Science of Religion, in Brazil) at the Pontifical Catholic University of São Paulo (PUC-SP). I would also like to thank my dear Pentecostal friends at PUC-SP, especially Vagner Marques and Adailson Souza, who helped me a lot with my bibliography and citations. Vagner and Adailson also helped by commenting on my ideas and even helping me to choose the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God as an object of study. Without them, I would be more misguided than I naturally am.

The idea of doing a PhD outside Brazil was hugely influenced by my colleague Raphael Uchôa, who provided me with much information about the academic requirements for getting into the United Kingdom. I also had the help of my former supervisor Eduardo Cruz and other professors like Maria do Rosado Nunes and José J. Queiroz, who wrote more than kind letters of recommendation for me, in support of my application to the University of Warwick. To them go my most sincere thanks. Another person important for my adventure of doing a PhD at Warwick was my supervisor Claire Blencowe, who was not only very helpful ever since our first conversation, but who also asked Steve Fuller to be my co-supervisor at that time. Both made significant corrections to and comments on my research.

In the United Kingdom, my thanks go to all my colleagues in the Department of Sociology at the University of Warwick, especially those who entered in the academic year of 2014 and attended classes with me. There are so many people to thank that I would probably be unfair and forget someone if I tried to name you all. I would like to highlight the professors in charge of my upgrade, Charles Turner and the late Deborah Steinberg. In addition, I would like to thank Goldie Osuri, who was kind enough to accept me in one of her courses in my first year. From outside sociology, I would like to thank the Brazilians who were at Warwick in the academic year 2014/2015, who shared many good times with me.

Special thanks go to my mom, who provided financial aid, psychological support and especially her ears to hear about my thesis ideas from the beginning. Without her comments and patience, the mess of thoughts would be much bigger than it already is.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the people of the Universal Church of Kingdom of God in Madrid who participated in this research. My main objective was never to depreciate their worldview, even though I do not agree with much of it on a personal level. Without their willingness to help me in the construction of this thesis, by correcting and answering my questions, there would have been no relevant debates on it. They share, along with the authors cited, the main ideas of this thesis, and I feel that I am merely a weak link between them and the academic world. To them go my most sincere *gracias* and *obrigado*.

Declaration

This thesis contains data collected in the years of 2015 and 2016 through fieldwork and from 2014 to 2018 through the different sources of the object of study here analysed. All the data was collected by myself with the purpose of doing this research. The thesis was not submitted anywhere else for examination.

Abstract

This research explores the activities of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG) in Madrid, the capital of Spain. The UCKG is a Brazilian Pentecostal church with temples in various countries worldwide, so it seemed relevant to begin by analysing this religious institution's cultural background and transnational character. Thus, I observed the arrival of the UCKG in Spain and its controversies in the public sphere, which are relevant for outsiders to understand the church's practices and the creation of internal bonds.

Conducting fieldwork at the church headquarters in Madrid, I also investigated and examined the practices with commentaries about the regular activities and the most common elements in the gatherings of members and pastors. With examples of testimonials and member interviews, I tried to observe the two main branches of the church's theology as demonstrated in Madrid, prosperity theology and the spiritual battle against Satan, by analysing specific themes such as financial sacrifice, exorcisms and the creation of the 'other'.

Afterwards, my main concern was with the ways that the UCKG controlled its members. Furthermore, while noting all the changes that the church brings to its members, I tried to conceptualize the church in a middle ground between the works of Emile Durkheim and Max Weber, as interpreted by Antonio Flávio Pierucci. There are no boundaries in the UCKG in Madrid between the social changes observed by Weber and the consolidation of a sense of belonging studied by Durkheim.

Keywords: UCKG; Brazilian Pentecostalism; transnationalism; religious practices; prosperity theology; spiritual warfare; othering; control; social solvent; social cement.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis is about my research on the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG) in the city of Madrid during the years of 2015 and 2016. More broadly, the church belongs to the Pentecostal movement, a form of Christianity that greatly expanded in the 20th century and continues to grow in the 21st century as well. The UCKG is today the largest Brazilian Pentecostal church outside its home country. However, the church has not had the same support inside the country, where the Brazilian Assemblies of God have around five times more members than the UCKG. The first reason for focusing on this specific church outside Brazil has much to do with its success in comparison with other Pentecostal churches. Furthermore, I wanted to understand how the church adapts in a new environment, something already discussed by different authors in the literature review. However, I found one place that had been less researched in comparison with other countries, which had a considerable number of members for a Brazilian church: Spain.

Consequently, I chose the capital, Madrid, where the headquarters of the UCKG is located, to undertake this research. My main goal was to understand what the UCKG represents for its members in Madrid. I have tried to create a dialogue with the more relevant themes of sociology: the church in the public sphere, along with its practices, economy, gender relations, and worldview as moulded by its institutional discourse, in addition to its internalisation by members. I do not know if I have been able to bring anything new to studies of the UCKG in a theoretical sense, but I have encountered some unique situations and I hope that I, at least, have been able to deal with this data in a way that might provoke further debates.

The thesis is divided into ten chapters, including the literature review and methodology. Chapter 1 is the introduction. In Chapter 2, I focus on the literature regarding this church and the Pentecostal movement as a whole. Since the UCKG has been a common object of study in the Brazilian academy since the 1990s, I have taken what I believe are the most relevant themes for this thesis from the literature review, especially from sociology. Among them, I highlight the social traits of the church and its theological premises in connection with the world today. These themes include the particularities of the church, its media and forms of propaganda, as well as its members and their former religious affiliations, their gender, their ethnicity and their economic ideals. I have also tried to contextualise the literature by exploring the social environment in which the church was created. I have focussed on Paul Freston's (1993) and Ricardo Mariano's (2012) historical

divisions of Brazilian Pentecostalism, which are the most accepted in the Brazilian academy. The UCKG fits into the third phase of this historical progression, and it is important to understand the particularities of its birth before getting into a deeper analysis of the church, especially outside Brazil. It is also in this chapter that I discuss my hypothesis, relying on the assumptions of Antonio Flavio Pierucci (2006), about the characteristics of the sociology of religion that he and I consider the most important branches of religion to analyse in sociology. According to Pierucci, the first of these is religion as social cement, as observed by Emile Durkheim, while the second is Max Weber's perspective on religion as a solvent. I consider the discussion of both perspectives to be the central theme of this thesis, which explores the role of the UCKG and its contribution to the sociology of religion. Is it a church adapted to an ethos of individual salvation, or does it function as a social binder? This will be an important theme in the conclusion of the research in Chapter 10. From my perspective, both solvent and cement are parts of a similar process: the destruction of older bonds – or the re-interpretation of a former worldview as wrong – as a way to join or become a part of a new community.

The third chapter explains my methodology. First, my choice of Madrid, which was influenced by different factors before I started the research. I will also discuss the inspirations, strategies and development of my fieldwork, the difficulties and ethics of the interviews and access to the church as a non-member during the course of my research. I will additionally say where and how I have obtained information for the research. The limitations of the study, especially problems with quantitative data and the theoretical framework that I used, will also be mentioned, alongside some suggestions about what to look for in further research on the UCKG in Madrid.

As of the fourth chapter, the thesis discusses the UCKG in Madrid specifically. However, this is prefaced with an attempt to indicate some aspects of its transnationalism and growth, especially after the 1980s. Later, I try to observe what is important about the church's ownership and use of media, which is a strategy that has assisted its forays into the international arena. This discussion brings us to the point at which the church began its activities on Spanish soil, with regard to the general social characteristics of the church in Madrid. I have also analysed controversies surrounding the church in Spain, and included some examples of these struggles, especially in the newspaper *El País*. However, since controversy and accusations seem to follow the church everywhere, I argue that it is able, as a result, to create a discourse of persecution.

In the fifth chapter, my analysis shifts to anthropological aspects, taking into consideration information that I gleaned mostly from UCKG services. I tried to observe the magical elements of the church, which are numerous, and the magical characteristics that empower its members. However, the UCKG also has the traits of a modern corporation, with a clear hierarchy and strategies. The division of services still has this characteristic of attending to a specific clientele, as a sorcerer would do, from a Durkhemian perspective. However, the UCKG's way of planning and attracting members is more church-like. Hence, my argument, while analysing both characteristics more deeply, is that both magical elements and secular planning are present in the church.

I have investigated the sermons of the pastors and the institutional interpretations of the Bible, especially via Bishop Macedo's books, and their understanding of what is important to say to the members. Hence, the restoration of the covenant with God as a way to recover the wealth in old stories from the Bible, and the interpretation of sacrifice as a way of pleasing the Almighty, both seemed relevant to the way that members practice their religion. In Chapter 6, I argue that the church's premises of giving in order to receive, with the church's premises of sacrifice, gives the prosperity theology of the church a highly speculative character, which is exemplified by the Holy Fire of Israel campaign, in which members are encouraged to sell properties and donate the money to the church. Thus, with the internalisation of this kind of theology, the members also absorb an ethics of aggressive investment in their daily lives when doing business.

The seventh and eighth chapters both deal with spiritual warfare in UCKG theology. I began by using the othering process, inspired especially by the work of Norbert Elias and John L. Scotson (1994), to analyse the kind of demons the church has in Madrid. I believe that the construction of a demonic outsider is essential for UCKG theology. However, in Madrid, the main targets in relation to belief seemed to be esotericism and atheism, unlike in Brazil, where the church demonises specific religious denominations and entities, especially Afro-Brazilian ones. This resembles the performance of exorcisms, the character of which changes from Brazil to Madrid. I have called this the secularisation of demons, since the church seems to have stopped appealing, symbolically, to demonic entities during exorcisms, instead naming them after problems of daily life, such as depression. This is explained by the church's fluid demonology, a term that I coined to observe how adaptable UCKG demonisation is. This has been able to not only create a kind of demonology in Spain that is different from the regular demonology in Brazil, but also give the church a more open relationship with other religious groups, especially Muslims, that congregate with the members of the UCKG inside the church.

The eighth chapter follows a path similar to that of the seventh. I analyse exorcism as a way of demonising, in particular, an individual's old self. I then explore testimonials, observing how the overcoming of a bad situation is always present in members' life stories. The construction of a new identity works in a dialectical manner between the old and new self. I coin the term self-othering, linked to the concept of othering, to refer to a process in which the first identity – before conversion – is seen as demonic, misguided and an example of what the person should not do, while the second identity – after conversion and full devotion – relies on having overcome all that, and on leading a plentiful life.

The Daniel Fast, Holy Supper and other church rituals are analysed in the ninth chapter. My main objective in this chapter was to analyse the forms of control that the church exercises over its members, and how, with obedience, the members are able to accumulate social capital within the UCKG. I have used the concept of the ritual of reinforcement, as proposed by the Brazilian anthropologist Roberto DaMatta (1997), to understand how the aforementioned rituals reinforce practices and control member behaviour. I have also tried to observe how shared charisma, in which the pastors empower the members by teaching the right way to perform as means of standardizing their gestures, transfers this capacity to members, allowing them to control each other. This is illustrated with an experience that I had with a member outside of church, which I believe shows not only the control of the UCKG over its members, but also the struggle that they have to live a life according to what is preached.

In the tenth chapter, I reconsider Pierucci's ideas about Weber and Durkheim's perspectives on the sociology of religion, while including a debate between Ruth Marshall (2009) and Nimi Wariboko (2014), whom I then align with one another. I use the example of the Temple of Solomon – the UCKG's newest headquarters in Brazil – and its symbolism, with theoretical help from Michael Maffesoli's *The Time of the Tribes* (1996), to observe that neither perspective (solvent or cement) is mutually exclusive, in the case of the UCKG in Madrid. The re-signification of an individual's worldview and the presence of an individual salvation do not exclude the search for and creation of communitarian bonds; there is, at least in my opinion, space for both. The relations between the two are aligned with my conclusions about the church: it is not only a borderless church in the transnational sense of the term, but also in many other and different ways, especially with regard to the Weberian and Durkheimian perspectives.

Chapter 2

Literature review and the waves of Brazilian Pentecostalism

2.1 Literature review

The rise of Pentecostalism worldwide has become notorious in recent decades. This religious movement began in the U.S. at the beginning of the twentieth century and has since spread all around the globe. The name Pentecostalism comes from the biblical passage in the book of Acts II. It began immediately after the ascension of Christ, when the Holy Spirit filled those present at that moment, giving them the capacity to speak in tongues (Acts, 2:2-5). It is difficult to know how many Pentecostals there are in the world today for several reasons. The main one is that most of them do not recognise themselves as Pentecostals. For example, in Brazil, they are commonly identified as *crentes* (believers, or the faithful) or *evangélicos* (evangelicals). In other countries, they are known as born again Christians. However, the total number of Pentecostals worldwide, according to the World Council of Churches¹, is approximately 588 million (78 million classical Pentecostals, 192 million Charismatics and 318 million Neo-Charismatics). The Pew Research Center², with data from 2011, gives a similar number of about 584 million members worldwide. It is safe to estimate, according to the aforementioned data, that in the academic year of 2017/2018, the number of Pentecostals worldwide is around 600 million³.

Despite being a huge religious movement, Pentecostalism has many different institutions dispersed all over the world. It does not have a central or higher command, such as, for example, the Catholic Church has in the Vatican. The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (UCKG) is no different, though it has its own specificities as an institution as well as in relation to the place where it originated: Brazil. The church as an object of study, in general, has generated a good amount of literature, especially since the 1990s, something observed pragmatically by André Corten (1997) with respect to Latin America, Africa and Afro-America. Since the expansion of the UCKG in the public sphere in the 1980s, it took a while for scholars to consider it in their studies. Among the most acknowledged work is that of Paul Freston (1993), who understood the church as

¹ In: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/church-families/pentecostal-churches>. The World Christian Database provides the data, according to the website. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

² In: <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2011/12/Christianity-fullreport-web.pdf>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

³ I have to say, without any empirical data, that these numbers feel a bit overestimated. However, it is just a feeling from someone born in the country with most Pentecostals in the world, with no data upon which to base my opinion.

belonging to the Neo-Pentecostal movement, or Pentecostalism of the third wave. Freston was inspired by the division made by David Martin (1978: 9-11), who also observes the three waves characteristic of Protestantism (Calvinist, Methodist and Pentecostal). The third wave is inspired by the historical moment of 1970s Brazil, with political populism and television as the new and main social media, Rio de Janeiro as the geographical location and the adaptation to yuppie culture as a characteristic (Freston: 1993: 95). Ricardo Mariano (2012)⁴ followed a path similar to that of Freston. In his book about Neo-Pentecostalism in Brazil, he pointed out this group's engagement with the theology of prosperity, which is highly focused on the capitalistic idea of wealth. I will consider Brazil's Pentecostal 'waves' further in this chapter, since it seems to be a very important theme to understand what is being preached by the church.

Discussion of the continuation of older cultural and religious practices in Pentecostalism is of key importance for this thesis. In studies of the subject in general, David Martin (2002) observes Pentecostalism as a bridge between modernity and tradition, while David Lehmann (1996) understood Brazilian Pentecostalism as the bringer of a new identity adapted to capitalism. A similar analysis was made by Peter Berger (in Martin, 1990), who understood this religious movement as the bringer of a new ethos to Latin America, especially Brazil, analogous to what Max Weber (2001) observed between the spirit of capitalism and Puritanism/Calvinism. Ruth Marshall (2009), in her study of Nigerian Pentecostalism, observed the process of subjectivation, a constant movement towards the improvement of the self, as analysed by Michel Foucault, while Nimi Wariboko (2014) highlighted the continuation of older local practices of this kind of Pentecostalism. Others have also addressed the concept of subjectivation in the analysis of Brazilian Pentecostalism (Benatte and Oliva, 2010; Silva et al., 2013: 160), highlighting the transformation and obsession with the improvement of the self.

The analysis of the UCKG and Pentecostalism in general, with regard to internationalisation, also has substantial literature. Andre Corten and Ruth Marshall-Fratani (2001) have analysed this religious movement as the opposite of the Babel Tower. The third wave of Protestantism, as David Martin proposed, would bring a common language to people around the world. In their study of UCKG transnationalism, Pedro Oro, Andre Corten and Jean-Pierre Dozen (2003) acknowledge the church as the greatest multinational enterprise from Brazil. Their book contains many analyses of the UCKG in other countries, such as England, Portugal and France. Other academics (Ruuth and Rodrigues, 1999; Aubrée, 2002; Freston, 2003; Oro, 2004; 2014; Pinezi et al., 2014) have

⁴ Originally released in 1999.

also researched the internationalisation of the UCKG. Its strategies, as shown by Oro (2004: 140), have an administrative core, which directs where the temples are going to be built, and it also has legitimacy and financial aid from its original, Brazilian, members. Dana L. Robert (2002) understands the transnational character of Pentecostalism as connected with the mutual impact of missionaries and converts, which involves the incorporation of practices of one group by another. There are different perspectives on the attempt to create an international community. In South America, the international missions of Pentecostal leaders and institutions are seen as the 'spiritual re-conquest of Europe' and as a form of legitimisation and propaganda for the locals (Oro, 2014). Paul Freston (2010) understands them as a reversal of missionary work, from the South to the North. In other locations, such as Mozambique, the Brazilian church missions are seen as a less static cultural form, especially for women (Kamp, 2015: 392). The UCKG aspires, institutionally, to create an international community of members, at least in discourse (Mariz, 2009: 171), since the spreading of the church all over the world still needs a sense of commonality among the members.

What was missing, which was my main reason for choosing Madrid, was precisely the absence of a study of this city, specifically, in the literature. At the beginning of my research, I found a paper with a few pages about the church in Madrid (Silva et al.: 2013), with just a few words about its practices there. Donizete Rodrigues and Marcos Araújo Silva (2015), two of its three authors, also released another paper about the church in Barcelona. Although it contained a lot of information, the second paper has, at least in my view, an ethical problem. The authors told the members of the church in Barcelona that they were immigrants interested in participating in services (Rodrigues and Silva, 2015: 1377), hiding the fact that they were ethnographers. Nevertheless, the first paper contains a description of how the church is still an ethnic one in Spain, showing the limitations of its discourse in the countries of Western Europe – with the exception of Portugal. Clara Mafra (2002) carried out an analysis in Portugal, substantially observing how the members changed their behaviour in that context, in taking possession of the word of God. Other important studies include those by Freston (2005) and Wyk (2014) on the church in different countries, such as South Africa, since this is the only African country where the UCKG has become successful that does not have Portuguese as its main language. The cases of Angola, Mozambique (Kamp, 2015) and even Portugal in Europe show that there is an affinity between UCKG discourse and members from Portuguese speaking countries. Internationally, authors have observed the adaptations of the UCKG, in each location, as it has become, for example, a black church in the United Kingdom (Miller and Anderson, 2003) and a church of immigrants, mostly from South America, in

Spain (Silva et al.: 2013). Academic discussion also considers Pentecostalism and modernity. Cecilia Mariz (2009: 169) observes that UCKG discourses, especially the theology of prosperity, are adapted to a 'liquid Modernity' (Bauman, 2006) with characteristics of consumerism, migration, individualisation and the absence of strong community bonds, while others see this branch of Christianity as a denial of modern values, especially in the early waves (Rodrigues, 2005), or as lying somewhere between a denial and an incorporation of these values (Martin, 2002; Comaroff, 2012).

Another characteristic of the UCKG and the Pentecostal message in general is its effective adaptation to different social environments, already mentioned in relation to its international missions. In Brazil, Pentecostal churches have been able to adapt their message for indigenous people (Almeida, 2002⁵), traditional communities of former slaves (Abumanssur, 2011) and even for migrants from the rural zones of cities (Passos, 2001; Barrera, 2009). In the suburbs of big cities and their relationship with Pentecostalism, Edin Abumanssur (2014) and Vagner Marques (2015) offer interesting insights into the easy relationship between Pentecostals and the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC), a criminal organisation that is widespread in Brazil, with origins in the jails and suburbs of São Paulo.

Rational choice theory in the sociology of religion is another framework used to analyse the growth and message of the UCKG. Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge were the first to apply this theory to religion (Stark and Bainbridge, 1996). Stark used it to analyse the growth of early Christianity (Stark, 2006). According to this theory, individuals always seek rewards, but to achieve rewards, there must be what Stark calls religious compensators, which explain how the desired rewards will be achieved (Stark, 2006: 187). Rational choice theory also follows economic logic, with disputes of (religious) compensators following the market rationale that the better 'product' is able to win the competition, especially in multicultural environments. Walter Barbieri Junior applied rational choice theory to his analysis of the UCKG, observing the plurality in Brazil's religious market, where the secular state allows different religions to compete for members. The author indicates prosperity theology as the main bearer of these symbolic goods or compensators, since its main characteristic is one of justification for the possession of material goods and a body free of diseases (Junior, 2007: 110). A similar perspective was used to research a church that coexists with the UCKG in Brazilian Neo-Pentecostalism, the Bola de Neve or Snowball Church. In *A grande onda vai te pegar*

⁵ The author deals specifically with the UCKG in those contexts.

(2013), Eduardo Maranhão Filho analysed its marketing and discourse, which generated legal problems for him since the church did not see itself as a marketing enterprise, but considered its discourse a God-given strategy⁶.

Marketing was also a main theme in Leonildo Campos' (1999b) book *Teatro, templo e Mercado*, which used an analytical framework connected with the performance of pastors and members, drawing on Goffman's conceptualisation of the theatricality of performances in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1990). Pastors' performances and charisma are a main theme for José Edilson Teles (2015), who argues that these enable church members to verify the authenticity of leaders by their performances. The theme of charisma (aside from the classical Weberian perspective) is also related to the work of Pierre Bourdieu (2005), who observes the possibilities of an institutional charisma. This sort of charisma makes the institution more important than any individual figure. As we shall see, I believe, as Teles did, in the mixing of these perspectives, with performances and engagement being important for the sharing of institutional charisma, from the church, through the pastors, to the regular members. By dint of strong performance and charisma, it may be possible for a member to accumulate more religious capital and be allowed to perform more, thus increasing his status in the hierarchy of the church.

Brazilian Pentecostalism also participates actively in the public sphere, especially in politics. The main characteristics generally observed are an anti-secular and anti-communist worldview (Souza and Magalhães, 2002). The need for the institutional engagement of the church, more specifically the UCKG, in a political campaign in order for a politician to win an election (Oro, 2003; Reich and Santos, 2013), and the grouping of evangelicals, especially Pentecostals, in the Frente Parlamentar Evangélica⁷ (Duarte, 2012), a group highly present in the Brazilian Congress, are both characteristics of the group's politics. Evangelical does not mean exclusively Pentecostal, but also encompasses other forms of Protestantism, in which the Bible, the crucifixion of Christ as a final and 'substitutionary atonement'⁸, and the rejections of Catholic culture in the Latin American context are central (Reich and Santos, 2013: 4). This group usually says prayers before official political sessions in Congress, and most of its participants employ a populist and conservative discourse. This closely follows William Connolly's (2008) argument about evangelical-capitalism in the United States and its characteristics of neo-

⁶ In: <https://noticias.gospelmais.com.br/autor-livro-bola-neve-proibir-desabafa-mordaca-crista-63650.html>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

⁷ (Evangelical Parliamentary Front)

⁸ Quotation marks used by the mentioned authors.

conservatism, neoliberalism and belligerent discourses towards more liberal (in the political sense) and secular political positions. Furthermore, it still has characteristics of patronage (Pierucci, 1989; Mariano and Pierucci, 1992; Freston, 1993; Mariano, 2012) and corruption, when patronage is not possible (Reich and Santos 2013: 15-16). Nevertheless, there are authors who have observed the progressive side of Pentecostalism, especially in the engagement of social care (Miller and Yamamori, 2007), while other authors see members of the UCKG using social services as a way to accumulate more prestige with their group in an individualistic manner (Rosas, 2014).

There have been nuances in the social characteristics of Pentecostalism in different places from the beginning. In the United States, the place where the movement started, the differentiation between two branches of Pentecostalism was a racial one. The white segment did not allow black people to join their services, while the black segment was more inclusive, as observed by Grant Wacker (2003). In Brazil, the movement began with the missionary work of immigrants, especially the Swedish, who founded the Brazilian Assemblies of God, and the Italians, who founded the Christian Congregation in Brazil (Alencar, 2012). The former were historically more inclusive, while the latter became more of an ethnic church. Today, with the huge expansion of Pentecostalism inside and outside Brazil, churches usually have more women than men (Chesnut, 1997; Kamp, 2015), a majority of black people (Burdick, 1999: 11; Martin, 2002: 8) and people with less education and lower incomes than the national average (Mariano, 2004: 122).

Theology is a main theme in studies of the UCKG, as observed by Ricardo Mariano (1996; 2003), Cecilia Mariz (1999), Grant Wacker (2003), Eloy Nolivos (2012), Martin Norberto Dreher (2013) and Mark Cartledge (2014), especially its obsession with wealth and prosperity (Nolivos, 2012: 99). The principle of this kind of theology is that a person may give money to God and by the act of faith in an Almighty payback, the faithful will receive more than he/she gave (Mariano, 2012: 162; Campos, 1999b: 369; Kramer, 2005: 101). Patricia Birman and David Lehmann (1999: 161) observe that the UCKG's attitude toward money is incompatible with a Catholic ethic, which does not understand wealth as a form of salvation. Aside from money, which plays a huge part in UCKG discourse, the body is also a focus in its theology. The practices of avoiding gambling, drugs and promiscuity, the performance of the spiritual and the obsession with health can be characterised as bio-political traits of the church. Nonetheless, discussion of Christianity's ability to create or provide the conditions (Anidjar, 2014) for control of the body is a relevant theme, especially if we observe the connections between economic (neo-) liberalism and the policies relating to the body.

Gender, and especially women's participation in the UCKG, have also been a theme of discussion by a few scholars. Cecília Mariz, Maria Machado (1997) and Maria Silvia (2009) have observed that although feminism is absent from the regular discourse of women in the UCKG, they have a sense of empowerment nevertheless, since they take on the role of converter, especially of their husbands (taking them away from the 'Devil's claws'). It is more important for the church to have men as members than to try to subvert the sexist relations of power. Machado and Mariz (1997) also observed how the church, with its prosperity theology, encourages women to enter the job market and the political sphere. Nevertheless, for women, ascension through the church's ecclesial hierarchy remains limited. Machado (1999) also argued that the UCKG has more discussions about women's health than other Brazilian Pentecostal churches, like the Assembly of God, with messages about HIV, family planning and reproductive rights. Machado also analysed the increasing participation of women in UCKG media by the end of the 1990s, revealing a contradiction between elected political leaders and a lack of participation in the political guidelines of the church. Fernanda Pimentel (2005) follows a path similar to that of Machado, understanding the importance of the recovery of family bonds by the UCKG's female members. In addition, she argues that the process of exorcism helps them in a cathartic way to reorganise and gain more confidence beyond the doors of the church. Jacqueline Teixeira (2015) analysed gender relations inside the church through a genealogical perspective of power and technologies of controlling others to control the self. For her, women in the UCKG need to be virtuous, as described in the Bible by Solomon (Teixeira, 2015: 207). She also observes how the church encourages women to take aesthetic care of the body and to have a professional life, in direct contrast to the message of the older and more sectarian Pentecostal churches in Brazil, which see women's role as a domestic one (Ibid.: 215).

Aside from its materialism, according to authors like Cecilia Mariz (1999), the UCKG embraces the theological idea of spiritual warfare, since the church has a great inclination to demonise other religions, especially Afro-Brazilian ones. Vagner Gonçalves da Silva (2005; 2007) and Ronaldo Almeida (2009) have observed the continuation of this belligerent practice. Even when demonising other entities, they are acknowledged as real by the church, a process that Almeida calls an anthropophagy of other religions (2009: 123), in which the church changes the original meaning of the entities from other religions alongside a partial incorporation of their practices. Almeida's perspective also draws on the conception of the anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss (2014: 414), who understands it as positive anthropophagy when a given society absorbs individuals in order to neutralise their powers. The same occurs in a symbolic manner, when the practices of

different religions are absorbed and re-signified by the church. Mariz (1999) and Mariano (2003) also observe the importance of the belligerent discourse of the church, with the latter even proposing that the Devil is a protagonist in the services of the UCKG. Pedro Ari Oro (2004: 150) offers an understanding of the demonization, by this church, of forms of shamanism and witchery, making it possible to adapt the discourse of demonisation in different social environments.

The aforementioned theological assumptions are the constructions of thinkers searching for an anthropological and sociological understanding of the church. Historically, I have based my understandings on the work of Dreher (2013), which deals with the roots of Pentecostal theology. I believe, nonetheless, in the necessity of observing how theologians see both the growth of Pentecostalism around the world and the questions raised by Pentecostals themselves. There is a group from the Master's Programme in Pentecostal theology at the University of Birmingham, in the United Kingdom, showing that an academic theological base is important for some Pentecostals. The priest and academic Nimi Wariboko is a source for understanding Pentecostal theology. Wariboko, in a book edited with Amos Yong, links the theology of Pentecostals to that of the theologian Paul Tillich (Yong and Wariboko, 2015). Containing an array of work by different authors, with different interpretations of both Tillich and Pentecostalism, much attention is devoted to pneumatology, since both the author and the religious movement have a great inclination towards the Holy Spirit. Wariboko also engages with Tillich in his book *The Pentecostal Principle* (2012), in which he further explores the notion of Catholic substance and Protestant principle offered by Tillich in his *Systematic Theology* (1972). Tillich's point was that Protestantism and Catholicism need each other in the sense that the normative side (Catholicism) and the open and non-structural side (Protestantism) can be complementary. Wariboko argues that the Pentecostal principle adds a creative factor to the equation, since ethics are temporal (Wariboko, 2012: 119) and must follow the method of correlation (Tillich, 1972: 10), which is the adaptation of the Christian message to the specific cultural dilemmas of a given society. 'The Pentecostal principle is the capacity to begin' (Wariboko, 2012: 1), with many different beginnings and re-beginnings being possible.

Another important theme recognises the importance of media vehicles in the UCKG's proselytism. Campos (1999b) observed its marketing strategies as a way not just to spread its message, but also to control members' lives outside the church. Emanuelle Rodrigues took a similar perspective on the church's Love School programme, which not only explores the love lives of members in terms of daily practices and theological perspectives, but also offers a way to sell their gospel products (CDs, DVDs, books and

so on). In this context, the consumption of both the symbolic and material goods of the church in order to become an adequate member is the path to a couple's happiness (Rodrigues, 2015: 139). Mariano (2012) analysed this gospel industry characteristic, observing the growth of the market in Brazil for the aforementioned religious products. José Ribeiro and Fabiana Pinto (2007) have also commented on the church's use of media, with a study focusing on the city of Campos do Goytacazes, in the state of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. They observed the impact of the media on the lives of church members in the city, indicating that the UCKG not only offers its products, but also creates a closer connection to God with the mediation of local pastors in charge of helping these people in radio programmes. In addition, testimonials on changes in members' lives are a powerful tool used to advertise the capacity of the church for transformation. The media also has been a part of the church warfare against rival religions and Pentecostal churches. The best known is the struggle against Rede Globo, the biggest television channel in Brazil (Birman and Lehmann, 1999; Almeida, 2009; Mariano, 2012).

The Brazilian magazine *Época* observed that church television programmes in Brazil were the cause of eight out of ten new members arriving at the church for the first time (Bronztein and Covalleski, 2012: 96). This shows the importance of the media in recruiting new members. However, with the explosion of social media in the last decade, church campaigns have become a strong feature on Twitter and bishops' blogs. A search for trending Twitter topics on campaigns and special church dates (the anniversary of its foundation, for example) is a way to expose the church's brand, as noted by Bronztein and Covalleski (2012: 91), who also observed the religious market in contemporary society, concluding that people are searching for a religious experience, or spectacle, and not so much a religious doctrine. Furthermore, interaction with the church's non-invasive marketing is important not only for members, but also for non-members, who receive up-to-date marketing, since the church focuses on putting a theological interpretation on the daily news

Testimonials are an important way of spreading the word of God for Pentecostalism. In Brazil, the group Atletas de Cristo – Athletes of Christ – was formed in the 1980s, as a way to organise famous sportsmen, especially in football, around the task of becoming messengers of the Bible. Felipe Bissoli (2011) observed how the normative side of Pentecostalism that regulates individual conduct could help professional athletes. Furthermore, as indicated by Carmen Rial (2012), athletes can also spread the message, becoming missionaries of the Neo-Pentecostal diaspora. Pentecostal players regularly use clothes with religious messages and do celebrations acknowledging God as responsible for the goal scored. The best football player in the world in 2007, Ricardo

Kaká, is an example. He celebrated goals with his forefingers pointing to the sky (or heaven, for a believer). At that time, Kaká was member of the Pentecostal church *Renascer em Cristo* (Reborn in Christ) and was often used by the institution as an example of success in its search for new members. Nevertheless, football players are far from being the only ones engaged in the mission of spreading Pentecostal religiosity around the world; famous singers, former models and even mixed martial artists are also representatives. Andressa Urach, a former model who became world-famous after an affair with the football player Cristiano Ronaldo, became a member of the UCKG after she almost died from complications after using hydrogel. In her book *Morri para viver*⁹ (2015), Urach tells the story of her life as a misguided, addicted prostitute. After hospitalisation with necrosis in the parts of her body where hydrogel was used, she was reborn and converted to the UCKG, with the help of Bishop Macedo's wife, Ester Bezerra.

In this thesis, I have tried to avoid using the concept of syncretism, which is still common in studies of religion. The Spanish anthropologist Julio Caro Baroja (1990: 193-196) has observed numerous cases of syncretism since ancient communities such as the Egyptians and Greeks, which blended old beliefs with new ones. The highly political formation of Christianity, during which there were many changes in the gospels (Ehrman, 2006; 2010) and many denominations and groups of Christians, has made me very cautious about using the term syncretism. I believe that if there is blending there must be something pure in the first place. If we take into consideration this plurality of Christianity and the heritage of Judaism, not to mention other religious beliefs that have become Christianised, the concept of syncretism seems a bit obvious. In studies of Afro-Brazilian religions, Christianity and Pentecostalism, the word syncretism seems to be more a tautology than an explanation. The search for purity also has political implications, as observed by Elisa Earl Castillo (2008), who analysed the discourse created by Brazilian academics, especially anthropologists, in their analyses of Afro-Brazilian Candomblé. They had a preference for *nagô* religiosities to the detriment of other branches, which made this kind of religious practice seem more pure – and closer to the African religions– than others.

2.2 Hypothesis

The aforementioned plurality of perspectives indicates that there is currently no consensus about Pentecostalism. Does the movement really change the lives of individuals? Is it just tradition in new clothes? It is maybe a bit of both for a few. I believe that the implications of the vast bibliography and analytical insights, both about

⁹ Translation: I died to live.

Pentecostalism in a broader sense and about the UCKG in a narrow sense, are a part of something bigger in the sociology of religion. While thinking about Pentecostalism, Antonio Flávio Pierucci, who is among the most well-known Brazilian sociologists of religion, developed the concept of religion as a solvent (Pierucci, 2006). He argues that the two most important branches of the sociology of religion are the Weberian and the Durkheimian. From Pierucci's perspective, Weber thinks of religion as a transformative and flowing movement of change; thus, as a social solvent. Perhaps, and this is my assumption, that is why Weber would see the prophet as good example of the revolutionary – a figure who brings the new, transforms social environments and has a normative stance based on a God-given charisma. The authority of law lies in the prophet himself. Hence, religious thought would transform society because of the exegeses of Protestant preachers such as Martin Luther and John Calvin (Weber, 2001), or religion would at least provide the basis for a new theological interpretation of the world. Pierucci focuses, therefore, more on the transformational characteristics of religion in Weber's theory.

The Durkheimian perspective is, in Pierucci's analysis, a stationary one. It concerns community, union, tradition and a sense of belonging to something bigger than the individual sphere. It is the opposite of the perspective of Weber, who observes that changes in capitalism, and even its growth, owe a substantial debt to theology and religious practice. In this sense, for Pierucci, who is himself a Weberian and thus performs his analysis through the German sociologist's lens, the characteristics of Brazilian Pentecostalism as a religion of individual salvation, and as a process of making individuals distinctive members of the group, constitute a *sine qua non* condition in this analysis (Pierucci, 2006: 120)

The Brazilian sociologist also observes that Weber's conception of religion is completely distinct from that of Durkheim. Therefore, these analyses, of religion as solvent or as cement, cannot go together. The antinomy between the perspectives cannot be resolved. Luckily, I was aware of most of the classical studies regarding the church when I conducted my fieldwork in Madrid. After re-reading Pierucci's paper, I began to think more about these two perspectives expounded by him. With only a little intellectual effort, one could observe elements of change in Durkheim's conception of society, since he proposed a transition from mechanical to organic solidarity. Furthermore, one could also observe a quasi-stationary form in Weber's perspective, in the shape of bureaucratic domination, and in the case of the UCKG, in its routinisation of charisma. Nevertheless, while analysing my data and going to church services, I could not provide a straight answer to this question.

At the beginning of my research, I enthusiastically began to read scholars who analysed the possibilities of more individualistic approaches to religion. The work of the French sociologist Danièle Hervieu-Léger (2008) is among that most used by Brazilian academics. In his analysis of the characteristics of the pilgrim and the converted, in which he draws on Bauman's assumptions regarding the present as a moment without much affiliation to communal bonds, the former is a 'liquefied' individual whose religiosity is forged by his/her own subjectivity and experiences in life. The converted is the figure that arises in the search for a communitarian identity in this pluralistic world of possibilities in liquid modernity.

Christopher Partridge observes what he calls the Easternization of Western society as a movement towards the spiritual traditions of the East, which are re-signified for the purpose of self-discovery. The individual can renounce his or her spirituality and become a seeker, based on the logic of consumption that appropriates Eastern religiosities and practices. Nevertheless, the two main points of a liberal belief system – a healthy and austere life – remain a key goal in their lives (Partridge, 2005: 115). Health and wealth not only sum up the main goals of the prosperity gospel; they are also a common need for Partridge's seekers. Sometimes individuals identify themselves, according to Partridge, as spiritual but not religious, which gives them the characteristic of open-mindedness (Ibid.: 46), and may be more in tune with contemporary society than if they identified as religious, which may be socially understood as fanatical.

Do pilgrims find a place to establish their communitarian bonds in the UCKG? Or does this church have little communitarian appeal, being just a group of individuals looking for spiritual empowerment to achieve their own goals? The Durkheim vs. Weber debate will be explicitly and implicitly present in this thesis most of the time. Meanwhile, inasmuch as the individuals who engage with the theological guidelines of the church change their behaviours, at the same time it has always seemed to me as if their participation and changes of behaviour were also a form of integration into a new community. My main hypothesis while doing this research is one that challenges Pierucci. Weber's understanding of religion as a solvent and Durkheim's understanding of it as a cement are not mutually exclusive. They are both parts of a broader process, in which an individual tries to find a new social tribe (Maffesoli: 1996) in a liquefied world (Bauman: 2006). The UCKG, at least in the case of Madrid, transforms to adapt their usually deterritorialised members (since the majority are immigrants) to a new logic of social life.

I also began to wonder, after reading the literature, what the adaptations of the church in Madrid were. How were the clientele and institutional discourse (and practices) different

from those observed in Brazil and in other parts of the world? In addition, how does a person change from the status of non-believer to that of church member, and how do members internalise these changes? Observing these things seemed like a good way to understand the church's role in Madrid.

After collecting a lot of material about the church, I have proposed here a different analysis from that of Pierucci; not in the form – although in the final chapter I do point out what I consider is not exactly right in his understanding of Durkheim – but in his use of the concepts of both solvent and cement. I took both perspectives while analysing the UCKG but did not find enough arguments and data to refute one position totally. I stopped caring too much about the role of religion in the church; the idea was to analyse the material pragmatically, and afterwards try to find where it would take me. After writing most of the thesis, I came back to this discussion – perhaps that is why I only talk about it more passionately in the last chapter, so that I could try to find out where it finally took me. This final chapter was the most difficult to write; however, I had started to observe that both are aspects of the same process. Weber's idea – or Pierucci's – of religion as a transformer would fit better if one takes into consideration the conversion of its members, their new life and attempt to detach from their older misguided life. However, the UCKG is a very hierarchical institution, with the almost exhaustive repetition of rituals and campaigns. Furthermore, the church creates communitarian symbols and practices, and I took the example of their newest headquarters in Brazil, the Temple of Solomon, to observe this communitarian bond or cement, as Durkheim would probably argue. There is space for both. As a result, I changed my hypothesis, considering both perspectives – solvent and cement – as different steps that go both forward and backward, that both transform and bind (and vice-versa) the members. I ended up using Michael Maffesoli's conceptualisation of social tribes to understand the detachment of the older self and tribe alongside the transformation of the new self while entering the new tribe (specifically, the UCKG in Madrid).

I had an image in my head, before starting the research, about the pattern of transnationalism in the church, which brings new enemies into the equation; in fact, it seems that understanding their enemies has been of utmost importance in my thesis. Since my previous knowledge of the UCKG – as I come from a quasi-secular family – had to do with controversies between the UCKG and the Catholic Church in Brazil and the accusations of different religious denominations, it was plausible to also search for controversies in the UCKG in Madrid. It was obvious, as I searched for the beginning of the church's expansion into other countries, that I would find material about such controversies. Demonisation and antagonism are common practices of the church.

However, I thought at first that the focus on Catholicism and Islamism would be much greater than it turned out to be. To understand how this has happened, I believe that first we need to understand the origins of the church.

2.3 The three waves of Brazilian Pentecostalism

The main studies of Brazilian Pentecostalism, in my view, are those of Freston (1993) and Mariano (2012) in their observations about the historical characteristics of Pentecostalism. Mariano (2012: 25) analysed the literature before Freston, who analysed only the Brazilian movement as a two-phase group consisting of Classical Brazilian Pentecostalism and a second phase regarded as both autonomous and sometimes having the characteristic of divine/spiritual healing. Freston's inspiration for dividing the Brazilian movement came from the three (or four) waves of American Pentecostalism (Lyons, 1998) observed in the work of David Martin (1978: 9-11), who called Pentecostalism the third wave of Protestantism¹⁰. Chronologically, this movement was preceded by the Puritanism of Martin Luther and John Calvin in the sixteenth century, and John Wesley's Methodism in the eighteenth century. Pentecostalism is located in the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, but it is also geographically different. While the first two waves occurred on European soil, Pentecostalism emerges in post-colonial and post-slavery America.

In the studies of the UCKG used in this research that came from a later moment than the work of Freston, only Ruuth and Rodrigues (1999: 22-23) sees Brazilian Pentecostalism as a two-phase movement, with the Classical phase initiated at the beginning of the twentieth century, and Neo-Pentecostalism in the 1950s and 1960s. However, I instead explain the socio-historical characteristics of Brazilian Pentecostalism in this literature review according to the normal scientific standard, since my aim here is not to discuss in any detail controversies about the historicity of this religious movement.

2.3.1 The first wave of Brazilian Pentecostalism

The missionary characteristic is not something new in Christianity. When Brazil was 'discovered' by the Portuguese on April 21, 1500, they began a religious celebration to bless the travellers and the 'new' land. Later in the colonial period, especially in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there was no lack of effort by the Jesuits to convert the natives to Catholicism. However, Protestantism would not arrive in Brazil until the

¹⁰ Leonildo Campos (2005: 103) observes that Montano, a Christian from the 2nd century, was the first one to preach a 're-charismatisation' in Christianity. According to Campos, many sects follow his preaching with regard to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. The characteristics of his message were very similar to some features of Pentecostalism today.

beginning of the nineteenth century, with a few English Anglicans that followed King John VI of Portugal after his escape from his homeland due to the Napoleonic invasion. In that period, diplomatic relations between England and Portugal were very solid. A commercial treaty in 1810 between the two countries regulated the creation of cemeteries, temples, hospitals, clubs and churches of the Church of England (Calvani 2005: 40). Thus, the first Protestant temple in Brazil was Anglican and was inaugurated in the city of Rio de Janeiro in 1819. Over the course of the nineteenth century, several Protestant denominations – Lutheran, Presbyterian and Methodist, especially – settled in Brazil after its independence from Portugal, on 7 September 1822. Black Protestants were rare, but they were not absent. The most famous was Agostinho José Pereira. This black man from the city of Recife was responsible for preaching an anti-Catholic message, mainly concerning the intermediation of the saints (Alencar, 2012: 44). A black anti-Catholic was a portent of what was to follow, with another huge wave of European immigration that began with the decline of slavery in Brazil, which resulted in its complete abolition later, in 1888¹¹. Many immigrants arrived in Brazil during its nearly 400 years of history. The French and Dutch fought for Rio de Janeiro and Pernambuco. The Dutch left traces of their culture due to the conquest of Pernambuco in the eighteenth century, despite the short time that their control lasted. However, nothing was as intense as the search for labour during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century, which brought many different immigrants to Brazil. Production on a large-scale, especially of coffee, brought many immigrants to the Southeast, mainly Italians, Germans, Portuguese and Azoreans. During this period people also arrived from other places in Europe, bringing different religiosities with them.

The case of Belém in the state of Pará is notorious. This town is located on the banks of the largest river in the world, the Amazon, and in the middle of the Amazon jungle. The main economic activity of the city in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century was the extraction of latex for the manufacture of rubber, which triggered a mass migration to the region. Belém was very developed by the standards of the era, especially if we compare it with other Brazilian cities. It was there that two missionaries landed who would change the history of religion in Brazil; their names were Daniel Berg and Gunnar Vingren. Born in Sweden, they arrived in Brazil in 1910 as Baptist missionaries, but with American influence, since both had stayed for a while in the U.S. and had met each other there – Vingren was a Baptist pastor – before they got to Brazil (Ibid.: 41). Under the

¹¹ Leonildo Campos says that between 1777 and 1884, 1.6 million immigrants entered the U.S. Just in the first decade of the 20th century, 8.2 million immigrants entered the U.S. (Campos, 2005: 105). The massive wave of immigration in the exact period of the birth of Pentecostalism illustrates the extent of social changes in the U.S. during that period.

influence of American Pentecostalism, theological conflicts begin to occur between them and other preachers of the Baptist doctrine in Brazil. As noted by Alencar (Ibid.: 37-39), the Baptist Church is the first 'enemy' of the two Swedish Pentecostals in Brazil, since all twenty creators of the Assemblies of God of Brazil are former members of that denomination. The interpretation of baptism by the Holy Spirit is identified as one of the theological reasons for the split in the Baptist Church in Pará, and its shift towards the religious beliefs of Berg and Vingren. The latter was responsible for the Baptist Church in Manaus¹², and started to ask his followers not to cite the passage about baptism by the Holy Spirit in the Bible, as that might trigger some sort of segregation.

The foundation of the Assemblies of God of Brazil would only occur in 1918, but during the period when Berg and Vingren were in Belém, many people converted to Pentecostalism, mostly former Catholics and Baptists. However, Pentecostalism was not a one-branch movement even at its inception, as we can see from the differences between Seymour and Parham in the U.S.; and in Brazil, this was no different. In the same year as the Swedish missionaries arrived in Belém, an Italian missionary arrived in the state of Paraná, in the South of Brazil, accumulating a small number of followers there, and later moving and settling in São Paulo. Luigi Francesconi was the founder of the Christian Congregation of Brazil, the only Pentecostal Church in what Paul Freston (1993: 64-83) calls the 'first wave of Brazilian Pentecostalism', apart from the Assemblies of God. Due to the large amount of adherents that the Christian Congregation had in its first decades, the number of members was greater than the Assemblies of God at the time. Today, its insistence on maintaining early practices, such as sexual segregation, in the services made Francesconi's Church lose ground to the multifaceted Assemblies of God and become more associated with the descendants of Italian immigrants. The growth of the Assemblies of God occurred mainly after Berg, Vingren and other members migrated from Pará to the Brazilian Southeast, especially after the decline in latex production and the beginning of industrialisation in São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. The main characteristics of the first wave of Brazilian Pentecostalism, which ran from the 1910s to the 1950s, are: poorly educated members, anti-Catholicism, an emphasis on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, Christ's early return, and salvation through rejection of the world, featuring sectarian and ascetic forms of behaviour (Mariano, 2012: 29).

2.3.2 The second wave of Brazilian Pentecostalism

¹² One of the only big cities that is geographically close to Belém in Brazil (at least for Brazilian standards of proximity).

During the following decades, the Assemblies of God and the Christian Congregation would spread throughout the country, in a more significant way, mostly from the 1930s on (Chesnut, 1997: 30). However, the exponential growth of Pentecostalism would come mainly in the 1950s and 1960s, when the number of evangelicals in Brazil (including Pentecostals) doubled its percentage. This is mainly due to the beginning of what Paul Freston (1993: 84) understands as the 'second wave' of Brazilian Pentecostalism and Ricardo Mariano (2012: 32) would call 'deuteropentecostalism'. Despite the differences in nomenclature, there is a consensus that this is the beginning of a different phase of Pentecostalism in Brazil. It started with the already internationalised Church of Foursquare Gospel, which settled in Brazil in 1951. Although we can consider the two churches of the first wave to be genuinely Brazilian, it was only in this second phase that Brazilians actively created their own institutions. The first was Brazil for Christ, founded in 1955 by Manoel de Mello in the state of São Paulo. This church was more open to some of the customs of earlier Pentecostalism, such as, for example, in its political participation, something forbidden by most churches at the time. In 1962, Levy Tavares from the Brazil for Christ church became the first Pentecostal to be elected to the post of federal congressman, (Lima, 2012: 40). Before this, most Pentecostal churches forbade their members to participate in politics.

In 1962, the most famous and prominent church of the second phase of Brazilian Pentecostalism appeared. This was the God is Love church, founded by the missionary David Miranda, a dissident from Brazil for Christ. Miranda disagreed with the more open practices of Brazil for Christ; he was emphatic in prohibiting his members from participating in political parties. In addition, he was strongly thaumaturgical, even dressing himself in white to emphasise his image as a spiritual doctor with healing powers. Nonetheless, he continued to engage in the practice of using a lot of radio to deliver his message, just as his former church had done (Ibid.: 36), although he left television alone because he considered it to be demonic at the time (Chesnut 1997: 38). The demonisation of Afro-Brazilian cults also started more vehemently with Miranda, especially with Robert McAlister's book *Mãe de Santo* (1968). In it, McAlister tells the story of a Candomblé spiritual leader who is delivered from evil entities and becomes a Pentecostal. However, for Pentecostalism, writing is nothing without practice. Miranda was the best example of this, and during his years of preaching, he conducted many interviews with such entities, to make them confess how demonic they were and what they did wrong in the lives of believers. Mariano noted that the New Life church, founded in 1960¹³, was where the founding members of UCKG began their participation in Pentecostalism, and they

¹³ By Robert McAlister.

demonised the Afro-Brazilian entities, but not with the same emphasis – not being its theological core – as the UCKG would later do (Mariano 2012: 51). Most scholars of Pentecostalism in Brazil, influenced by Freston and Mariano, consider this moment as having two main characteristics: spiritual healing and message transmission via radio. However, to arrive at the UCKG, which would emerge a few years later, it becomes important to understand some peculiar characteristics of this historical moment. In addition to political participation, characteristics such as spiritual healing, the demonisation of Afro-Brazilian cults, interviews with entities seen as demonic, and especially the transnational mission all began with the second wave of Brazilian Pentecostalism.

It worth remembering that Pentecostalism arrived in Brazil, first of all, as a mission. However, God is Love was effectively the first Brazilian Pentecostal church that aimed, through internal bureaucratisation, to install temples abroad. In Europe today, there are around seventy God is Love churches¹⁴; its more sectarian message seems to have had success outside Brazil. The members of this institution are characterised by not watching television at all and wearing quirky garments (suits for men, long skirts for women), and not enjoying what they understand as worldly pleasures, such as drinking, gambling, casual sex and so on. It would seem unlikely that Miranda's church could be successful outside Brazil, but it was and still is, and even more so if we consider that the birth of this institution occurred at the Brazilian periphery and that its message is very strict and repressive.

The second wave of Brazilian Pentecostalism adapted in several ways to maintain its flow through the historical moment of the country. After the military coup in 1964, many of the evangelical and Pentecostal churches received support from the new government (Chesnut, 1997: 152), especially after certain Catholics turned to the left in politics with the liberation theology of the 1970s. The growth of Pentecostalism continued in the ensuing years of the dictatorship in Brazil, especially when, in the 1970s, nationalism and the exponential growth of the economy boosted the ideal of a greater chance for social mobility in the country. Pentecostalism's understanding of this historical, social and political moment in Brazil was very important for the movement. The differences between Brazil for Christ's discourse of greater participation in the public sphere, and the more ascetic and miraculous message of the God is Love church, resulted in institutions with different symbolic goods and different approaches towards participation in politics and in the public sphere. It was not just their understanding of this moment; the members and

¹⁴ In: <http://www.ipda.com.br/enderecos-ipda/igrejas-pelo-mundo/europa/>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

priests were also required to adapt their message by being a part of this time. Nonetheless, the 1970s brought a new configuration to Brazilian social life, and Brazilian Pentecostalism thus changed and adapted itself to its new environment.

2.3.3 The third wave of Brazilian Pentecostalism and the beginning of the UCKG

The UCKG finally arrived in the third Pentecostal wave (Freston, 1993: 95), also known as Neo-Pentecostalism (Mariano, 2012: 34), in the 1970s. Edir Macedo was the main leader of the church from its beginning. A member of New Life until the year of 1975, he left this institution to found the UCKG with Roberto Lopes and Romildo Soares. Their aim was to make the message of their new church less elitist than the church of McAlister, who focused his preaching on the middle class. The first temple of the new religious enterprise was located in the neighbourhood of Abolição, a suburban area of Rio de Janeiro, in a house that had previously operated as a funeral home (Souza, 2010: 288). However, as noted by Freston (1993: 96) and Mariano (2012: 32), other denominations were also part of this new moment of Brazilian Pentecostalism, including the International Church of the Grace of God, founded by Romildo Soares (co-founder of the Universal Church) in 1980, the Heal Our Land Church (1976), and Christ Lives (1986), among others. The main features of Pentecostalism from that period were spiritual warfare against the Devil¹⁵, prosperity theology and the rejection of customs and practices that had been common to previous periods of Brazilian Pentecostalism, including a break from the strong focus on asceticism, and a greater worldliness among members (Souza, 2010: 250).

Prosperity theology came mainly from the American theologian Kenneth Hagin and the televangelist Oral Roberts. They preached that offerings by the faithful in the form of money would return due to their faith in Christ. The more you give the more you get or earn back. From the mid-1950s onwards, both leaders had considerable exposure in the U.S., but as of the 1970s, with the promise of even greater financial return for tithes, made by Hagin's disciple Kenneth Copeland, prosperity theology spread itself even further. Through the influence of Hagin, Macedo brought prosperity theology to Brazil, but also democratises it a little more. During the 1970s, Brazil was at the height of a military dictatorship and the so-called 'economic miracle' meant that the country experienced inflated economic growth during this decade, especially in the beginning. Hence, the possibility of social mobility was a discourse present in the lives of Brazilian people, and

¹⁵ Cecília Mariz (1999) refers to this warfare against the Devil as a theology of spiritual warfare.

even if this did not materialise for most of them, the military government focused a lot of energy on propaganda promoting economic growth and nationalism.

Macedo's break with Robert McAlister of the New Life Church in the second half of the 1970s is connected with this political and social discourse. While McAlister wanted New Life to remain a more elitist church, Macedo – a member of the church at the time – wanted the mission and 'new life' to be for everyone, especially for the people in the favelas (Lehmann, 1996: 122). For Macedo, a key feature of his church was that the world was divided into the converted and the unconverted and not into classes or races. The church's message should be for everyone. The theology of prosperity that would come to the newly founded UCKG in 1977 put all the responsibility for social mobility and economic stability in the hands of the individual as a matter of true faith: if he/she did not prosper, the guilt would be solely his/hers, because of his/her lack of faith. This theology carries a form of bargaining between the faithful and God. The offering of money donated by the faithful to the church is a promissory note that God must necessarily redeem to the one who offers it. Vagner Gonçalves da Silva noted a similar relationship in Afro-Brazilian religions. The offering as a way to ensnare spiritual entities is a premise of both Afro-Brazilian religions and popular Catholicism. For example, the UCKG often blesses candies and offers them on the day of Saints Cosmas and Damian, afraid that children will eat candies coming from other religiosities (Silva, 2005: 165)¹⁶. Other features, such as the trance in exorcism, the use of specific days to fight evil when the Afro-Brazilian religions praise their entities and items such as rue, salt and anointed oil are also ways of appealing to the popular religious traditions and its magical imagination (Ibid.: 164). While it is highly rational in its dealings with money, being influenced by American theologians, the theology of the UCKG can materialise its monetary core in accordance with popular rites, and even incorporate it effectively into its practice.

Hagin was also responsible for the preaching of the Health and Wealth Gospel, especially through his book *The Name of Jesus* (2010). In one of his sermons, Romildo Soares cited Hagin's book, saying that after reading it he had never had any other diseases (Proença, 2010: 376). Pentecostalism's historical characteristic of spiritualism now appeared in a new sense, in which adherents could stay healthy all the time, so long as they remained in a state of grace with the Holy Spirit, always. Another important factor at this historical moment was the church's appearance on open television channels, as a way to spread

¹⁶ The day of Saints Cosmas and Damian is celebrated on September 26 by the Catholic Church and on the next day by Umbanda. Delivering sweets to children is very common during this period. Vagner Gonçalves da Silva has made a table aligning the days of devotion of Catholicism, Afro-Brazilian religions and the UCKG, respectively (Silva, 2005: 165). There are, according to his table, around a dozen dates shared by these religions that have special relevance in the Brazilian context.

the message of various neo-Pentecostal churches. Today, Macedo has the second largest television channel in Brazil, in addition to numerous radio stations, both inside and outside Brazil. However, as noted by Elton de Souza (2010: 268), despite the theological influence of American theologians and televangelists, the main goal of the propaganda and TV shows of the Brazilian churches is to attract people to services. The gospel industry – music albums, books, movies – is an important part of the process, but the aim is to bring both the spectator and the consumer to the nearest temple available.

The ability to cure diseases acquired a more aggressive characteristic after the Fuller Theological Seminar, in the late 1980s. In addition to the spiritual struggle waged against the demonic forces that could control individuals, there was now also an extension of demonic possession to other family members, which could be inherited. The whole family needs to be clean in order to cast out the demons. The practice of mass exorcism gained strength, and performed the double function of converting all members of a family in a less restrictive way than some sectarian churches, such as God is Love, which simply forbade the marriage of their members with people who did not share the same faith. Macedo discusses the theological perspective of demons in families in his 1987 book: *Orixás, caboclos e guias: Deuses ou demônios?* He says there that Kardecism and Afro-Brazilian religions only have manifestations of demonic entities. Some authors understand the UCKG's persecution of Afro-Brazilian religions as having a socio-economic vein (Mariano, 2007: 140; Pereira, 2010: 295). However, Kardecism is usually a middle-class religion that manifests spirits, including dead relatives, and is a common target for the UCKG as well. Every spiritual manifestation related to entities is always demonic according to members of the UCKG; the only true spiritual manifestations are those related to the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Attacks that focus more on religions with an African background are a way to target a specific public. Kardecism, in Brazil, is a religion more connected to the middle classes of society.

Historically, Pentecostalism is a religion of the poor, and it has dealt most of the time with poor people. Although this has changed a little with the greater flexibility of social classes within Brazilian Pentecostalism, the vast majority of the faithful still have very limited finances (Mariano, 2004: 130). This economic aspect leads Chesnut (1997: 105) to suggest that Pentecostalism is a way to cure poverty, since there are ties among the members – which sometimes do without the priest – who aid in trying to help improve each other's financial conditions. If we consider the suburban context of Rio de Janeiro, where the UCKG and several Pentecostal churches of the third wave began, the issue becomes clearer. The suburban areas of Rio de Janeiro are made up of many descendants of slaves. The potential members thus have a prior knowledge of the

(usually Afro-Brazilian) entities considered demonic by the UCKG, and the church has a predilection for raising new believers with prior knowledge of its demons. After all, Macedo's institution recognises the power of Afro-Brazilian religions and their entities; the problem is that this power always has a demonic characteristic (Lehmann, 1996, p. 145). The UCKG's bias may be religious but it is not socioeconomic. Although it is ahead of most Brazilian Pentecostal denominations in relation to the educational and socioeconomic status of the faithful, this still does not make it a form of religious elite, as the number of people without a university degree was more than 80% in 2004 (Bohn, 2004: 14). This data was available at the time of Mariano's (2007) and Pereira's (2010) comments, which renders their analysis problematic.

Like Brazilian Pentecostalism in general, the UCKG has also grown institutionally over the decades. Pentecostalism in Brazil is the fastest growing religious denomination in the country, even if we compare it with other Protestant movements in recent decades, reaching its peak in the year 2000. The Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) suggests that the UCKG had over 2 million members in that year, a figure that had declined by 2010. Now, according to the IBGE, the number of UCKG faithful is somewhere around 1.8 million. Nevertheless, growth in other places was huge, especially in Africa and Latin America (Freston, 2005: 39). The decrease in the numbers of faithful in Brazilian territory can be explained by increased competition from other denominations in recent decades, especially in the media. From the UCKG's first decades until the mid-2000s, Rede Record, Macedo's television network, had a virtual monopoly over religious broadcasting, with the main exception being the co-founder of the UCKG, Romildo Soares, and his institution, the International Church of the Graces of God. Today, other segments on television are not uncommon: leaders of The Assemblies of God have also begun to have more airtime on Brazilian television, especially the priest Silas Malafaia and the priest and congressional representative Marco Feliciano, for example. Dissenters from the UCKG have also increased the competition for believers. The priest Valdemiro Santiago and his World Church of the Power of God illustrate this. A former member and priest of the UCKG, he was expelled for disagreements in 1998. He founded his own church after that, in direct competition with the UCKG (Bitun, 2009, p. 72). A marker of its success is that, in 2000, Santiago's church did not appear in the IBGE statistics, but by 2010, it had seen exponential growth, numbering 300,000 members. The greatest proof that the new church is a real threat to the UCKG, however, comes from the services of Macedo's church. He has begun to cast out demonic entities who claim to come from the World Church of the Power of God. The dispute with former members has thus taken on proportions beyond the physical world. Marina Manduchi (2014: 44) even proposes that

the Daniel Fast, a church campaign that commands members to avoid distractions like television, may have been created as a result of the media space that Valdemiro has gained in the past few years. Santiago's church is currently the main competitor of the UCKG, but it is far from being the only one. Pentecostal churches with even more relaxed customs, and that move towards specific social groups, exemplify this phenomenon. The Snowball Church has geared itself to appeal specifically to a group of sportspeople and young people, mainly surfers and skaters, and models itself specifically on the language and practice of these social groups.

The competitiveness of the UCKG is important, as we shall see throughout the thesis, and always permeates the religious message and institutional growth of the church. The UCKG had struggles with other religions and media together with public opinion in many countries, especially in Brazil, where Edir Macedo was arrested in 1992, accused of embezzlement and quackery¹⁷. To understand both the growth of the church and its bellicosity against what they see as the Devil, the othering process is fundamental, especially as it appears in the work of Elias and Scotson (1994). Furthermore, since the church is not rooted historically anywhere in the world like older traditions, there is a constant move towards both confrontation with, and incorporation of, these traditions. It operates also as a form of behaviour – which is perhaps the main point of this research – of church members towards themselves, in a process that I have called self-othering. As a third wave of Brazilian Pentecostalism, with its own characteristics and message, the church provides a unique kind of transformation – via conversion – and commitment for the members. However, I believe that it was first necessary to offer, in this chapter, an explanation of the social environment in Brazil from which the church has come.

¹⁷ In: <http://www.estadao.com.br/noticias/geral,relembre-as-denuncias-e-investigacoes-sobre-a-igreja-universal,416987>. Access: 27/12/2017.

Chapter 3

Methodology: a stranger in the nest

In this chapter, I outline the methodological aspects of my thesis. I discuss how I came to choose Madrid, as well as how I analysed and grasped the official church material to understand its discourse. My observations regarding my ethnographic work explore my difficulties in becoming a church participant to begin the research, as well as in the interviews, my visits to the temple in Madrid and ethical issues in the research.

In the last part of the chapter, I consider the limits of the research, and what I believe would make it more substantial and complete. Apart from the difficulty inherent in studying a church of which I am not a member, there were several reasons (most of which related to time) why I left aside a lot of work that would have provided an even better understanding of the church in Madrid.

To make it easier to identify when something occurred, I put in parentheses the date of services that I attended to make it easier for me to recall memories based on my fieldwork diary. I believe this also contributes to the research, since it means that I had an almost exact record of when an event occurred.

I chose the name of this methodology chapter by taking the name from the 1975 Miloš Forman movie¹⁸ starred by Jack Nicholson *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. In Brazil, the film was translated as *Um estranho no ninho*, which re-translated into English, literally means 'a stranger in the nest'¹⁹. Unlike the English title, the Brazilian translation gave me, at least before I watched the movie, more of a sensation of displacement and strangeness in a social environment, which is what happened to me in undertaking my fieldwork in the UCKG, than a feeling of being in a madhouse, as in the movie. Furthermore, the Brazilian title has no pejorative connotations, unlike the English one, at least from my point of view. Having been a committed atheist, and having never been a member of any church in my whole life, I never thought before starting this research that I would be attending a service and feeling that I should come back the next day, and the next, and so on. As in the movie, later on I began to realise that the people there, despite our differences of beliefs, were more like me than I expected. My little flight into their nest made me feel less strange about them, and I hope made me less strange to them, too.

¹⁸ I have just discovered that there is a book with the name *Stranger in the Nest* written by David Cohen (1999), which has nothing to do with the movie.

¹⁹ In Portugal, the name of the movie was translated in the same form as in English.

3.1 The choice of Madrid

I embarked on my research without knowing which Brazilian Pentecostal church in Europe I would research. I was divided between the church God is Love – stricter and more sectarian – and the UCKG. After a few meetings with my supervisor Claire Blencowe, I asked two Pentecostal friends who are also academics, and both said that the latter would be an easier target for my purposes, even though neither is a member of that church. The second step was to choose in which country I should do the research. Portugal was ruled out completely, since Ruuth and Rodrigues (1999) and Clara Mafra (2002) already had books on the same theme in that country. A possible alternative was a big city in England, the country in which I was doing my PhD. However, after reading the literature on the UCKG in the UK, it seemed as if the UCKG had become a black church here, and it would be harder for me to understand some aspects, since I am far from having a good knowledge of immigrants coming from Africa.

I also wanted to search for countries that had not been covered in Pedro Ari Oro, André Corten and Jean-Pierre Dozon's (2003) book about the church's activities outside Brazil, which has a chapter about the church in the United Kingdom. If the name of that book in translation is 'The New Conquerors of Faith', it seemed plausible to suggest that the church had arrived in other countries, too. After searching its official website for its addresses in Europe, many countries came to mind, since I did not know – and still do not know – about research on the church there: Latvia, Russia, Ukraine, Luxembourg and Switzerland. Spain was the exception, since as I have already mentioned, I now had knowledge of existing ethnographic papers, even though they lacked the ethical standards demanded of sociological or anthropological research. My initial plan for the whole research project included three countries: Luxembourg, Switzerland and Spain, without having chosen specific cities. Before my PhD upgrade, I reduced the scope, and left just the city of Geneva in Switzerland – because of its strong historical ties with Calvinism – and Madrid in Spain, after seriously considering Barcelona. Nevertheless, since the national headquarters of the church is in Madrid (and since there was as strong possibility of Catalonia declaring independence that I had learnt more about from conversations with a friend from that city), choosing the Spanish capital began to look like a wise move.

During the upgrade process, Professors Charles Turner and Deborah Steinberg recommended that I choose just one city. I did not want to do that at the time, but since my applications for scholarships from Brazilian research programmes were being constantly denied by the financial department, despite the approval of the technical one,

it seemed healthier for my financial life to study in the cheaper place of the two. Expecting financing from a government during political crisis is like praying for rain in the desert: the chances are very low. Another reason was the number of church buildings in Madrid, which indicated a higher number of members and a more thorough immersion in the community than in Switzerland. Thankfully, this worked well, as I have a decent level of Spanish and my knowledge of Spanish history and culture was considerably broader (which does not mean much) than that of the Swiss.

3.2 Discourse analysis

To understand changes in practice and institutional discourse, I had to do a discourse analysis that focused on religion. Frans Wijzen theorised about the discourse analysis of religion (2010: 154). He aligned words and actions with the exercise of power. I have taken this a step further, to explore not just the alignment of speaking and performing religion with exercising power, but also the church members' absorption of the discourse.

On the matter of how members are persuaded to incorporate practices and discourses, I followed Marco Túlio de Sousa and Wedencley Alves' blend of French discourse analysis and argumentation theory. The authors observe that the former has more to do with the social position and ideological premises of individuals, while the latter gives more autonomy to an individual with discursive strategies (Sousa and Alves, 2010: 197). I tried to keep in mind the flexibility of pastors and many aspects of their preaching, and to observe from where they were coming and to whom their message was directed.

Another important contribution to my understanding of discourse analysis came from critical discourse analysis. In sum: '(it) involves not only the examination of text and the social uses of language but also the study of the ways in which the very existence of specific institutions and of roles for individuals to play are made possible by ways of thinking and speaking' (Hodges et al., 2008: 570).

To grasp the institutional discourse, I read books written by the leader of the UCKG worldwide, Edir Macedo²⁰, and articles from the blogs of church leaders (including Macedo). I got a hold of all the flyers and magazines from the church in Madrid, and even asked a friend to request some church newspapers in Brazil. I have cited these and links to them in the parts of the research in which I used them. In addition, thanks to the church's well-developed strategies for spreading its message worldwide, it is easy to find material online: I targeted documentaries, sermons, exorcisms, testimonials and interviews with members and leaders of the church. I used a lot of material from the

²⁰ All of them are in the bibliography.

website of Familia Unida, which is the name adopted by the church in Madrid. Using its public information in the country really helped to complete my information about church members there. I also used the official website of the church in Brazil (www.universal.org), initially to find information about the addresses of the church in Europe, but also after I chose Madrid. That website became a good tool for guidance in my discourse analysis, when I needed to search for a specific theme relating to the church's theological interpretation.

The leaders' video channels on YouTube also helped me a lot with empirical data to understand their practices. I used the official channels of the church and its leaders. However, the most important source of material for my discourse analysis was ethnographic, both from face-to-face talks with members and from the sermons of pastors and bishops. Nevertheless, this theme deserves a particular section.

3.3 Fieldwork and interviews

I went to the headquarters of the UCKG in Madrid, located at the Paseo de Santa Maria de la Cabeza, 12, Atocha, for the first time in October 2015. I stayed there for around two months, and regularly attended church services. The second time, I stayed in May and June 2016. The third and last time was in October and November 2016. This added up to about six months of fieldwork in total, from which I have than fifty transcriptions of services. In fact, I attended more services than this, but some are repetitive and hence there was a lot of irrelevant material to transcribe.

Participating in the church services with the purpose of doing research varied in difficulty for me. The first time that I went to the church, the door attendant asked me to wait and talk to the pastor. Just a few minutes later, after the door attendant called the person in charge by phone, Pastor Lenin arrived and spoke to me about my intentions. After telling him my research purposes, Lenin said: 'I cannot forbid you to watch the service, if you do not disturb anyone during it'. I followed his recommendations and after a very enthusiastic service, the pastor came to shake my hand. The first part of my fieldwork went well in this respect.

The second time I went there, I asked the door attendant if I could talk to the pastor in charge, hoping it was Lenin again. Unfortunately, although Lenin was still in Madrid, he was spending less time in Atocha (probably also working at other church buildings) and the pastor in charge was not there. I returned and one of the assistant pastors told me that I should get permission from the UCKG office in the city. I told him that I did not need it the last time and, looking a bit confused, he asked me to talk with another pastor, who was not there at that moment. After my third try, I finally met Pastor Alberto, who would

be the most important pastor for giving me information about church activities in the country, although I did not know this at the time. Alberto told me that the permission I needed from the church office was only in case I wanted to take any photos. Filming or any kind of recording was forbidden, something Lenin had also emphasised months earlier. The pastor said that they had problems with newspapers and journalists, but I will leave this specific subject for a later discussion in the next chapter. Alberto even mocked me in a very casual manner when he tried to understand why I was studying the UCKG. 'A PhD about a church? Why would you want to do something like that?', he said. However, after seeing my commitment, in our last conversation, when he gave me a brief interview – something uncommon for the pastors of the church –, he seemed to understand my dedication, while observing that I 'followed him a lot' during my time in Madrid. He even gave me his WhatsApp number, which was in one of the church's flyers, to talk to him while I was away from the city.

In my last period in Madrid, it was easier to access the church than in the other ones. I just asked the pastor and door attendants in charge to enter, promising I would not disturb them or make any films. He probably realised that I knew the institutional guidelines while we were talking, observed my familiarity with other members of the church and just let me in.

During the research, I turned to classical anthropologists such as Bronislaw Malinowski (2002) to understand the correlations between ritual and many spheres of society, such as the social, economic and legal spheres, which are directly linked to the religiosity of the group that I studied. I also referred to Clifford Geertz (1973), as I tried to observe signs and symbols, and assign symbolical meaning to the practices represented. Evans-Pritchard (1976), with his comprehension of magic as a socio-cultural phenomenon, and Claude Levi-Strauss (2014), particularly his observations regarding his time in Brazil, helped me as well. The classical authors are no less important than the other sociologists and anthropologists who have done fieldwork with the UCKG (and who are discussed in the literature review chapter). I have to say that my studies as an undergraduate gave me access to perhaps the best anthropology team in Brazil, from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). There, I was able to learn from anthropologists such as Elsie Lagrou, Marco Antonio Gonçalves, Maria Laura Cavalcanti and Beatriz Heredia. Even without citing them in the thesis, all of them inspired my behaviour and my search, as Mitchell Duneier (2011) (following Max Weber) proposes, to identify the inconvenient. Duneier also made me keep in mind the importance of avoiding only hearing just a part of the whole.

The interviews also retained the characteristic of what was being observed. I tried to vary my respondents' characteristics by gender, ethnicity, economic status and social status inside the church. I spoke with men, women, non-regular and regular members, new and old members, Spanish citizens, Brazilians, Jamaicans, Venezuelans, as well as different ethnicities, backgrounds, social statuses and ages. I was always looking for something new, about which I had not read or heard. Unfortunately, after trying to convince a few of the members to give me a proper interview, their avoidance of journalists also had an impact on my fieldwork. It was virtually impossible to interview them in significant numbers; perhaps I would have had to deal with a lot of church bureaucracy, with denial being almost a certainty. I therefore conducted interviews informally by just talking with members, always guiding them to subjects in which I was interested, whenever they let me. When they did not, I just chatted with them as much as I could about various subjects, hearing their opinions, which were almost invariably based on theology. After these conversations, which usually occurred after a service, I then had to rush to a coffee shop or bar near the church to transcribe the conversation as fast as I could, while my memory was fresh enough to remember everything. These difficulties meant that I retained less quantitative information about numbers regarding the social characteristics of the members. The quantitative parts of this research were based on observation, on official numbers provided by specialised institutions regarding membership in Madrid and Brazil, for example, and on interviews of the leaders, who were a good source of information about the kind of people who attended their services.

Following the British Sociological Association Statement of Ethical Practice, I always told the members with whom I spoke that I was not a church member and not merely a curious person, unlike a few of the ethnographers that study Brazilian Pentecostalism. I always let them know my purpose for being inside the church with them. Respecting them by telling them truth was an essential part of my task. I did not have any kind of conversation with minors under the age of eighteen for the research, since this requires special authorisation. I also took care to avoid using the names of the members; I have used only the names of leaders, since they are the official representatives of the institution and have their interviews on the church website. More than once, I tried to do what my other supervisor, Steve Fuller, suggested to me: let the people who were my object of study read my research. Unfortunately, they did not show much interest after I told them what the topic of my research was.

3.4 Limits

Since my research was based at the UCKG headquarters, I did not visit other temples of the church in Madrid. I tried to find the ones closest to the headquarters, but they had probably changed their addresses, since most of the small temples are rented spaces that are just temporary. However, to look at the work of the church in the suburbs, and (why not?) the country as whole, would have greatly increased the scope of this research. Nonetheless, the thesis is long enough even without this material, and this perhaps leaves the field open for other sociologists to do new research.

As already mentioned, my quantitative data on the UCKG in Madrid is, to say at least, poor. I indicate below where I have made guesses about the quantitative characteristics of the church in Atocha. Again, all my assumptions were made with regard to the headquarters of the church and thus do not take into consideration other buildings in the city and in the country. Since my objectives here were rather more qualitative than quantitative, this was not a problem.

Some other areas that would have been useful to research were impossible just because of the structure of the church and its services. Services specifically for women, for example, were completely out of the question, since I could not attend them. Services for young people, with a group called *Fuerza Joven Española* (Spain Youth Force), or FJE, were also impossible for me to attend. I was invited by one young girl at the end of a service to go to the FJE afterwards. She said that I should go, since it was for people up to 26 years old (more or less). I replied that I was 29, and she was surprised by my age, to my great joy. I especially did not want to lie or make her go against church guidelines, inviting myself even though I exceeded the age limit. However, this left me with fewer ethical issues regarding the research itself, since many participants were children, and there are specific rules about dealing with children as research participants. Asking for authorisation would have given me more work, and if denied might have led to more distrust of me among the members.

I have also tried to do research that has my own stamp upon it. I am indebted to all the authors cited here, but I did not take one big theoretical framework to analyse an object of study, as many researchers do in their PhDs, even though this left open many theoretical possibilities for understanding this specific church in Madrid. It is arguable that the study of Pentecostalism in a broader sense in this city, in its different branches, would also have helped to understand further what people from other denominations think about the UCKG.

Chapter 4

UCKG transnationalism: a church of controversies arrives in Spain

4.1 Introduction

This main theme of this chapter is transnationalism, the arrival of the UCKG in Spain and the church's controversies. First, I discuss the expansion of the church outside Brazil, observing the literature and data on its historical development during recent decades, with examples of strategies for the UCKG's growth in a few places. This seems an important point to observe, even if only superficially, to help understand the extent of the compatibility between these adaptations and those made by the church in Madrid, especially in relation to the themes analysed in this research.

The second part focuses on the analysis of church media, and its role in the church's expansion. The struggle between the UCKG and Afro-Brazilian entities, which will receive further comments in later chapters, makes its first appearance here. Furthermore, the huge expansion of church media, especially with the acquisition of Rede Record in Brazil, indicates the UCKG's aggressive investment in the public sphere. Internationally, its strategy of expansion connects directly with both founding and acquiring media vehicles locally, which will also be analysed. I will furthermore discuss how the church uses the different media vehicles available.

In addition, this chapter contains an initial discussion of the church in Madrid, including data on, and a brief consideration of, the work of the UCKG in Spain since its arrival, and controversies surrounding it in the public sphere, especially in the newspaper *El País*. This controversy with the newspaper is similar to that of the arrival of UCKG in Spanish society, which was approached more gently than in other places. During my fieldwork in Spain, one of the pastors told me that the church was only affiliated with the UCKG worldwide; it was in some way independent from the Bishop Macedo's institution. I also try to ascertain, while highlighting the transnationalism of the church and its arrival in Madrid, the reason why the pastor told me this, as well as why I believe the opposite to be true.

This chapter begins with some general information about the church, before shifting the focus to Spain and Madrid. However, as I have already explained the church's origins in Brazil, the next step is to observe a few aspects of UCKG transnationalism in a broader sense. As a global enterprise, it is not possible to understand the church's local work in

Madrid without observing the global characteristics of this institution, and what is particular to the Spanish capital.

4.2 UCKG Transnationalism: a church without geographical borders

The expansion of the UCKG has only been possible due to globalization in the twentieth century. The world has become connected by mass media communication and the mass migration of people. Moreover, different cultures are now more interconnected, which means that pluralism is the new tune of the liberal, Northern and Western world. This process has also affected Pentecostalism since its beginnings, which has become an increasingly transnational religious movement, with an accelerated circulation of goods, ideas and people (Dijk, 2001: 223). Religious institutions need to understand this new global configuration if they want to expand and disseminate their theologies. There is a need for dialogue between the local and the global. As a church that has become global, the UCKG needs to adapt its discourse and sometimes its practices to have meaning for the people in each part of the world in which it has installed temples. The transnational mission has to be plural, which makes it more powerful in some places than others.

Today, according to the UCKG's website, there are church assistants in more than 170 countries and official temples that are accepted by local governments in 115 countries²¹. It is difficult to believe in this account, since it was hard to gather enough data about numbers, especially during the short period of my PhD research. Nevertheless, the UCKG is considered to be 'the greatest multinational church from the Third World' (Oro et al, 2003: 21), which makes Brazil a major exporter of religious goods (Almeida, 2009: 19), and the number of temples in the different countries in which the UCKG has established itself shows how important Macedo's church is all around the world. Chronologically speaking, the UCKG's first transnational forays were undertaken during the 1980s, in Latin American countries and the United States (Freston, 2001). The expansion continued into other continents, including Africa and Europe, and later Asia and Oceania. In Europe, the UCKG has already established around 240 temples or prayer locations, and over 100 of these are in Portugal²², largely due to the language, which has also helped the growth of the UCKG in the African countries colonised by Portugal: Angola, Ethiopia and Mozambique (Oro, 2004; Freston, 2005; Mariz, 2009). The only country in the African continent where the UCKG has a huge impact with a completely different language from Brazil is South Africa. In Asia, the UCKG is relevant only in Japan, largely due to the great number of Brazilian immigrants who have Japanese ancestry (Freston, 2001: 201).

²¹ In: <https://iurdenderecos.wordpress.com/about/>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

²² In: <http://www.universal.org/>. Accessed 27/12/2017.

The Latin American case is quite different from that of Europe or Asia, and more similar to that of Africa. There are a few countries where the UCKG is not very relevant, such as Mexico and Uruguay. The Mexican case is similar to that in the northeast of Brazil, the region where Pentecostalism, and consequently the UCKG, found it more difficult to establish itself (Mariano, 2004: 121), which does not mean that it has not succeeded at all. In the northeast of Brazil, popular Catholicism is very strong, especially magical practices that sometimes blend elements of Catholicism and Afro-Brazilian religions with local leaders. One example is the worship of Padre Cícero, a Catholic priest whom the local people of Ceará – the state where he was born, lived and died – believe performed miracles. Popular Catholicism is an aspect of the Mexican case, too, where the cult of the Virgin de Guadalupe seems not to leave much space for the growth of Pentecostalism and Protestantism (Oro, 2004: 149). The main characteristics of popular Catholicism in both regions are similar to that of an earlier phase of Pentecostalism: the magical mystery of the miracles attributed to an exchange with local saints. In Pentecostalism, the exchange is directly with Jesus (God); nonetheless, the process is very similar. It is not rare to see people in Brazil walking huge distances on their knees, even on stairs, to thank Padre Cícero for his blessings. Catholic sacrifice exists in a different way than in the UCKG. While the UCKG focuses more on money, the devotees of popular Catholicism make what they call ‘promises’, or vows that are usually kept with a sacrifice related to the devotees; bodies, such as walking on the knees for a long distance, or a fast in relation to some specific food.

The situation is different in Uruguay, where the UCKG has tried to install temples since the 1980s, according to Ari Pedro Oro. For ten years, most of the appeals and campaigns were unsuccessful at bringing a substantial number of new members to the temples. Oro speaks of a UCKG pastor who was trying to bring people to an empty temple by saying, ‘the Devil here is strong’ (ibid.: 147). Nonetheless, the church has begun to expand somewhat even here, in the early years of the twentieth first century, probably due to a shift in the strategy of recruiting new people. Oro’s analysis suggests that the warfare against Afro-Brazilian religions – which have been in Uruguay for a few decades – has helped in the creation of an enemy, through a discourse that was common in the UCKG’s homeland. To conquer the minds and souls of the new members, first it is necessary to make their everyday cultural practices strange to them. Nevertheless, the main new aspect of the church in that country which really changed its institutional impact was a substantial investment in media. Television and radio were the main tools that spread sermons as propaganda to the new ‘audience’. A similar situation occurred in Argentina, where Afro-Brazilian cults had also become established. Hence, the focus of the church

was spiritual warfare against these cults, and its media vehicles helped it reach more people with its message.

As we can see in the aforementioned examples, sometimes the message preached by the church has a hard time making strong bonds and recruiting local members, even when the latter are from lower classes and from countries that have languages similar to that used in Brazil. The case of Uruguay shows that a new strategy can work with the successful creation of an adequate discourse and with an investment in propaganda. There is a need to understand the local environment and to offer a discourse that can fit into the popular culture of a specific place. Oro (2004: 140) also observed that the church leaders usually choose cities – especially in Europe and in the United States – where there are big communities of Brazilian or Latin American immigrants. In addition, the choice of a location for the establishment of a new temple takes into consideration the number of people who will be passing by.

If we take the perspective of the rational choice theory of religion, as proposed by Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge (1996), to analyse the UCKG's expansion, the temple must be in a place where its product – the religious message – is well exposed. Ricardo Mariano (2004: 126) also observed, in the Brazilian case, that the choice of specific places is made by bishops of the church, which is organised in an episcopal and bureaucratic form, thus achieving internal cohesion and ease regarding decisions and plans. The form of organisation of the church resembles that of the Catholic Church (Almeida, 2009: 14) more than that of Protestant churches, given that the UCKG's administrators consist of a few Brazilian bishops who are trusted by Macedo and are at the top of the church's hierarchy. According to Ilana van Wyk (2014: 14), they decide where new temples will be built by taking into consideration local discourses, especially laws governing things like taxes, property, religious expression and non-profit organisations. The bishops also consider the infrastructure – transport routes – and the number of people passing by the location on a daily basis. The local culture and material conditions are both important for UCKG entrepreneurship, but the financial aid of the members, who are sometimes engaged in campaigns to help with the building of new temples by giving money, is probably the most important aspect. With their money, members help the church in areas that do not necessarily offer fertile ground for its dissemination, since there are places where it has only a symbolic existence, with few and low income members. In many countries and cities, the UCKG is not economically profitable, and members in other places have to help support its continued existence. Brazil is the main financial headquarters of the UCKG, but other countries such as South Africa also aid in balancing the church's finances. This African country by itself covers the economic losses of all the

other church branches in that continent (Freston, 2001: 202; Wyk, 2014: 3). This does not mean that only South African churches make a profit for the UCKG; Portuguese-speaking countries such as Angola and Mozambique are other African countries where the UCKG is most likely to be profitable. A strong administrative core²³ is the only way in which the distribution of temples, along with their bishops, pastors and even assistants, can occur and in which non-profitable temples may survive (Freston, 2005: 38).

The economic losses of the church in some countries and cities and the permanence of the institution in these places may mean something other than the mere search for profit or implementation of a religious McDonalds (Campos, 1999b: 178²⁴; Corten and Marshall-Fratani, 2001: 6)²⁵. The UCKG discourse engages churchgoers in a beyond-borders mission and the church commits itself in the same way. Looking for the best places to install new temples does not mean that the church will be successful (Freston, 2005: 37-40), nor does it mean that the UCKG will close its temples. There is a need to create an institutional discourse capable of aligning the theology that flows to their members' worldview from their globalised church.

The church's expansion in the world ultimately follows a path of adaptation in each location according to its clientele. A temple with Spanish sermons is available in São Paulo, Brazil. This city became a location to where immigrants from the other countries of South America migrate. For instance, São Paulo has around 350,000 Bolivians, the biggest community of Spanish speakers in the city²⁶. The UCKG also helps immigrants from Haiti, who arrive via the northern State of Acre, to become established on Brazilian soil.²⁷ In these examples of adaptation, the focus on immigrants is vast. The church has become almost a Latin American institution in New York, with more temples preaching in Spanish (11) than in English (8), and it also has also become a black church in the United

²³ The most important bishops are the ones responsible for the policies of the church in alignment with Macedo's orders. They are the administrative core of the church.

²⁴ Campos does not assert that the UCKG is a religious McDonalds. In his book, he shows a figure published in the Brazilian newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* – one of the biggest in circulation in the country today – on 19/05/1996 that shows a billboard sign with the analogy between the M of McDonalds and that of Macedo, while pastors say 'sai capeta' ('get out demon', in English).

²⁵ Nonetheless, the *modus operandi* of the UCKG heavily resembles that of the organisation of a McDonald's restaurant (Ritzer, 1996), with the church having guidelines made by a central core, offering standardized services which make the members feel free to enter any temple as if it were a franchise and facilitating the simple substitution of its pastors. Although the organisation is very similar, the lack of profit-driven motivations calls this resemblance into question, since there are temples and even countries where the church has a negative balance.

²⁶ <https://noticias.gospelprime.com.br/igreja-universal-abre-igreja-para-latinos-e-hispanicos-em-sp/>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

²⁷ <http://www.universal.org/noticia/2014/02/28/conheca-o-trabalho-da-universal-com-haitianos-no-acre-28956.html>. 27/12/2017.

Kingdom and France, since most of its clientele are immigrants from African countries (Aubrée, 2003: 191).

4.3 UCKG media: a worldwide strategy

The UCKG's expansion on Brazilian soil owes a lot to its ability to use mass media communication, especially radio, in the first years after its foundation. The appropriation of media vehicles in Brazilian Pentecostalism is not new. Since at least the 1940s, older Pentecostal churches like the Brazilian Assembly of God had radio programs, and in the 1960s, Robert McAlister – the main figure of the New Life church, to which Macedo belonged before going solo with the UCKG – had television time for preaching (Teixeira, 2014: 234). At first, there was enough money to buy radio stations and space on television. The strategy was to maximise airtime, especially when church expenses were higher. The church searched for slots on TV schedules after programmes that aired Afro-Brazilian religious services (Mariano, 2012: 66), as a way to confront them. The first exhibition was on TV Tupi with a show called *Despertar da Fé* (Awakening Faith) broadcast in the morning. Its success was huge and in 1983, after only six years, the UCKG had TV programmes playing in almost all of Brazilian territory. UCKG media would continue to grow until it acquired its biggest enterprise in 1989: Rede Record, the second largest television channel in Brazil today, and one of the largest radio stations as well.

Since the UCKG began managing the station, Rede Record has become huge. At first, the most famous TV show was *Fala que eu te escuto* (Talk and I'll Listen to You), with church messages and debates occurring until dawn, an hour at which almost no other Brazilian television channels had TV shows. The themes were regular news with theological interpretations, and blessings were offered with a famous gesture: drinking a glass of water – which should be near the TV set – after prayers. Rede Record shows were, and still are, far from being just church messages (most of them are not), and have a broad appeal to their public, with TV shows about the news as well as soap operas, which are very popular with Brazilians. The UCKG's media have no borders: Record Internacional, which is the online and international branch of Rede Record, is broadcast live to the United States, Japan and Europe. It is worth remembering that as a Brazilian enterprise, UCKG online TV broadcasts mostly in Portuguese. This aspect shows how the television channel can be part of the cultural apparatus of Brazilian or Lusophone immigrants, with no need for belonging to or even any kind of knowledge of the UCKG's rituals.

In other parts of the world, such as Africa, the church also has had a huge impact by buying radio stations and TV channels, especially TV Miramar from Mozambique, which

was acquired by the UCKG in the 1990s. The negotiation of this African media corporation raised suspicions of a political and monetary agreement between the church and FRELIMO, a leftist political party that has had majority political control in Mozambique since the 1970s (Freston, 2005: 57). Its radio stations and TV shows are widespread in South Africa (Wyk, 2014: 157), Mozambique and Angola, while other countries in the continent receive little or none of the UCKG message spread by media vehicles. In Europe, there are radio stations such as Liberty Radio in the United Kingdom²⁸, as well as airtime acquired for preaching on secular radio stations (such as Ecuatoriana Radio in Madrid, on which Bishop Gilberto Santana used to pray during the nights of the Daniel Fast Campaign in June of 2016). Most of these channels are broadcast online, but the church also has six radio stations in Portugal and two in France (Modesto e Guerra, 2012: 4).

Radio and television stations are not the only media owned by the UCKG. Its most important and widely disseminated newspaper is *Folha Universal*, which printed more than 1.7 million copies in one week in March of 2016. The newspaper began in 1992 and has an editorial line focused on the exaltation of the church (Ribeiro and Pinto, 2007: 5). *Folha Universal* helps to create an international discourse by printing almost weekly news about the church and its help-centres outside Brazil. According to Campos, who analysed the UCKG from a marketing perspective, before globalisation and mass media communication, religious organisations had a more traditional way to transmit their values and practices, usually via their older members and their rituals (Campos, 1999b: 239). Later they became dependent on the media, as a source to shape and regulate member behaviour. The UCKG also has newspapers in South Africa and Portugal (Modesto e Guerra, 2012: 4) and local magazines that are usually distributed in their meetings. Books by well-known members – especially those of Macedo – and gospel music also help to disseminate their message in different languages; the UCKG has its own publishing and record companies that control the distribution and the marketing of their own products.

The mass inclusiveness of the digital world from the late 1990s and into the twenty-first century encouraged the UCKG to market itself on the internet as well. The official website www.universal.org publishes different articles about the church's message, and links to their online television and radio channels as well as the blogs of their most prominent members (which include a list of well-regarded bishops and Macedo himself), directions to their U.S. page and even the services of an online pastor. The latter is a 24/7 service where any individual can contact a UCKG pastor to help him/her with advice and sermons.

²⁸ <http://libertyradio.co.uk/>.

The first page of the pastor online service has a question, 'why are you suffering?', which is the most used line in the church's proselytism. Online services such as Macedo's posts on his blog or Facebook page are focused more on the regular members, according to Campos, as a way of controlling the members' behaviour and giving them guidance in facing their everyday problems in life, whether they be economic, spiritual, domestic or relationship-oriented. The same thing occurs on YouTube, where Macedo²⁹ and the UCKG³⁰ have their own channels to make their most important messages available to the members. This simultaneous behavioural control and religious marketing with media vehicles shows the extent to which the church is concerned with a disputed and plural religious market, if we look at it through the lenses of rational choice theory. Moreover, there is a need to keep the members from moving to other denominations, and the church needs to grow on the international scene.

The website of the Familia Unida in Spain shows two key propagandised media of the church not counting the website, which is the most propagandised of all, especially in the fliers distributed by the church (*Familia Unida* magazine shows the website address on its cover). The first is iurdtv.eu, the online TV channel of the church in Europe, created in 2011. Most of the programmes are pre-recorded, although it is also possible to watch live events. The iurdtv.eu channel is similar to the Brazilian iurdtv, the online TV station of the church in Brazil which was created in 2005 and which broadcasts in Portuguese. There are sermons and testimonials from people who have achieved benefits since becoming a church member, all of which aim to send the viewer to the nearest temple.

The second is Radio Positiva, which was inaugurated on 2 April 2010, and which broadcasts programmes of around 40 minutes, at least 3 times a week. The programmes all have a similar format, with Bishop Antonio Francisco de Cantuá, the usual presenter, generally beginning with a short prayer, after which music is played. This is important as a way of teaching lyrics to the members, since the church regularly plays music during its services in Madrid. The preacher then says another prayer, which is usually followed by member testimonials. Finally, there is the final prayer, which is followed most of the time by a glass of water. This is also common in the church's TV sermons in Madrid. The bishop or pastor in charge prays with a glass of water, sometimes asking people to put a glass of water close to or even on the television, and after the sermon, the listener is invited to drink it.

²⁹ In: <https://www.youtube.com/user/CanalBispoMacedo>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

³⁰ In: <https://www.youtube.com/user/TvUniversalorg>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

Radio Positiva's message focuses on the theological combat against evil, which I shall discuss in greater depth in later chapters, since it is perhaps the most important theology preached by the church. The station proposes the following: 'Un programa dedicado a las personas que se consagran, luchan y batallan contra las fuerzas del mal'. (Free translation: A programme dedicated to the people who faithfully fight and battle against the forces of evil). In addition, the most important thing for listeners is to continually follow institutional recommendations and be a member full time. The services usually publicise the time of the next broadcast so that everyone can be connected at home for the next programmes.

The church's media propaganda in Madrid also corroborates my doubts about Pastor Alberto's assumption regarding the Familia Unida's not identifying with the UCKG. In our first conversation, the pastor said that the church was affiliated with the UCKG; it was not the UCKG itself, since its registered name is different³¹. The fact that the bishops working for the church in Spain were named by the church in Brazil would be enough to prove the direct link between the Brazilian UCKG and the Familia Unida. However, the description of how the media vehicles began and of their objectives in Madrid attested even further that the Familia Unida is actually the UCKG in Madrid, with a different registered name:

Teniendo en cuenta todos estos aspectos, el creador de la IURDTV, el Obispo Macedo, creó una plataforma donde difundir una programación totalmente dirigida a la recuperación completa del ser humano. Equilibrio interior, bienestar físico, estabilidad económica, armonía familiar y felicidad en la vida sentimental; todos estos aspectos son tratados en los programas emitidos las 24 horas del día, los 7 días a la semana, los 365 días del año. Cualquier persona, en cualquier lugar del mundo, puede acceder a un canal de programación ininterrumpida y también a mensajes que necesite en ese momento³². (Free translation: Taking into consideration all these aspects [the practice of bringing the gospel to everyone], the creator of IURDTV, Bishop Macedo, created a platform to broadcast a programme totally directed to the complete recuperation of the human being. Inner equilibrium, physical well-being, economic stability, family harmony and happiness in sentimental life; all these aspects are covered in programmes 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Any person, anywhere in the world, can access a channel

³¹ I will discuss this further in the next section of this chapter.

³² In: <http://centrodeayudauniversal.es/multimedia/en-directo/>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

with an uninterrupted schedule and messages that he or she may need at this time).

The UCKG's media, therefore, not only controls the members, but also serves as first aid to people in despair, or to those who just want a comforting message. However, in the case of Madrid, the Familia Unida's media attested to the leadership of Bishop Macedo in the description of who started the church's media channels, which conflicts with Alberto's assumption. Nonetheless, Macedo's charisma as a founder is less representative in comparison to the leaders of other Pentecostal churches, especially the ones with a narrow dissemination than the UCKG, which have a fully centralised leadership of one person. Macedo as a figurehead is almost absent from the church in Madrid on a daily basis. The exceptions to this are his rare visits during his tours through Europe. None of these occurred during my fieldwork or in any videos of his sermons – the majority of videos presented inside the church do not present the leader as the main figure. The only time that someone brought Macedo into his sermon, while I was doing my fieldwork, was Bishop Gilberto Santana. Macedo is not completely absent, however, from everyday sermons. As I indicate in the next chapters, his theological thinking, especially through his books, is the main source for the church sermons, even when they do not explicitly quote him.

Does the church avoid the controversial figure of Macedo because of his bad reputation among the people in his home country? The answer is impossible to give. Nevertheless, in Madrid, Macedo's less highlighted leadership does not bring up the past (in which he ended up in jail in 1992) of the UCKG leader. Church avoidance of controversies seemed to be a strategy during my fieldwork, and perhaps explains why Alberto said that Familia Unida was only affiliated with the UCKG, and not part of it. However, the church, despite the visible effort not to be as belligerent as in the past, seems to attract controversy, even with the precaution of being open to others through interreligious dialogue and welcoming, as best as it could, a researcher like me. The social trend of the Manichean worldview of the church did not bring it controversies in Spain. Quite the opposite was true: its message of prosperity was the one that caused the most important and visible debate about the church in the public sphere.

4.4 Arrival in Spain: a church of controversies

The UCKG established its first temple in Madrid in 1992, according to its own documentary about the expansion of the church in Europe,³³ or in 1993, according to the

³³ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3C2fVhkeZkk>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

Familia Unida website, but had been active in Spain since 1990. A former UCKG pastor, Mario Justino, who was involved in the early development of the church in Europe, described the introduction of pastors to Spain as a way to cheat immigration policies in Portugal, the first country in the old continent where the church had become active. According to Justino (1995: 100), all the UCKG pastors in Portugal, with the exception of two, were illegal; they had to cross the border to Spain every three months to avoid being expelled. Constant travel throughout Europe was also a way to prospect for the next countries the church should enter. I began my fieldwork almost 25 years after the inauguration of the first temple in Madrid at Santa Maria de la Cabeza, which was where I did my research. According to the *Familia Unida* magazine, the church has 28 buildings in Spain, 11 of which are in Madrid, and they vary between regular temples and help centres³⁴. The region with the second highest number of temples is Cataluña (mainly Barcelona), which has five. Other important parts of Spain, including Seville, Almeria, Zaragoza, Navarra and the Basque Country, also have a UCKG presence.

The UCKG in Madrid was started by Bishop Paulo Roberto, who changed the official name of the church to Comunidad Cristiana del Espiritu Santo due to the high number of scandals in which the church was involved during the early 1990s. These included Bishop Macedo's imprisonment in Brazil, in 1992, and accusations by the former pastor Carlos Magno Miranda of money laundering for Colombian drug dealers, in 1991³⁵. The church is still not recognised by the Federation of Evangelical Religious Entities of Spain (FEREDE), an organisation which has a number of affiliated protestant churches in Spain – including Pentecostal ones. This shows the degree of hostility against UCKG practices in Iberian countries; even the winner of the Nobel Prize for literature, the Portuguese writer José Saramago, has said: 'The Universal Church is a criminal organisation, a gang that dedicates itself to crime and robbery'. (Campos, 1999a: 356). Its name change was a strategy to avoid more notoriety while the church was still taking its first steps in a different continent. This allowed it to construct a new image and gave it the status of dissident (Ruuth and Rodrigues, 1999: 114). Pastor Alberto, during my first interview, corrected me when I called the church the UCKG; he emphasised the registered name and said that Familia Unida was 'the name we are using to spread the message'. He did not mention that the church had previously used the name *Pare de Sufrir* (Stop Suffering), which was the first name used by the church in Spain. Further controversies in some sectors of

³⁴ Help centres are usually rented buildings where the church has just a few programs with pastors attending people.

³⁵ In: <http://brasileconomico.ig.com.br/brasil/mosaico-politico/2015-01-12/autor-de-denuncias-diz-continuar-cruzada-contra-macedo.html>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

Spanish society, in particular the newspaper *El País*, probably made the church directors in the country change the public name.

The UCKG has used a number of different names, including Oración fuerte al Espíritu Santo³⁶ and Comunidad Cristiana del Espíritu Santo³⁷, in countries such as Bolivia, Ecuador, Venezuela, México, Peru and Colombia (Oro et al., 2003: 51). The same thing has occurred in Italy with the name Comunità Cristiana dello Spirito Santo (Silva et al., 2013: 147). In the United Kingdom and the United States, the church uses the exact translation from its original name in Brazil, The Universal Church of the Kingdom of God. Despite these differences, the aforementioned authors have not explored the reasons for the UCKG's name changes in those places. Only Freston has written about it. Most of the name changes were made due to legal embargo (Freston, 2001: 203), since the church has as bad a reputation in foreign countries as it has in Brazil, but as I have already suggested, it seems that the change was more strategic in the Spanish case, rather than the result of legal persecution.

Controversies surrounding the church in Spain have had a huge impact on the members' social behaviour towards non-believers. When I first spoke with Pastor Alberto, asking permission to re-start my fieldwork, he was very open when he said what he and the other members of the church think about journalists in general. His biggest concern was that I might actually *be* a journalist with no respect for the members' faith. After our brief conversation, in which I explained my objectives and the purpose of my participation in services, Alberto advised me to let the members know that I was not a journalist. Unfortunately, in crowded meetings that sometimes surpassed a few hundred people (I would guess that the most crowded events have more than five hundred people), it was impossible to let everyone know what I was really doing there. Since I am not a Pentecostal, and I tried to respect the members by not pretending to be one, people often looked at me as a newcomer or worse. On 6 June 2016, as usual, I was sitting at the back, watching people walk up to give their money offerings after the pastor asked them to do so. While he was going back to his seat, one man pointed at me and asked me from where I was; I replied 'Brazil', and he nodded his head in what I thought was an 'OK'. He stared at me a couple of times during the service, but after it was over, he walked past me saying that he had told the pastor that I was journalist. I ran after him, introduced myself and explained who I was. The man, whose name was M., was an immigrant from Jamaica, and after our brief conversation, in which I explained a bit of the history of the

³⁶ Translation: Strong Prayer to the Holy Spirit.

³⁷ Translation: Christian Community of the Holy Spirit.

church and Bishop Macedo's struggles against the media in Brazil, M. changed his attitude towards me and even told me to come back for a future service.

It is easy to understand the reasons why Alberto and M. were concerned about journalists in the church. The most famous clashes have been with *El País*, the biggest newspaper in Spain, and the two most significant occurred in 2008 and 2014. The earliest article that I found about the church in Spain was from December of 1995, however³⁸. Even in this early article, there was exposure of Macedo's legal problems in Brazil, information about the official foundation of the UCKG in Spain and, most significantly, an investigation of the church's connections with drug dealing. The article's headline gives a general idea of the newspaper's hostility towards the church: 'La secta brasileña investigada por tráfico de drogas ya está legalizada en España' (Free translation: The Brazilian sect investigated for drug dealing has been legalised in Spain). In 2008, an article titled 'Los inmigrantes se traen a Lutero'³⁹ – which can be translated as: 'The immigrants bring Luther' – gave church leaders a big headache. The journalist who wrote the article gave voice to the president of the institution responsible for the evangelical churches in Spain (FEREDE) who made comments about the UCKG as a corrupt church that sells the Gospels, and even compared it to a football team. The church sued the newspaper and won, receiving a public retraction imposed by the Spanish court. In 2014, the church was once again in the newspaper, in an article about the construction of the Temple of Solomon⁴⁰, in São Paulo, Brazil. In the article, the journalist wrote that the members were required to give 10% of their salary to the church as a way of helping with the construction of the new temple. Once again, the church sued the newspaper and received a public retraction. *El País* was forced by the court to write a few paragraphs in the article saying that the church did not require anyone to give their money compulsorily.

The 2008 article draws more on personal opinion, and relies on the freedom of speech in a given country. The second article is untrue, based on my experience of the church in Madrid. The church does try, of course, to persuade its members to give tithes and offerings, and even to make regular donations. Testimonials, sermons and official institutional discourse based on prosperity theology do talk a lot about money, and how important it is for a member to help the work of God by financing the church. Nonetheless, it is never an obligation, and neither is any kind of threat made by pastors and bishops towards those who do not pay this regular tithe, at least while I was doing my research.

³⁸ In: https://elpais.com/diario/1995/12/29/sociedad/820191615_850215.html. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

³⁹ In: http://elpais.com/diario/2008/08/30/sociedad/1220047201_850215.html. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

⁴⁰ In: http://sociedad.elpais.com/sociedad/2014/07/31/actualidad/1406831912_261622.html. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

The establishment of the UCKG in Spain coincides with the growth in the number of immigrants in the country. As Rodrigues and Silva observed (2015: 1377-1378), between 1990 and 2011, the immigrant population grew from 2% to 11% of a population of 46 million people. The vast majority of the country is Catholic (around 73%), while the majority of immigrants are evangelicals (58%), for whom Catholicism still plays an important role (e.g. 30% are Roman Apostolic and 12% are Orthodox, Maronites or Coptics). In Madrid, the proportion of immigrants is larger than in the country in general. According to the Council of Social Policies and Family (Consejería de Políticas Sociales y Familia)⁴¹, in 2016, there were 6,555,247 people in the city, 862,085 (13%) of whom were immigrants without Spanish citizenship, and 334,427 are naturalized immigrants, which increases the total to 18%. Around 25% of the immigrants in Madrid come from Latin American countries, but the aforementioned data has no numbers from countries such as Brazil, Uruguay, Mexico and Argentina, which means that this percentage may be quite a bit higher.

Historically, Catholicism reflects the ethos of the non-declared Catholics in Spain, which may generate alienation from Pentecostal practices, especially from a kind of Pentecostalism that has Brazilian traits. A quick Google search for the activities of Familia Unida shows the overall opinion of the church. Many Catholic and secular blogs in Spain offer written opinions about the UCKG, most of which are similar to the opinion expressed by *El País*, treating the church as a moneymaking enterprise that brainwashes its members⁴². A good number of blogs refer to the church as a sect and link it to Bishop Macedo, showing the disputes he has had during his religious career⁴³.

Critics also come from Protestant and Evangelical denominations, as shown by the problems in affiliating with FEREDE. In an article on the *Protestante Digital* website (protestantedigital.com/espana) titled 'La IURD no es evangélica' (The UCKG is not evangelical), the accusations are similar to those made by *El País*, with the addition of a focus on trying to unlink this institution from classical Protestantism, and even from a few Pentecostal denominations. According to the article⁴⁴, it is common in Spain to

⁴¹ In: http://www.comunidad.madrid/sites/default/files/barometro_de_inmigracion_2016_0.pdf. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

⁴² The church controversies seem to follow the institution worldwide. There are famous frictions with other social groups in Brazil, Portugal, United Kingdom and Angola, to cite a few.

⁴³ To cite a few: <https://hipertextual.com/especiales/familia-unida>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

<https://religionesysectas.wordpress.com/sectas/familia-unida/>. 27/12/2017.

<http://www.mundoparapsicologico.com/area-esceptica/especial-la-iglesia-universal-una-peligrosa-secta-que-cada-dia-tiene-una-presencia-mas-poderosa-en-espana/>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

⁴⁴ http://protestantedigital.com/editorial/16586/La_IURD_no_es_evangelica.

characterise all the non-Catholic religions, pastors and services, as Protestant. Accusations follow, aimed at practices with magical objects and elements of the church (which I will analyse in the next chapter) that are more Catholic than Protestant. These allegations are similar to criticisms of Brazilian Evangelism, for example, that of Caio Fabio d'Araújo, a former pastor of the Brazilian Presbyterian Church and an independent preacher today. Caio Fabio⁴⁵ even suggests that the UCKG can attract people familiar with *Santerías* – Latin immigrants – in the U.S. rather than native-born Americans; he implies that the latter have fewer magical beliefs than people from Brazil and Mexico. The article goes further, criticizing the prosperity theology of the UCKG, emphasizing the non-recognition of the church by other denominations in Spain and, like *El País*, labelling the church an Evangelical sect:

‘Secta evangélica’ se usa en ocasiones para referirse a grupos o sectores evangélicos, generalmente con actividades negativas o potencialmente peligrosas para la sociedad y el individuo. (Free translation: ‘Evangelical sect’ is used on occasions to refer to evangelical groups or sectors, usually with activities that are negative or potentially dangerous for society and the individual).

A few months later, the church filed a lawsuit against the aforementioned website. According to the official notes of the website⁴⁶, the UCKG wanted them to change their editorial, saying it was humiliating and harmful. Their defence of the church goes further, observing that it is legally accepted and registered in Spain, and is not merely a commercial faith, as the article implied. The editorial of *Protestante Digital* says that the critique is based on accusations against the church in Brazil, and due to freedom of speech and the press, its opinions would not be changed.

The defence made by *Protestante Digital* also cites another article from *Madrilánea* (*madrilánea.com*), the student media website, which operates as a partnership between Universidad Complutense de Madrid and the local newspaper, *ABC*. This a secular website, which carries news and articles on varied themes without religious proselytising, unlike *Protestante Digital*. The article⁴⁷, ‘Una iglesia que cambia de nombre y cobra con tarjeta’ (A church that changes names and takes payment with a credit card), contains a brief interview with the pastor in charge of the service at the time, Walber Barboza. It describes the inside of the church and the practice of tithing, which includes the possibility of making payments by credit card. The journalist asked the pastor what the church does

⁴⁵ In: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D8oA9uEJFhk>.

⁴⁶ In: <http://www.laverdadahora.com/la-iurd-amenaza-protestante-digital-si-rectifica-su-editorial/>.

⁴⁷ In: <http://madrilanea.com/2013/03/01/una-iglesia-que-cambia-de-nombre-y-cobra-con-tarjeta/>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

with the money, and he replied that it was always used to further the work of God. The article also observes that Macedo has been cited in *Forbes* magazine as one of the five richest evangelical leaders around the world, and includes the FEREDE criticism about the theology of prosperity and accusations that the church is a sect. What is new is Pastor Walber Barboza's response to the last topic. He answered that their doors are always open, unlike a sect, which has secrecy. Even without the accusations of *El País* and *Protestante Digital*, the article is still critical of church practices, highlighting the UCKG's concern with money, but at least it also carries the pastor's response. However, its author still analyses the lack of theological study of the Bible in services, asking the pastor why only one passage was used – to which the pastor replied that this was so as not to confuse the faithful.

People in Spain, especially the secular, Catholics, evangelicals, other Brazilian Pentecostals⁴⁸ and even Pastor Walber Barboza, approach and understand this nomenclature differently than the great scholars of sociology. Hubert Seiwert observed (2001: 23) that the term 'sect' in colloquial language has only one thing in common with the scientific nomenclature: the designation of a religion group. The connotation of sect, however, is rather pejorative and applies to a religious minority. In academia, Max Weber, basing his conceptualisation on Ernest Troelstch, defines a sect as a religious organisation that rejects institutionalised salvation and charisma (Weber, 1978: 1024). Weber's distinction is relative to the concept of church, which is a well-established religious institution, generally with a clear and strong bureaucracy and hierarchy, which usually incorporates the dominant religious practice in a given country. Nonetheless, due to transnationalism and the previous establishment of the church in various countries following its success in Brazil, the UCKG cannot be considered a sect, since its organisation has all the bureaucratic aspects of a church, though the beginning of the church in Brazil, with its separation from the New Life church, did have the schismatic characteristic of a sect. Stark and Bainbridge (1979: 125) use the concept of a cult to refer to a religiosity that does 'not have a prior tie with the religious body of the society in question', and thus represents an independent religious tradition in society that arose through mutation or migration, which may also be important in the understanding of the UCKG.

⁴⁸ In a brief conversation with a Brazilian waiter who also is a member of the Brazilian Assemblies of God, he said that he did not like the UCKG, since, according to him, the church 'cares too much about money'.

Despite the fact that Pentecostalism was in Spain long before the arrival of the UCKG⁴⁹, most people in the country did not adopt this religious movement, taking into consideration the aforementioned statistics. However, the UCKG has the characteristics of being independent and migrant, taking into account that both characteristics are bureaucratically oriented by the church's highest commanders. In the Brazilian case, the church is clearly a huge religious institution, even though the majority are Catholic. Nonetheless, when looking at the UCKG in Madrid, it does appear to have a few characteristics of both a sect and a cult, especially the former, as a result of migration and independence. Its detractors use the word sect as observed by Seiwert, but in the sociological literature, it seems that the UCKG is more like a church or sometimes a cult than a sect, from a Weberian perspective. Émile Durkheim (1995: 41) understands the concept of church as '(...) a society whose members are united because they imagine the sacred world and its relations with the profane world in the same way, and because they translate this common representation into identical practices [...]'. Furthermore, he observes that churches can have a broad definition: they can encompass social fractions, a country, and even have no national borders or need for a leadership. This Durkheimian definition could be applied to both sects and cults, as proposed by Stark and Bainbridge. The mixture of characteristics, namely, the bureaucratic form of a church as observed by Weber, in addition to the possibility of adherence by a social minority and the non-necessity of national borders on the part of the church as observed by Durkheim, sustains my understanding of the UCKG as a church in sociological terms. This is also a view shared by other academics who have studied the UCKG (Ruuth and Rodrigues, 1999: 9).

From a broader perspective, the problems of the UCKG in Madrid have deeper implications. As the majority of its members are immigrants (more than 60% of the total members)⁵⁰, and with a religious message that incorporates many practices that differ from those of Catholicism, the church suffers from implicitly xenophobic attacks. By implicit xenophobia, I mean a lack of respect for a faith that is different from that usually accepted by Western-European, and especially Spanish, standards. The struggles of other forms of Protestantism – if we consider Pentecostalism as form of Protestantism – are usually less significant than those of Pentecostalism, exemplified here by the UCKG. If we take post-colonial considerations into the equation⁵¹, it seems that tolerance of

⁴⁹ The first ones to establish Pentecostalism in Spain were Julia and Martin Wahlslen, in Gijón, 1923 (Martín-Arroyo, 2011: 165).

⁵⁰ According to the only Spanish Bishop of the UCKG, Antonio Francisco Cantuá, the number of immigrants can increase in places where the foreign population is bigger. In: <http://www.noticiacristiana.com/sociedad/sectas/2008/10/pare-de-sufrir-se-presenta-ahora-en-espana-con-el-nombre-de-familia-unida.html>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

⁵¹ Gayatri Spivak (1988), for example.

immigrants is even lower when they come from poorer parts of the globe and have a different skin colour. The UCKG receives them with open arms, while condemning and reshaping their religious practices and social behaviour.

The church's official website in Spain already acknowledges the institutional controversies that its affiliates may suffer during the process of becoming a member:

Así también acontece en los días de hoy, muchos intentan frenar o acabar de una vez con la Obra de Dios, por medio de persecuciones, mentiras, difamaciones e incluso usando todos los medios de comunicación para intentar ver sus deseos satánicos realizados, pero todas estas cosas contribuyen para que Dios sea más y más Glorificado pues sin lucha no habría victorias, y las victorias que hemos tenido durante todos estos años muestran que esta obra que realizamos no es del hombre, sino de Dios. (Free translation: This also happens nowadays, many try to interrupt once and for all the Work of God, by means of persecutions, lies, defamations and even using the media to try to see their Satanic wishes realized, but all these things contribute to a further glorification of God because without a fight there would be no victories, and the victories that we have been having all these years show that this work which we do is not that of man, but of God.)⁵²

The controversies surrounding the UCKG – or Familia Unida – in Spain follow a pattern similar to those observed everywhere else. The transnationalism of the church is directly linked to the controversies that surround it. Paula Montero observed that Brazil does not have religious privatisation – unlike France, for example – and that religious plurality has occurred via public conflict (Montero: 2015, 13). The UCKG has learnt that all publicity is good publicity, and as Leonildo Campos (1999b: 178-181) has observed, attacks against Pentecostal denominations have been common since its beginnings on Azusa street. The same has occurred with older Pentecostal denominations in Brazil, with the UCKG being the most visible and extreme case. However, the UCKG has been able to transform these accusations into discourses of persecution against the church (Ibid.: 191). In Spain, later secularisation in comparison with other European countries left different traits, as observed by Alfonso Pérez-Agote (2012). Pérez-Agote observed a first wave of secularisation beginning in the nineteenth century, with more anticlerical characteristics. After General Franco's ascent to power, an ideal of national identity returned, which included Catholicism as the ideal religion; non-Catholic services became illegal and thus

⁵² In: <http://centrodeayudauniversal.es/quienes-somos/historia/>.

became clandestine. The second wave of secularisation occurred after the collapse of Franco's military dictatorship, and was related more to a lack of interest in religion, but this was only possible, politically speaking, in 1978, when a new Constitution made the Spanish state neutral with regard to religions (Rozenberg, 1996: 245). However, there are still disputes in the public sphere regarding the reality of secularism in Spain, with criticism by Protestant churches and other religions, since the Catholic Church continues to have political privileges in the Spain, according to Protestant churches (Delgado, 2010). The heritage of the Catholic Church also concerns other religious denominations, since it owns universities, schools and television channels (Rozenberg, 1996: 264).

The UCKG entered Spain amid a very hostile environment of rapid secularisation, Catholic dominance and non-recognition of other Protestant churches. Accusations followed the church to Spain just as they had worldwide: it is a sect, a quasi-magical faith, exploits members' faith and money, misrepresents biblical texts, and its leader, Macedo, has had problems with the legal system. The public sphere is full of information regarding the church, so changing the name of the institution to draw public attention away from these accusations is one of the strategies used by the church to avoid a first bad impression. Nevertheless, the church is used to transforming its bad reputation into a discourse of persecution. When Bishop Edir Macedo was asked why the church is still growing in Brazil despite the many scandals – which I have here tried to extend to Madrid as well – he answered that the church is like an omelette: the more you beat it, the bigger it gets (Silva, 2010: 54). Controversies regarding the church are not new in its history; direct confrontation brings it into familiar territory where the leaders are used to being. Attacks against the church in the public sphere provide a basis for a Manichean discourse of us against them, which will be shown in their theological belligerence in later chapters.

The UCKG is a borderless church of controversies; it seems that bringing polemics to new places is one of its main characteristics, even when it tries to avoid them. Its different practices regarding magical objects, blended with the prosperity gospel, provoke many Christian denominations into explicit outrage against it. In this chapter, I tried to deal with the controversies surrounding UCKG transnationalism before it arrived in Madrid. It seems to me impossible to understand the church without considering what outsiders – Protestants, Catholics and the secular – think about it. In the next chapter, I observe practices inside the church: its institutionalised routines, services and even magical elements. I consider these another characteristic of a borderless church. While it still has many magical elements and objects, the church organises itself as a modern enterprise, in dialogue with both tradition and modernity.

Chapter 5

Magical practices and religious routines: between tradition and modernity

5.1 Introduction

This chapter contains data and observations on religious practices and institutional divisions – among members and services especially – that are common in the UCKG in Madrid. I have first tried to analyse the magical elements used by its participants. These may vary depending on the will of the bishop or even of the pastor in charge of a service. However, some are more common to Brazilian Pentecostalism and also have a more substantial biblical base. I have also divided the practices according to the different kinds of prayers that I could observe during my fieldwork in Madrid, which are familiar to everyone in the church.

In this chapter, I discuss my observations regarding the stratification of church members in Madrid, which seems to be common to the church in other parts of the world. High turnover of pastors and bishops has been one of the church's strategies since its beginning, which helps to avoid schisms in the leadership while strengthening the church as an institution, making it less about the personality of its missionaries. I also comment on the assistants and regular members, including the stratification of the latter.

The last part of this chapter deals with the division of church services. Following a similar tradition worldwide of dividing them into specific subjects, the institution creates specific aims for people in need of specific blessings.

Finally, I will argue that the church blends its magical elements and objects into a routinised and very hierarchical institutional organisation. Hence, the UCKG dialogues with both magical traditionalism and modern, business-like organisations.

5.2 The magical elements of the UCKG in Madrid: entering the church

The headquarters of the church in Madrid is near the centre of the city. The street on which it is located has a huge number of people passing by daily; outside is a sign that reads 'Familia Unida' (United Family) in big letters, and 'Solo así la felicidad es completa' (only like this is happiness complete). There is usually, also, some advertisement for services outside, as well as, sometimes, a stand with the church magazine for anyone to grab free of charge. The church exterior offers no clue about what the interior is like. There is a small turn to the left inside the door, which makes it impossible for anyone who is passing to see the whole place from the outside. This is not mandatory in UCKG temples.

Near where I live in Brazil – actually around 30 meters from my door – there is a UCKG where anyone passing by can see the public space of the church, as I will soon describe. Therefore, this means of preventing people from seeing their services is not something that the church and its members care about particularly.

Inside the doors, the temple has characteristics very similar to those of the UCKG in Brazil: a very cosy environment with many chairs on two floors, with the second having fewer seats than the first, indicating a consistent number of members. There are almost no images or symbols, with a few exceptions. The most visible of these is the altar, which is raised, with a pulpit, the Ark of the Covenant, a big screen and an enormous poster of the Temple of Solomon, the UCKG headquarters in São Paulo, Brazil with gigantic letters above it forming the phrase ‘Jesucristo es el Señor’⁵³. The altar is a symbolic place on which everyone needs to place their ‘lives’ – something that is often said in services. Before a service begins, regular members place their vows, tithes and offerings on the altar. Others approach the altar and start praying alone, without any coordination or presence of the pastor. Most members stay in their chairs, talking with someone in a neighbouring seat – or sometimes not – waiting for the service to begin. When the pastor responsible for the sermon starts, he often calls people to approach the altar during specific prayers, or when handing them something symbolic. The altar is a place of worship; it represents a space of covenant with God, with all of its symbolic objects and meanings. The money from tithes and offerings always passes by the altar: most of the time members put their money on it, and sometimes the assistants and pastors who collect the money in bags – mostly without touching it, at least in front of the members – place these bags on the altar for a prayer. The only time when there is no cash on the altar is when someone pays his or her tithe with a credit card. The receipt is placed there so a blessing can occur, even with new technology.

Aside from the altar, there is a mobile pulpit close to the seats, with a table containing different symbolic material: sometimes wine, and most of the time olive oil. When someone comes into the temple, it is common for the door attendant to give you something meaningful to the church and its members; during the time that I spent in Madrid, they gave me many things, such as drops of water from the Jordan River, lentils, and even a badge blessed with a drop of their oil. On the altar, magical objects are more common: drops of must (wine) to represent the blood of Christ, perfume, oil, roses, lentils, flyers to sell future services and water from the Galilean Sea were things brought into the services as way of spiritually connecting the members of the church with each other and

⁵³ In English: Jesus Christ is Lord.

with God. Ricardo Mariano, who studied Pentecostalism in Brazil for many years, offers the following extensive list of objects used by the UCKG in Brazil: roses, oil, perfume, powder, salt, coarse salt, rue, wedding rings, scarfs, oil from the Mount of the Olives, copies of blessed banknotes, beach sand from the Galilean Sea, fluidic water, crosses, keys, combs and soap. He saw similarities with Umbanda practices, in which objects are sometimes put in food, other times in the pocket, and other times thrown into a river and so on (Mariano, 2012: 134). According to Mariano, the church recommends the use of these different objects and practices related to them in order to attract members to services that can be very routinised and sometimes tedious, since they are repeated exhaustively.

All of these objects have a symbolic meaning in the Bible. The most common, as I have mentioned, is oil, which has a vast usage mostly connected with the unction of prophets and kings (I Samuel, 10:1; 16:13; I Kings, 1:39; I Kings, 19:16), and with consecration in the Old Testament (Exodus, 30:26-29; 40:9-11 and Leviticus, 8:10). In the New Testament, oil was used as a form of unction for the sick (Mark, 6:13), and in the embalming of Jesus (Mark, 14:8; Luke, 23:56). These uses consider both the New and the Old Testaments, just as the pastors and bishops do, since consecration and the covenant with God are two of the most important parts of the UCKG's theology, especially if we consider the covenant between God and men. The passages in the New Testament reflect two uses with one purpose: healing. The first is more obvious, since it was the oil that was handled by the disciples of Jesus and put on sick people's bodies. The second also represents a form of healing, since Jesus was resurrected in a body covered with oil; this specific substance was on the body of Christ when he defeated death. Hence, the covenant with God and the overcoming of sickness has its materialistic representation in applications with the oil. The pastors and bishops are not the only ones who apply the oil; they also encourage the audience to use it on themselves and others. In a service in June 2016 (08/06/2016), with no more than 25 people present, I saw Pastor Alberto ask one of the members (who I later discovered was his own mother) to anoint him with oil, before he began to pray, and afterwards he told all the people to anoint themselves. Most of the members took the symbolic liquid from their own bags and used it on themselves. Nonetheless, a few members, who did not have this item with them, were anointed by others. The magical objects of the UCKG are for, and given to, everyone, and are a way of bringing people together in the temple.

The use of oil goes beyond consecrating the people inside the temple. It is also used to bless other objects, thus changing their status from regular and material, to spiritual and enriched. On the service of 06/06/2016, I received a badge with an image of the Ark of

the Covenant, to represent my participation and covenant with God in the service. The badge had been blessed with oil, which gave it a magical characteristic that would increase my connection – in addition to that of the other people who attended the meeting – to the Almighty, with the aim of increasing my chances of prosperity in the coming days. Removing the spiritual side from the analysis, the badge also gave members that day a feeling of exclusiveness and importance. It was a symbolic representation of a personal invitation to commune with God, pastor and other members. This is only one of many associations that one can make between the church and a moneymaking business enterprise: everyone is free to enter and leave, but when someone is inside, he/she must feel special.

The pastors and bishops do not care that the members see the oil as something bought in the supermarket. Sometimes, they apply the oil from its own container with the brand name and the label still on it. The main point of these objects, like the oil, and the rose that can cure and help in the combat against the Devil, is the blessing conducted by the leaders, and sometimes with the participation of all members gathered in the church. The spiritual meaning of these objects has biblical legitimacy, as I have shown in the case of the most common holy object used in Madrid, the oil, which has the blessing of church leaders who can transform a regular bottle of oil into something magical by the power of prayer. The church thus has magical characteristics that are different from those understood by Durkheim as magic, which does not bind people like religions and churches do. According to the French sociologist, there are no churches – which represent religion – of magic (Durkheim, 1995: 42), because the magician has a clientele with no mutual relationships; the analogy is of a sick person seeking help from a doctor. Pastor Richard himself said, more than once, that people with no trouble in their lives would never be at the church's services. The characteristics of magic and religion are both contained in the UCKG, since one of the most important aspects for new members is the new moral code that they have to follow, and for Durkheim, it is religion, not magic, that makes a moral community. As I observe next, church members are stratified. Nonetheless, the Holy Spirit is for everyone, and its benefits and spiritual empowerment bring the same capacity for everyone to fight demons, handle the magical objects of the church and fight against demonic forces. Magic therefore does have a place in the UCKG as a form of social cement working dialectically with the institution's moral codes. To receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit is material proof of the correct way to believe and behave; moreover, the miracles performed by magical services are material proof of the engagement of a member with the moral codes of the church.

5.3 Member stratification and church hierarchy

Bishop Macedo is the most recognisable figure in the UCKG. He is the only founder still in the church, and he directs it with other trusted bishops, being considered a leader by almost everyone – members and non-members – who has any kind of knowledge of the UCKG. To become a bishop, which is the highest position in the church's hierarchy, a pastor must have many years of experience and the full trust of the higher bishops. In Spain, the first bishop in charge, while I was conducting my research in 2015, was Gilberto Santana, who had worked as a missionary pastor of the church in many countries, such as Cape Verde, England, Portugal and others. According to his short biographical video, he became an assistant pastor in 1995⁵⁴, and was named bishop almost twenty years later⁵⁵, in 2014. The second bishop in charge was Portuguese, Carlos Rocha, who had previously worked for the church in Madrid.

There were at least three pastors that I saw regularly working there, and many assistant pastors working as door attendants. The former are regularly accepted by the church and receive a salary for their work; some assistants that work for the church on missions in foreign countries also receive money and sometimes a place to live from the church. The latter are in a probationary period, helping the pastors in services, and sometimes taking their place when no one else is available. I asked Pastor Alberto in an interview (29/06/2016) how a pastor is chosen and whether he has some sort of theological education. He was very open and told his own story, saying that he came to the church twenty-four years ago, to the same temple in which we were talking, and 'fell in love with God'. First, the person who wants to give more to God than just being a regular member needs to change his/her life and receive the blessings of the Holy Spirit. Afterwards, with a testimonial of God's work and a will to give more to the church, if the highly ranked members think someone can serve as an assistant, he/she can be invited for this new position. Moreover, the member must be interested and the church must grant approval for someone to become an assistant. These are the unpaid hard workers of the church, with a balance between men and women. I., the Brazilian female assistant who had been a member of the church for more than three decades, told me one day that she had to be in the church at 6:00 am and would only be able to leave at 9:00 pm, on a Sunday. Inside the church, the assistants help with prayers, counselling and taking care of the members' children. Outside, they are responsible for face-to-face merchandising, especially for distributing flyers about the next services or campaigns in the streets.

As far as I could discover, there are no female pastors in Madrid. The highest rank that a woman can reach in the UCKG is through marriage. The assistants work in the atrium –

⁵⁴ In: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZRZ5Yy-JrnY>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

⁵⁵ In: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86Go8Xv4iik>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

the lower part of the church, where the seats are – while the pastors and bishops work at the altar. The only way for a woman to work at the altar is to achieve the title of '*Dona*', which is the result of marrying a pastor or bishop, and which is summarily lost if they divorce (Teixeira, 2015: 220). The most famous *donas* can play a huge role in members' lives, especially female members, with their books and YouTube channels. They teach the correct way to behave for women of every age and marital status, and are the only women who can participate in some way at the altar. Marriage thus has a capacity to empower women in spite of the church's binary views about gender (Teixeira, 2015: 207).

Regular members form the great majority of UCKG membership, and their tasks include giving tithes to get their name in the book of tithed. There is a hierarchy among them; the most acknowledged members are those with good testimonials, regular participation and a good amount of sacrifices and tithes. Donizete Araújo and Marcos Silva (2015), who studied the UCKG in Barcelona, constructed a hierarchy of regular members, which indicated that participation is the cornerstone of a member's position. The lowest ranked members are rebels who question the church's doctrines and usually go to church because of a relative or a partner. Second are the inconstant, those who do not accept Jesus and just go to services without offering everything they can and really engaging with the church. Bishop Gilberto Santana calls them 'religious'; they just go to church as a weekly gathering or social event and not to profess a real faith. Next in the hierarchy are the faithful members, the ones who have received and remained with the Holy Spirit. They are also the ones who participate more, and it is from among these members that the higher ranked members search for new assistants.

Jaqueline Teixeira (2015: 219) divides UCKG members into three groups. First are the converted: pastors, bishops, assistants and regular members who have been in the church for a while; these are called 'servants of God'. Second are the people who have been baptised by the Holy Spirit, but who are still in a probationary period. Third are the 'people of the world', those who are searching for immediate miracles without any strong bond with the institution; they also sometimes only have contact with the church via the media. This last group treats the UCKG as an Emergency Room, which highlights its magical characteristics of serving people in need. Nonetheless, all the church sermons clearly say that someone must be with the Holy Spirit to live in grace. Hence, according to this institutional premise, the people who just go to services for a specific reason are in danger of being tempted and molested by evil entities.

Regular members are free to wear almost anything that they want. In my time spent in Madrid, I saw members with clothes that go from sports t-shirts to a suit and tie. The only

thing members (especially women) always avoid are short clothes. Clothes and makeup become more formal when a member knows that he/she will participate at the altar, usually giving testimonials for the other people inside the church, with the pastor coordinating the microphone and the topics in the testimonial. There are always regular members (and sometimes pastors) participating in outdoor services, wearing similar waistcoats or t-shirts displaying church symbols and sometimes messages. Photos of members on the streets of Madrid using their uniforms to attract new members can be easily found on Facebook (on the church page and that of Bishop Santana).

Assistants have a stricter code of dress and behaviour when they are in the church. They can attend a service without their assistant clothes, but they will be considered to be only regular members, and will participate in the audience, just like them. When an assistant is doing his/her duty, he/she must act and dress in a proper manner. The UCKG's website offers guidelines for proper dress and behaviour⁵⁶. Male assistants usually wear a formal shirt and tie, followed by long pants and shoes, all of them in sober colours (usually dark blue, white and black). Female assistants wear blue blazers or blouses with ties, according to institutional recommendations. The women also wear long skirts and pantyhose. Both genders have badges indicating who they are.

Assistants undertake important duties, which include manual work such as sweeping the church between meetings, not only as hard workers of the church but as the most important cells for spreading the religious message, by talking and helping the regular members. Hence, they need to be friendly to everyone and treat everybody nicely. As the church website says, assistants must have the Holy Spirit incarnate in them all the time and follow ten premises when talking with other people. The first is politeness, which means that an assistant should say polite things to other members, like goodnight, good evening, thank you and so on. Second is always to smile when greeting someone. The third rule also involves politeness in talking and listening to people in a proper manner, always with positive gestures and a calm way of talking. The fourth rule is always greeting people with a handshake. The fifth concerns looking people in the eyes when talking and always remembering to say his/her name during a conversation. The sixth is to have integrity in relation to the possessed; an assistant must treat them with consideration, patience and respect. The seventh and eighth are about discretion and subtlety, and both are related to conversations with members; there must be a willingness to listen to serious issues, and maintain confidentiality, secrecy and respect. Ninth is punctuality, which

⁵⁶ In: <http://sites.universal.org/obreirosuniversal/manual/>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

means that an assistant should be in the church even before a service starts. The tenth is about ways of behaving during the Holy Supper⁵⁷ and of serving people; the institution imposes ways of serving the wine and bread – with both hands holding the tray – and even extends to telling female assistants to tie their hair during ceremony.

Pastors and aspirants to this position usually dress the same. There are no women in any of these positions in Madrid, but male assistants usually wear a suit and tie, or, on the hottest days, just their formal shirt and tie in sober colours. I saw Alberto a few times wearing a shirt advertising a special service, *Señales*, but afterwards, he went back to wearing the same clothes as the pastors.

Pastors' behaviour dramatically changes when they are preaching, especially if we compare this with their informal conversations inside the church. Pastors transform themselves into soldiers of God while at the altar; spiritual warfare is serious business, especially in services with strong prayers. The first time I went to the UCKG in Atocha, it was a Friday, which is the deliverance service. After asking Pastor Lenin for permission to visit the church, I sat at the back so that I could have a panoramic view of the rituals and altar. Lenin gathered the assistants who were present that day and started to talk with them in a way that was very similar to that of a sports team coach before a match. I clearly remember him asking his assistants: 'are you ready to fight the Devil?' and transforming himself into a completely different social being. When the pastors are preaching and praying near or at the altar, their behaviour resembles that observed in the analyses and analogies of Erving Goffman (1990) in relation to the theatricality of social relations. The pastors perform in a way that the audience – the members – expect. Nonetheless, this is not a semi-conscious attitude towards the social. The pastors receive institutional recommendations to act in a belligerent way, especially when they are fighting the Devil. Pastor Alberto told me after the *Señales* that he needed to adjust his preaching to a more popular type, because there were many newcomers in the church that day. The pastors and bishops are always aware of their audience; they do a theatrical performance adapted to each cultural environment.

Bishop Gilberto Santana is not only the person in charge of the institution in Madrid, but also the highest in the Spanish church hierarchy during my first two fieldwork visits. Later, the Portuguese Bishop Carlos Rocha, who left the Spanish church command in 2017, substituted for him in my last visit to Madrid at the end of 2016. The leader has to travel around the country, especially to other big cities where the church has a substantial number of members – Barcelona and Valencia are two examples. Bishop Gilberto shares

⁵⁷ I will make further considerations about the Holy Supper in the UCKG in the chapter on the Daniel Fast.

one characteristic with many UCKG preachers who have left Brazil to follow an institutional mission in foreign countries: a poor knowledge of Spanish and other languages, and sometimes even weak Portuguese. Santana preaches in what is popularly known in Brazil as *Portunhol*, a blend of Portuguese and Spanish, which is easily understood by anyone with a good knowledge of one of the two languages. This illustrates the kind of people who have been in the UCKG for a long time: poor people from the lower classes of Brazilian society, such as Gilberto Santana, who has been a preacher for more than twenty years. The Bishop's attitudes at the altar are most belligerent, especially in comparison with Bishop Rocha. He represents the seriousness of the institution and its combat against the Devil in all of its forms. His services were usually the longest and most crowded in comparison with other preachers, because they took place in a privileged time-slot, like Sunday morning. Pastors and others often recall his sermons to illustrate their point while explaining a point of view. The only person above him in the UCKG in Spain is Bishop Macedo, who rarely visits, but Santana represents more to the other members as a leader, especially newcomers or recent converts, who have not formed strong ideas about the institutional hierarchy.

The bishop is also responsible for quality control of assistants. According to Alberto, the person in charge of assistants' exams and for regular evaluations of their knowledge is the person at the top of the church hierarchy. The bishop coordinates other pastors' sermons and their topics by meeting with them – too many times in Alberto's opinion –, but nonetheless, most prayers have a connection with the institution in general. A small number of campaigns occur everywhere in the world, but there is also space for specific themes concerning national and more local issues pertaining to the city. The bishop is also in charge of upgrading peoples' status in the hierarchy. However, as Mariano observed (2012: 63), the church had a theological university in Rio de Janeiro, which closed because giving pastors a regular education in theology made them less enthusiastic. In Madrid, as elsewhere in the world, the church does not have a specific education curriculum with diplomas for pastors; they learn by practice and personal readings of the Bible.

Santana highlights the motivation of what he calls a 'living faith'. He never tolerates people sleeping or showing a lack of interest in his sermons. He often says that if someone does not want to be there, he/she should attend another service at a different time or just go home. If someone wakes up on a Sunday morning, that person must be there with full attention. He uses a unique expression: people who go to a religious meeting without full devotion are practicing a religious faith, not the true devotional faith. Religious faith, in his understanding, means a routinised practice such as that which Catholics engage in when

they go to church once a week; it values the social gathering but has a lower interest in the word of God. Christopher Partridge (2005: 46) has observed how people affiliated with esotericism call themselves spiritual but not religious. Perhaps secularisation and religions' being used as a characteristic of fanaticism may have affected, as Partridge suggests about the esoteric, Santana's avoidance of this nomenclature. Being religious is a bad thing for UCKG members and leaders. The bishop's performance to grab everyone's attention includes lying down on the altar and screaming abruptly, which contrasts with his very calm preaching, and which has an impact similar to that of the sudden sound effects of a scary movie, giving everybody a shock of adrenaline to maintain the full attention of the crowd.

The social status of a UCKG member depends upon the accumulation of social capital by learning the church's practices, ways to behave inside and outside the church, church songs and music in addition to other institutional performances. However, having a vocation to be a good preacher and perform in the right manner also counts; nobody is asked to be a pastor unless he has a good amount of personal charisma. However, men and women have different opportunities to accumulate religious capital: the former can easily ascend through the hierarchy but only by marriage can both can achieve the highest position in the church, bishop and *dona*, respectively. Hence, the accumulation of social capital needs to be demonstrated on a daily basis by an acceptance of the church's practices and theology, though the higher ranks are not for everyone.

5.4 The structure and division of services

The UCKG is aware of the plurality of needs that a person may have nowadays. To make everything simpler, it is easier to direct prayers in some sort of social/spiritual division of services. The days are divided into different types of services, to address the members' different needs. Mondays are about financial achievements; Tuesdays are for restoration of health; Wednesdays are for biblical studies; Thursdays are for families and matrimony; Fridays are for spiritual cleansing; Saturdays are for impossible cases; and Sundays are for miracles. Nonetheless, most discussions of these themes occur on other days, especially in the testimonials, although the pastors and bishops do try to keep the focus on the specific subject of the day. There are nuances among some of the services on the same day. For example, on Fridays, although every meeting is about spiritual cleansing, the vigil is different from the regular service, since it gathers people from all the churches in Madrid. A similar thing occurs on Sunday at 10:00, when there is usually a summary of all the week's services. Nonetheless, the one at 18:00 deals regularly with cases of addiction in all of its forms. In a big UCKG church like the one in Atocha, there are many

pastors present to assist people in the five daily services (with the exception of Fridays, which has six, while there are two or three on Saturdays and Sundays). Familia Unida's website offers the following table to summarise services, which gives a general idea of what subject is usually covered by each day's services:

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Time of services available	07:00, 10:00, 14:00, 19:30, 20:00	07:00, 10:00, 19:30, 20:00	07:00, 10:00, 14:00, 19:30, 20:00	07:00, 10:00, 16:00, 20:00	07:00, 10:00, 14:00, 19:30, 20:00, 22:00	08:00, 16:00	07:30, 10:00, 15:00, 18:00, 19:30
Main subject of services	Financial Goals	Restoration of health	Biblical Study	Therapy of love	Spiritual Cleansing and the Vigil	Impossible cases and Youth	Random ⁵⁸

Services usually follow a similar course, with a biblical message or a prayer at the beginning, to cast out the evils of whatever subject the service covers. Later, the person in charge of the meeting asks for the tithe, after another biblical message. Afterwards, there is a sermon on the main theme of the service, which focuses on the transformation of members' lives and total devotion to the Almighty. Sometimes the pastors ask for more money, which is the sacrifice. Following this, there are videos on the big screen about people who have given money to the church and had their lives restored, also in relation to the theme of the day. For example, the screen can show a couple who were having a hard time financially or with respect to their relationship, but after they began to attend the church's specific service for their problem and pay their tithes, their lives changed. Another prayer starts in the final moments of the gathering, sometimes with all the members turning towards the street doors, praying for people outside the church, but most of the time it is just a final prayer asking for God's intervention in members' lives.

⁵⁸ There are specific Sunday services for miracles, cures from addictions, treatment with light and study of the Apocalypse. However, special services also occur on Sunday, and the final services of chains of prayers and campaigns are usually on this day of the week, too.

The division of services also attends to the specific needs of individuals, which makes the members more engaged in some way or other. Couples are often seen in the relationship services, while people suffering financially usually go more often to the wealth services. For example, I. told me several times that she wishes to return to Brazil. She has some sort of labour debt back from the time when she was a teacher in her home country, an amount which could be paid at any moment. She usually went to the wealth services and sat down as a regular member – without her assistant clothes – praying and making offerings, so her debt could finally be paid. A few assistants bring their wives and husbands to the relationship services as regular members, which frees them from the obligations of being an assistant. This transition from assistants to regular members usually occurs when the meetings have a low number of participants; in the most important meetings, it is very unusual to see the assistants without their clothes, abdicating their higher position in the church's hierarchy.

I have divided the discussion that follows according to the subject of the services I was able to attend in Madrid. The only exception from those mentioned in the table is Biblical Study, which is mostly a blend of all the services, usually without the exorcisms, but with sermons about demons, the restoration of wealth and health, and just a few passages of the Bible cited. There is no formal study of the Bible as in a classroom. Usually, a short passage of text (perhaps just a verse) is quoted 'not to cause confusion', as Pastor Walber Barboza would say⁵⁹.

5.4.1 Social support services

Social support is one of the most important things for the UCKG, and one of the best forms of propaganda, so that members can donate their money to 'a good cause' and spread God's work. The social service occurs in many Pentecostal churches in Brazil, and the most famous pastors, like Silas Malafaia from the Brazilian Assemblies of God, use social work to bargain with politicians. According to him⁶⁰, the churches work for the Brazilian government, since they do not receive any support for saving people from drug addiction⁶¹. The income and number of members in Brazilian Pentecostal churches give their leaders numerous possibilities for doing something big related to social work. For example, in the city of Irecê, in Bahia, Brazil, the UCKG has a 500-hectare farm called Nova Canaã (New Canaan). The idea came, according to the UCKG's website⁶², when

⁵⁹ In: <http://madrilanea.com/2013/03/01/una-iglesia-que-cambia-de-nombre-y-cobra-con-tarjeta/>.

⁶⁰ In: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Myb0yUHdi14>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

⁶¹ He strategically omits the absence of taxes with regard to the churches in Brazil, which is the way that the State aids them financially.

⁶² In: <http://blogs.universal.org/bispomacedo/2010/08/16/fazenda-nova-canaa/>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

Bishop Macedo saw a television programme, on his own TV channel in Brazil, about poor children who were starving because of the absence of rain. Today the project assists more than seven hundred children with its schools. It also gives both adults and children health care, including access to dentistry and doctors, and offers adults the opportunity to work.

There are fewer options for social engagement in Madrid than in Brazil. The church has less money, because it has fewer members, who are its real financial supporters. No New Canaan is possible in Madrid. The most common kind of social services are donations of non-perishable food, for people who need it, and the fight against drug and alcohol addiction. The members themselves are usually the beneficiaries of these services, but there are people from outside as well. In front of the church, there is a box where any passers-by can leave non-perishable food to be donated to people in need. This social support service, besides helping people in general, also illustrates the best means of interaction between members of the church and outsiders, or at least it used for this purpose. I saw members from other religions in those services. There is more discussion of the interaction between the church and other religions later, in the seventh chapter.

Services on Sunday afternoons for people who have addiction problems are another way of collaborating with social services in the community. Sometimes people attending other church services are specifically invited to attend this meeting. Bishop Gilberto Santana, for example, invited a man in a crowded Sunday morning service to deal with his struggle with addiction to alcohol in the service later that day. In the bishop's words, his father was an alcoholic as well, and the same God that saved his father was going to save that man. For full salvation from drug addiction, the man needed to be present in the specific service for the *cura de las adicciones*, or cure of addictions. This service has the characteristic of healing by prayer and participation. The testimonials about the life of a member with an addiction, and how the struggle against this 'devil' is difficult, is reminiscent of Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, though the latter has characteristics that are more secular. The pastor's coordination, miracles and occasional exorcisms of evil entities that cause the addiction are not present in A. A. meetings. Nonetheless, sharing their problems and helping others by telling their experience is a similar strategy in the treatment of the religious group therapy of the UCKG.

The hard-core treatment of addicts occurs at the altar. I saw a few of these live, but after an empty afternoon service a young aspiring pastor named Michael showed me the most interesting one. I was walking away from the service when he called me, holding out his cell phone, and asking me to watch it. On the video, another aspiring pastor, Carlos, had

cocaine in a small bag and was interviewing a middle-aged man, asking him about his feelings about the drug. The man said that he wanted to take a dose of the drug very much. After a strong prayer, casting out the evil of addiction, the man was declared free of his addiction. Carlos gave the small bag of cocaine to the man, who refused it in disgust. Afterwards, the aspiring pastor asked the man if he wanted to take more drugs, to which the latter replied: 'not now'. Carlos corrected the man: 'no, you are never going to take drugs again', making the man repeat this phrase loudly. The emphasis on the man's total cure differs from the A.A. way of talking about the cure, but has a similar systematic treatment. Continual meetings with other addicts and testimonials about past and new lives operate as a form of therapy for people who have had addictions in the past, both in the UCKG and in A.A. The life-long treatment is their presence in the church and the correct way of behaving, which includes avoiding social relationships that have alcohol or any other drugs involved. To become free from addiction in A.A. is to take one day at a time, while in the UCKG it is to spend every day at church. What is different is the spiritual cause of addiction and especially its symbolic disruption by exorcism, which casts out the demonic forces responsible for the addiction.

5.4.2 Restoration of health services

Health services are common in the UCKG, and miracles with regard to the cure of diseases are not limited only to this service; the Holy Spirit can act at any time. The best example of a health service that I saw was led by Pastor Alberto (14/06/2016). During this service, the pastor first asked everyone with a health condition to approach the altar. Afterwards, he started to pray directly to almost every possible problem: pain, cancers, depression and so on. He also asked every person to put his or her hands on the part of the body where the problems were. Of the eleven people that approached the altar for this specific prayer, around five or six said that they felt better after the prayer. One of them, an old man, said that he was better for the time being. Alberto quickly corrected him by saying that he was free for good from the spirit of illness, making the member repeat that he was free. Intolerance towards disease is a characteristic similar to that observed in the cure of addictions. The cure comes from the individual demanding it from God.

Health services usually provide the most impressive cures among people struggling for years with their problems. However, it is not uncommon for a person to say that the problem remains unchanged, especially church neophytes. The answer for the absence of miracles in a member's life is usually the same: that person must pray more to receive more. The church does not advocate against modern medicine, as evident by Alberto's

telling the people in the crowd that they should pray for their doctors (21/06/2016), but it does say that there is no cure that is complete without God. This is similar to Pastor Maximiliano's assumption regarding the cure of addictions (which is also a disease): you can find and medicate someone's problem, but if you do not take the demon that is causing it out of the person, he/she will never be completely cured.

It is also common in some of the health services for assistants to put on a doctor's coat, similar to the approach of Brazilian Pastor David Miranda, who emphasised his healing powers by sometimes dressing in a similar way. As a Pentecostal from the second wave of Brazilian Pentecostalism, Miranda's focus on spiritual healing was enormous. In a similar manner, the UCKG has not abandoned its historical roots in older denominations in the symbolic struggle for members.

5.4.3 Group services

Specific gatherings for groups are common in the church as well. Sometimes these occur in private rooms inside the temple, while other times they occur where the regular meetings happen, and there are gatherings in other temples of the UCKG in Madrid as well. In fact, there are at least ten more temples in the city, most of them much smaller than the headquarters in Atocha. The separation of the meetings by groups is an important tool for regulating members' lives according to the institutional message, and to what is expected from them in terms of their social roles. It was not possible to go to meetings specifically for women and youth – because of my age and gender – but the propaganda and specific preaching for these groups can give a general idea.

There are gatherings just for men, which occur once a month. These usually reinforce the role of the man as the head of the family, in charge of its wealth. Nonetheless, there are messages about common problems seen as moral issues for the denominations: do not engage in any kind of addictive practices, and be a role model, following all the church's recommendations. Men's groups divide the behaviours of single and married men, with regard to morality, religious practices and prosperity. Both should have a patriarchal role, and be hard working to provide for themselves and their families, if they are married. When someone is single, the moral codes include avoiding nightclubs, gambling, drinking, drugs and casual sex, and focusing on work, church services and trying to meet a woman with a similar morality. The married man should be faithful to his wife, be a good and present father to his children, and not let temptations of the flesh – like thinking about or looking at other women – affect him.

This is no different from what the church expects from women, who represent around 70% of members of the church in Madrid (Rodrigues and Silva, 2015: 1382), or a little

less than that by my observations of the services. They should respect their husbands, if they have one, or behave with abstinence in relation to sex if single. There is a fair number of single mothers who become members, but after conversion, they should become abstinent and try to meet someone, ideally from the church, with whom to engage in a monogamous relationship.

The Godllywood programme is directed at the women of the church. Unfortunately, as a man, I was not allowed to participate in these services. However, this programme's website⁶³ tells us what goes on there. There are specific meetings for young girls between six and fourteen years old, called Godllywood Girls, to help their character formation in connection with God, and to help them deal with their parents and girls of their age, by forging healthier relationships. There also groups that give directions to single mothers on how to raise children alone, and perhaps most importantly, how to overcome their shame of being single in a very sexist environment.

The division of specific groups dealing with single issues is important in the creation of feelings of togetherness, inasmuch as people share problems with others who have similar issues to overcome, and who come from a similar social background. It not only helps to create a communitarian aspect among members, but also to make the environment of the services more strictly related to a certain aspect of a person's life.

5.4.4 Strong prayers and deliverance services

The scheduling of services on particular days also includes UCKG demonology. I only saw exorcisms on Friday nights⁶⁴, a day reserved for the strong prayer service or *culto de oración fuerte*, which is a deliverance service. On this day, strong prayers begin right at the beginning of the service, with ecstasy and louder words from the members and the priest in charge. I saw different types of services on Fridays. At the end of 2015, the temple had a big mantle, which was spiritually enriched by being at the altar. People were supposed to touch it to expel demonic forces. In the time I spent in Madrid in 2016, the praying took place closer to the altar, but with no mantle. Fridays also attract fewer people than other meetings, such as *Terapia del Amor* (Love Therapy), for example, which takes place on Thursdays. Most people who go to church on Friday nights are used to exorcisms, which are quite peculiar and even strange to someone not used to it. The prayers are more powerful and more emotional in comparison with other days. The exorcism – which I shall discuss specifically in later chapters – occurs at the beginning of the service, when the first and most powerful prayer starts. Afterwards, there is another

⁶³ <http://www.godllywood.com/br/>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

⁶⁴ With the exception of the *Señales* special service, on a Sunday.

round of strong prayers, and finally the vigil, in which people are cleansed of evil entities, and in which exorcisms are possibly performed, also.

The vigil has the characteristic of a gathering all the people of the UCKG – or Familia Unida – in Madrid. According to Pastor Alberto, this is the most important service, in which people can commune with almost every member of the church. It can be defined as a form of social substitution for Friday night socialisation, in which the streets, bars and nightclubs of Madrid are full of people. It seems to be wise – and this happens in every UCKG all around the world – to gather as many people of the church together as possible on Friday nights, in order to replace secular socialisation. It is not rare in Brazil for UCKG members to be out on the streets praying until late at night. This does not happen in Madrid, perhaps because of the size of the city and especially because of the number of people gathered inside the church.

5.4.5 Restoration of Wealth services

The monthly *Familia Unida* magazine refers to the services offered on Mondays as Financial Achievements. It is very common to see people leaving work and going straight to the church to get a financial boost in their lives. This service starts with a strong prayer calling all the evil spirits who are blocking prosperity in the members' lives. Afterwards, the pastor in charge usually gives a sermon connecting members' financial lives to passages of the Bible, especially those that focus on sacrifice and prosperous figures such as Solomon, the wealthiest character in the Bible. This service also has a more substantial message concerning tithes. The God of the UCKG is wealthy, but if someone wants his attention and benefits, he/she must give tithes, make offerings and undergo sacrifices.

The testimonial of a particular couple (20/06/2016) represents exactly the notion of a fair God as it appears in prosperity theology. A fair God always pays back the people who make sacrifices and follow his moral codes. The couple did not have any kind of regular job when the wife started to visit the church – wives are usually the first ones to convert. They were selling food on the streets of Madrid, without knowing how the next day would be. After beginning to visit the UCKG, the wife improved her life in many aspects – her health, her relationship with her husband and children – and started talking about the church with her family. The husband started to go to church, but was not giving everything he could, especially in terms of money offerings. His tithes were usually about 60 to 70 euros per month, according to him. Things got better for him with this small sacrifice, but it was not enough. He started to believe more and give more money to the church, arriving at almost one thousand euros in one month. On the big screen, there were images of the

couple with their new jobs on a trip to a resort, with all costs paid by the company for which they worked. Their donations had increased, and they understood that it was their own responsibility to take action towards God, by making a true sacrifice.

Services for members' financial lives often have the characteristics of a business meeting. At one of these meetings, I received a badge with the Ark of the Covenant on it, and a biblical passage saying: 'Then put in the ark the tablets of the covenant law, which I will give you' (Exodus, 25:16). The badge was a symbolic representation of an executive going to a meeting, and Pastor Richard said in one of his Monday sermons that from the altar he did not see people but businesspersons. To be a businessperson, one must act like one, and that requires taking risks and especially action with regard to entrepreneurship. Motivation is always a feature of the services, but when the leaders talk about wealth, this is highlighted even further. Acting according to the message received is what UCKG members do to please God. This is the ultimate faith: doing the things that God asks, according to the pastors and bishops, without questioning.

5.4.6 Relationship services: Love Therapy

The *Terapia del Amor* – Love Therapy – is the best example of relationship service that the UCKG provides. This service occurs on Thursday nights and is attended by both single and married members. The meeting has a softer environment than those engaged in spiritual warfare. Its name is well chosen, sometimes giving a feeling more of group therapy inside the temple – via the leadership of the pastor – than of a Pentecostal gathering. I never saw any demonic possessions or strong prayers with spiritual manifestations in these meetings. The main theme is teaching by example, especially from the pastor's own relationship with his wife and the testimonials of other couples.

The ideal partner for a UCKG member is someone from inside the church, a man or a woman of God. Therefore, since every aspect of the church's message has a connection to an action and a behaviour that most attends to God's will, preaching needs to focus on a spiritually and materially solid basis for enabling someone to marry. Pastor Lenin was in charge of the *Terapia del Amor* services, with the help of assistants and especially his wife Victoria. She was the one in charge of the women's meetings, and they both gave special prayers and blessings for the people in the relationship services. Lenin said one night that when he was a boy of around 16 or 17 years of age, he wanted to go on a date with a girl. When he asked the pastor about it, the reply was that he had a year to marry the girl. Lenin became terrified at such responsibility and put aside his feelings for the girl. Now he preaches a similar message: one needs to have a well-developed material life before entering a relationship. The UCKG preaches that relationships should always be

steady, and be aimed at real commitment and plans for marriage. When a person wants to find a good match, he/she needs to be spiritually fulfilled with God, purified emotionally, and really committed to the beliefs of the church. Lenin observed that a person needs purification, so God can trust him/her with another person enriched with the Holy Spirit. Nonetheless, this does not always happen, since many people have partners who are not members, some of whom do accompany them to church, however. I could see vastly discrepant behaviours among couples in the church, such as when one woman was in tremendous ecstasy while praying, and her boyfriend looked bored and stayed seated throughout the service.

Marriage engagements also happened exclusively in the Love Therapy services, and I was able to observe this on 19/06/2016. The pastor called the couple from the audience, followed by an assistant who gave the woman a bouquet of flowers. Lenin explained that an engagement is a chance for a couple to get to know each other before marriage. He pointed out that divorces are something exceptional, extreme cases that only violence – physical or psychological – and a complete absence of affinity could justify. According to him, God does not want people to divorce; he used the example of the tabernacle door to show people that like marriage, they both have only one door. Engagement is therefore the phase during which a couple can learn about the other's habits, future expectations, plans and so on. Sex is still taboo in the official discourse; it must be saved for after marriage. Nevertheless, since the UCKG is a very young church, the assimilation of the discourse is more important than past behaviour. The engaged woman gave a testimonial a few days later, in which she explained that one of the reasons that she entered the church was to learn how to deal with a former relationship. Absorbing the discourse is renewing the covenant with God, and adopting new behaviours is the only way to overcome past problems.

5.4.7 Outside the temple: merchandise and services

Outdoor services usually bring people inside the church. This is perhaps the greatest difference, as mentioned by Elton de Souza (2010, p. 268), between the Brazilian Neo-Pentecostal churches and those of the United States. Every movement towards merchandising and propaganda outside the church – including media – has the ultimate aim of bringing people inside its temple.

During my time in Madrid, I saw the assistant I. giving flyers for the next service to people crossing Santa Maria de la Cabeza street, where the church is located. The UCKG's assistants are not the only ones recruiting new members in the streets next to the church. A few blocks away, Jehovah's Witnesses had a stand of books in many different

languages that were being given to passers-by. I received – free of charge – one of their books in Portuguese, and I. even told me one day that they followed her while trying to talk about God. She said that she did not listen to them because of her very busy life and that she did not like their approach. According to her, they bother people too much with their message, while in the UCKG people are welcome to join or leave at any time. I have to say that no Jehovah's Witness bothered me at any time, at least in the centre of Madrid. However, it is very common for them to knock on doors to promote their religious message, something that members of the UCKG almost never do, it not being an institutional recommendation.

On Saturday mornings, the most assiduous members spread the word of God outside the church as well, by what they call evangelisation. Their approach is calm and friendly, with respect for people who do not want to hear about their gospel. They usually have hi-vis uniforms, similar to traffic officers, and walk in small groups around the streets, praying for those in need and telling people to visit the church for one of their meetings. Although the bishop and pastors also take part in these outdoor services, we cannot consider them regular services but rather a way to spread the church's message and testimonials in order to bring more people to the church. As in any crowded service, when the number of people is high in an outside service, church members, especially assistants and pastors, take photos with the aim of posting them on social media – the Facebook pages of the church and of Bishop Gilberto Santana are the most common – to give them more material for propaganda. After the evangelisation outside the church, they all gather inside the church for a crowded service, preached by the bishop.

Church services are organised objectively, following guidelines in relation to what is preached and how beliefs are disseminated. Members should be in as many services as possible; however, if a member has a specific need, he/she should be in the appropriate service or prayer chain. For every specific need, there is a specific solution. While the traditional magic remains in the church's services, the division and the hierarchy that underlie its organisation show a very modern and business-like kind of enterprise. There is not only space, but also a need for both in the UCKG.

5.5 Between re-enchantment and bureaucracy: the 'return' of magic

The UCKG in Madrid follows a different path from Protestantism and the disenchantment of the world as proposed by Weber. The rationalisation of Puritanical Protestantism would bring, in contrast to Catholicism and its traditionalism, a disenchantment of the world that would lead not only to practices connected with the birth of Capitalism, but also to a reduction of magic and meaning in these religions (Pierucci, 2005). The further

development of Protestantism and the alignment of its followers with scientific society, as proposed by Robert K. Merton (2013: 40-47), gave this kind of religiosity a fundamental role in the development of Modernity.

However, with the rise of Pentecostalism, as the example of the UCKG organisation shows, there is a re-signification of this kind of interpretation of the world. While the progressive decay of magic and the rise of secularism were present in Puritanical Protestantism, in the Pentecostal movement it was quite the opposite. The magic 'returns' to Christianity, since the powers of the symbolic elements of the Bible are a way not only to dialogue with Christian traditionalism from the time of the scriptures, but also a method of bringing together the people who believe in magical traditionalism and were not disenchanted in the first place. This is the reason why I have put quotation marks around 'returns'. Jean Baudrillard observed academia's problem in understanding what the masses in general think about religion:

They have never been affected by the Idea of God, which was a matter for the clergy, nor by anguish over sin and personal salvation. What they have retained is the enchantment of saints and martyrs; the last judgment; the Dance of Death; sorcery; the ceremony and spectacle of the Church; the immanence ritual – the contrast to the transcendence of the Idea. (Baudrillard, 1983: 7).

The church deals with this situation by using its own magical objects and elements to capture the imagination of its members. It is, after all, a church for everyone. Nonetheless, despite these seemingly pre-modern elements, the traits of modernity remain not only in the hierarchy and in the possibility of ascending in accordance with its own institutional rules. They exist especially in the division of services, and in the obsession of a complete person in all the separate aspects of life: health, wealth and family.

The UCKG in Madrid blends the magical characteristics of performing a specific service or miracle for a specific need and using blessed elements or objects. However, the way in which these needs are met is organised in a business-like manner with a clear hierarchy and division that is only found in modern institutions. This dialogue between tradition and modernity is present in many of the church's practices, though in the UCKG the balance swings more to the latter than to the former. The institutionalisation of a routinised and organised magic (Mariano, 2012: 57) follows institutional guidelines in the effort to meet members' needs. Therefore, magic returns to Christianity in bureaucratic form, having the functions of the miraculous and powerful combined with institutional coordination.

In this chapter, I have tried to analyse the magical elements, hierarchy and division of services of the UCKG in Madrid. The key theme here is that despite the rationality of the organisation itself (which was also explained in the previous chapter while observing the church's strategies for spreading itself worldwide), the church still has relevant magical practices. In the next chapter, my concern will be with the theological aspects of the church, which are important to observe in the context of the UCKG and what it has to offer its members with respect to their social-economic conditions.

Chapter 6

The UCKG's prosperity theology: restoring the covenant and the ethics of investment

6.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the theological premises of the UCKG and its prosperity theology. First, I analyse common concepts of Christianity and their interpretation specifically by the leader of the church and main theologian, Bishop Edir Macedo. Observations about the concepts of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit will be present here as well. Furthermore, in the observations about the Holy Spirit, I have tried to make observations regarding the pneumatology of the UCKG, since academics often acknowledge the studies of the theologian Paul Tillich on this theme (pneumatology) and Pentecostalism in general.

Another main theme is the church's focus regarding the restoration of the covenant with God, which is very important in UCKG's theological perspective of achieving material benefits in a spiritual way. However, and this another theme present here, the method of achieving these benefits is as important as the restoration of the covenant. Faith, the living God and sacrifice are themes that are present in the church's sermons. These themes also raise considerations attuned to Pentecostalism in academia that go further than theology researchers do. Faith in the living God has created the attitude that members should receive material benefits from being in the church, and it is also a way of further restoring the covenant between men and the Almighty.

Sacrifice, another important aspect of church theology, is here analysed following the propositions of Melinda Cooper (2008) and Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff (2012). While the earlier wave of Protestantism, as Max Weber proposed, is concerned with an ethic of labour and inner-worldly asceticism, the characteristic of sacrifice has more to do with a way of bargaining with the spiritual realm and especially with a form of speculative capitalism. Furthermore, the interpretation that giving leads to re-earning profit becomes internalised in members as a more widespread search for profit, which aligns the church's discourse with the neoliberal society of today.

6.2 God, the Holy Spirit and Christ: the Trinitarianism of the UCKG

We need to take into consideration, as a point of departure, that the UCKG is a fairly new church, and that pastors rarely have any kind of academic education in theology⁶⁵. It is almost impossible to expect a well-developed academic theology of the church; there is no Aquinas or Augustine in the UCKG. The main theology of the UCKG is, as matter of fact, drawn from the simplicity of Macedo's books; it is a theology for everyone, aimed at the average person in Brazil and, later, around the world. José Cabral was the official head theologian of the church until his death in 2002. Nonetheless, as observed by Rodrigues and Ruuth (1999: 39), Macedo was always commanding the church's theology. The impact of Macedo's books on Brazilian society was tremendous, especially if one considers that Catholics were a vast majority in the country. The church's best-seller is *Orixas, Guias e Caboclos*, originally released in 1987, whose sales have surpassed 3 million copies⁶⁶ in a country where almost half of the population does not read books⁶⁷. In his books, Macedo does not say from where he takes his theological inspirations, but there are similarities between his exegetic *leitmotiv* and that of American televangelist preachers and theological authors such as Oral Roberts, T. L. Osborn, Peter Wagner and Kenneth Hagin (Mariano, 2012: 31, 40).

Since my research is about the sociological aspects of the UCKG, especially in Madrid, with a few exceptions, I am not going to focus much on the classical theological exercise of understanding what the religious concepts mean for the church. The main goal is to observe in this chapter what is internalised as a discourse by its practitioners to transform their lives. Nonetheless, it seems that a brief explanation would help those not very familiar with the official religious message.

The UCKG shares with other Christian churches and sects the interpretation of the classical characteristics of the divine, such as omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience, eternity, immutability, perfection and sanctity (Rodrigues and Ruuth, 1999: 44-45). The UCKG also believes in the Trinitarian aspect of God; the God-the-Father, God-the-Son and God-the-Holy Spirit (Macedo, 1992: 12). The first of these is the creator and a

⁶⁵ In most of Bishop Macedo's books, the last page is about his academic titles in Theology. In the official page of his biography at the UCKG's website, the same titles are shown, with more details. According to both, Macedo has two PhDs (Divinity and Theology) and an honorary PhD in Christian Philosophy (Macedo, 2001; 2005; 2007; 2008). No institutions from where he earned his titles are given, with exception of the Federación de Entidades Religiosas Evangélicas de España, where he allegedly completed his master's. In: <http://www.universal.org/institucional/historia-do-bispo-macedo.html>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

⁶⁶ In: <http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/cotidiano/ult95u115122.shtml>. The data is from 2005. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

⁶⁷ In: <http://cultura.estadao.com.br/blogs/babel/44-da-populacao-brasileira-nao-le-e-30-nunca-comprou-um-livro-aponta-pesquisa-retratos-da-leitura/>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

benevolent entity with almost paternalistic characteristics; the second is the saviour and born of the Virgin Mary by the work of the Holy Spirit. The UCKG acknowledges and uses Jesus a lot, especially in exorcisms, by employing the expression 'in the name of Jesus' to cast the demons out, which occurs at the end of most of their prayers – something also preached by Kenneth Hagin (2010)⁶⁸. The third aspect of the trinity is perhaps more visible in Pentecostalism, having all the attributes of the Creator and Son (Macedo, 1992: 22), which are the other two parts of the trinity. The Holy Spirit is responsible for the spiritual gifts received by members, namely, the gifts of Revelation (knowledge, wisdom and discernment between good and evil spirits), Power (healing, performing miracles and possessing supernatural faith) and Inspiration (which gives the gifts of glossolalia, the capacity to interpret glossolalia and the ability to prophesy) (Ruuth and Rodrigues, 1999: 47-48).

The Trinitarian God is used often by both members and pastors without too much concern about the theological divisions. A person can say that God healed her, or the Holy Spirit, or Jesus, since in essence they are all the same. For many, the distinction does not make much sense. Nonetheless, being empowered by the Holy Spirit through receiving and being baptised by It, is very present in the services.

6.3 Materialism and pneumatology: the Holy Spirit for everyone

There are different denominations, churches, social environments and perspectives in which Pentecostalism grows. The theologian Amos Young observes that it can be an innocuous exercise to ask for the theological methodology of this movement as a whole (Yong, 2015: 7). Nonetheless, we can perceive the presence of a commonality in most Pentecostal denominations. The presence of the Holy Spirit, as an active being who is able to materialise spiritual gifts, giving members the chance to experience the action of a living God, is also present in the UCKG, as already mentioned. Thus, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is central to Pentecostalism, as it is to the systematic theology of Paul Tillich, whose focus on the Holy Spirit is derived from Schleiermacher (Vondey, 2015: 30) and highlights the pneumatology – or theological concern with the Holy Spirit – characteristically shared by Tillich and the Pentecostals. To understand the everyday theology of the Pentecostal movement, one must acknowledge the experience of the Holy Spirit and its material blessings in the specific case of the UCKG. A young pastor, Maximiliano, told me that only by the baptism of the Holy Spirit could a person be a tool for doing God's work. The pneumatology of the UCKG is not limited to empirical

⁶⁸ Originally released in 1979.

experiences, but must be visible in the lives of members who have received spiritual empowerment.

A theology of restoration of members' lives needs a radical spirituality that proves itself in the simplest manner. The benefits of the Holy Spirit must not only be visible; they must be achievable. The socioeconomic environment in which the UCKG has grown, and still grows, displays the revelatory side of theology and relating revelation to something similar to the correlational method proposed by Paul Tillich (1972: 10) in his systematic theology. Sermons must be adapted to socially formulated questions. Bishop Edir Macedo understood that if he wanted to make his church global, it should be able to adapt to the issues of his clientele – usually (but not only) poor people in despair, and in the case of Madrid, mostly immigrants. This does not mean that the message is only for poor and uneducated people. The expansion of this church worldwide in the past few decades indicates, at least on some level, that the UCKG's theological approach makes sense of the issues raised by a large number of people. In Madrid, for example, I saw the testimonial of a Spanish member with three noble titles (duke, count and marquis) who is a professor in a famous university in the city. This indicates that members are not only illiterate, uneducated and poor people. A message for everyone also means for those at the top; however, it is rare to find other academic members.

As I pointed out in the introduction to this chapter, American Charismatic Pentecostal Leaders had a huge influence, especially since the 1960s, on the foundation of UCKG's prosperity theology, such as its preaching about health and wealth. During the late 1970s, Brazilian society experienced a wave of nationalism under the military dictatorship, which lasted from 1964 to 1985. The slogan 'Brazil, love it or leave it' was the motto of the authoritarian military government ruling the country. Apart from this lack of democracy, there was a huge expectation of economic growth, especially in the 1970s, that reinforced the idea of 'a country of the future'. Brazil was still underdeveloped, but the sense of a good future was generally present in people's lives, giving Brazilian citizens possibilities to imagine a better future for themselves. American Pentecostal leaders preached in tune with the idea of the self-made man, who values hard work and the possibility of ascending the social hierarchy through an individualistic ethic. By this time, the religious message of these preachers had started to gain traction in Brazilian Pentecostalism.

Before founding the UCKG, Edir Macedo was a member of the Nova Vida (New Life) church. He joined this Pentecostal church led by the Canadian Pentecostal leader Robert McAlister after his sister became ill and the church miraculously cured her. Macedo was a Kardecist before his conversion to Pentecostalism. Nevertheless, the Nova Vida church

focused on the middle and upper classes of Rio de Janeiro, a city with a historical background of great inequalities of wealth and race. Rio de Janeiro was a port city, where many slaves were brought to Brazil before going to the countryside to work on plantations or in mineral extraction. After the abolition of slavery, in 1888, the Brazilian government did not put in place any inclusive policies to integrate former slaves in society. Rio de Janeiro became a huge 'depository' of former slaves, who were displaced from the central zones of cities to the peripheries and to the favelas⁶⁹, after many decades of disastrous social policies. The city never recovered from the huge social gap between the 'asphalt' and the 'hills'⁷⁰. McAlister was more concerned with the former, while Macedo wanted to deliver the gospel to everyone. The schism between Macedo and other members of the Nova Vida church created a way not only to launch his own religious enterprise, but also to adapt to Brazilian dilemmas during that period.

The church's first temple, at a chapel in an inactive funeral parlour on the outskirts of Rio de Janeiro, has much to do with the prosperity theology preached by the church. The places in which the church installs itself are usually well planned, as I have observed already. Furthermore, it chooses crowded places with a large number of potential members, mostly black and poor people. The promise of material benefits through faith and sacrifice is the most well-known characteristic of prosperity theology. Hence, it seems plausible to search for people in need of these benefits.

Three aspects of the UCKG's prosperity theology are relevant to the understanding of this religious discourse. First is the covenant with God; second is the meaning of faith for the members; and third and perhaps most importantly is the biblical interpretation regarding sacrifice. The construction of the UCKG's main building today, the Temple of Solomon, was inspired by the biblical figure of King Solomon, who was the richest person alive in his time, according to a video played in a service at the church (13/07/2016), because he was the one who sacrificed the most (I Kings, 8: 63). The video compared Solomon with the five hundred wealthiest people today. According to this comparison, the old Hebrew king had five times more money than today's richest people did.

I shall now divide the discussion into three sections as follows: one based on books written by Bishop Macedo himself, one related to articles from the church's official website and one about data collected from the fieldwork done in Madrid. Afterwards, I shall try to observe how the institutional discourse goes from the top down in the church's hierarchy.

⁶⁹ Shantytowns or slums occupied by the poor people of the city, especially during the 20th century.

⁷⁰ A common saying that highlights the geographical difference between the middle and higher classes, who live on asphalt streets, and the lower classes, who live in favelas that are often on the hillsides, and are usually not paved).

A recurrent and significant theme is that most of these aspects are grounded in the Old Testament, a characteristic similarly found in early Pentecostalism.

6.3.2 Restoring the pact: a covenant with God

The covenant with God is the first step towards someone's salvation, according to the church. Most of my comments regarding this matter are taken from Macedo's book (2000) *A Aliança com Deus*⁷¹. On the book's cover, there is an image of a menorah, an ancient candleholder used by the Jews in the Torah. The UCKG website⁷² says that the origins of the menorah date from when God gave Moses the order to build the tabernacle,⁷³ and its light symbolises the presence of God among the people. The book has a huge focus on the Old Testament; its two hundred pages are divided into thirteen chapters, in which only the last chapter concerns Jesus Christ. All the other chapters are about the covenant with God by figures from the Old Testament, and the Christian saviour is cited, but not as much as the others. Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen (2015: 23) proposes that the centre of Pentecostal spirituality is Jesus Christ and his relation to the Holy Spirit. Jesus is seen in the official theology of the UCKG as a member of the trinity and is important as the ultimate sacrifice. The name of Christ is often used by the church in their practices as previously mentioned. Nonetheless, the stories of the Old Testament and even characters from the older books of the Bible are more frequently cited than those from the New Testament, which seems to be a problem in Kärkkäinen's analysis. The obvious reason is probably because Jesus and his followers were poor, and examples of prosperity and success are easier to find in the kings and prophets of the Old Testament than in the apostles, who were poor. Nonetheless, the church preaches quite a lot on the decay of humanity. The biblical examples come from Adam and Eve, Jewish history in the Old Testament and even from Lucifer, who fell from heaven (Ruuth and Rodrigues, 1999: 41). Thus, for the UCKG, humanity had a wealthier and more peaceful past than present, which differs from the idea of progress in the Modern Era.

Bishop Macedo observed that all the covenants between men and God began with Adam. The first covenant occurred before Adam sinned and the second afterwards. God demanded from Adam just obedience to his orders and, in exchange, the first biblical man would have eternal life and eternal peace (Macedo, 2005a: 31; Genesis, 2: 15-17). Nevertheless, after Eve tempted him and the forbidden fruit was eaten, God had to sacrifice an animal to cover Adam and Eve's nudity. This sacrifice symbolises God's own

⁷¹ I am using the third edition from 2005.

⁷² <http://www.universal.org/noticia/2014/02/15/conheca-o-significado-da-menora-o-famoso-candelabro-judaico-28816.html>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

⁷³ The holy Jewish place where the Ark of the Covenant was.

blood, Jesus Christ (Macedo, 2005a: 32), since humankind was doomed and needed a saviour, who would come thousands of years later. Adam's contempt for God's commandment caused the release of demonic forces to tempt humans in the world.

The sin of Adam has followed humankind throughout its history. Nonetheless, the difference between the UCKG's understanding in comparison to many other Christian denominations, is that the pact can be restored. Macedo observes that a covenant with God creates a symbiosis between men and God. Everything that belongs to God becomes shared with men and vice-versa (Ibid.: 28). Those who obey God are those who obtain success even in the face of the hardest difficulties, and those who fail are those who, even with the best chances, have problems because of their disobedience. Therefore, the pact is still available to everyone; the mission of the church is to make people – misguided Christians and gentiles – aware of it. However, after they become aware of this message of good news about the possibility of the restoration of their covenant with God, a person who wishes to please God must next understand other theological aspects regarding beliefs and practices, which should help on the path towards prosperity.

The pact between a member and God must be restored by one's own will. The demons, miseries, diseases and other symptoms of a sinful and disgraceful life all happen because a person is not, of their own free will, on a path towards God. There are people who do not know the message and this is the main reason why the church must spread itself wherever possible. Nonetheless, after receiving the message, an individual must act of his/her own will to receive and keep receiving the blessings. Someone who does not constantly renew his or her pact with God will be open to the actions of evil entities. Hence, the beginning of all troubles in someone's life starts when he/she does not know about the covenant between men and God or makes a rational choice to dismiss all His promises, especially those about the protection from evil or about the material benefits in life. The guilt of Adam and Eve lies in their disobedience, and it follows all people who do not want to restore the pact with God. The individual is to blame, but he/she also has the capacity to overcome this guilt. The message of the church preaches a self-changing status much in tune with an individualistic society, which understands success and failure as related to someone's own action.

The act of making a new covenant with God enables an individual to enter into His reign and instantaneously receive the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Rodrigues and Ruuth (1999: 48) call this characteristic 'immediacy'; deliverance from evil and forgiveness occur at the same moment when a person receives the Holy Spirit. Pastor Lenin (23/06/2016)

provided support for their observation when, during one of his sermons, he said that ‘a person baptised is free from sin. The person could have committed murder or lived a completely deviant life, but as soon as he/she receives the blessing, he/she is free’. While blaming demonic forces for the evil in the world, the church provides a cure for them. The covenant with God is the first step, theologically speaking, to changing someone’s life, and the only way to salvation and a fulfilled earthly life.

The restoration of the pact gives a person all the benefits of its fulfilment. Most testimonials were from people who received material benefits – wealth – or were cured of some disease or pain – health. Nonetheless, when the blessing does not produce immediate results, the pastors sometimes recommend more prayers. For example, during one service (14/06/2016), Pastor Alberto tried to heal a few members near the altar and a woman with lots of difficulties walking could not receive the blessing that would cure her. When the miracle did not occur at once, the pastor immediately said: ‘we should pray more for your health afterwards’. Blessings can be immediate or gradual. Nonetheless, as a spiritual doctor who prescribes medicine, the individual action of repeatedly getting in touch with God by praying, or going to the pharmacy to buy medicine, also resembles a belief in free will. To get spiritual benefits, someone has to act in that direction, keep believing and have faith in the cure. When someone does not obtain the cure, the absence of faith or the action of evil entities is usually to blame (Mariano. 2012: 155).

6.4 Faith and the living God

The next step, when someone has received the message about the possibility of the restoration of a pact with God, is to prove his or her belief. Macedo has written a few books in which the main topic is faith, with its rational (Macedo, 2010) and supernatural (Macedo, 2008) characteristics. The rational characteristic of faith is connected to an understanding of an active Devil that tempts humans all the time. Rational faith is different from what Macedo calls emotional or ‘pirate’⁷⁴ faith. According to him, this kind of faith is easily seduced by feelings, emotions or enthusiasms (Idem, 2008: 29) and does not resist sins. A member must use his/her intellect and the mediation of the Holy Scriptures to be saved. Macedo even stresses that he is not God and is just a man prone to failure and mistakes, and that people must seek their own salvation (Ibid.: 58). People have free will, and their personal responsibility to seek God is also present in Macedo’s interpretation of faith. Nonetheless, the avoidance of emotional and mundane behaviour can be very confusing for someone in a UCKG service because, as in many Pentecostal churches with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, it is common to witness glossolalia, screams and other

⁷⁴ In Portuguese, ‘pirate’ has a colloquial meaning of false.

acts that would be considered very emotional by a secular person or non-believer like myself. However, members and preachers do not see these as emotional, but as a manifestation of the Holy Spirit. The excessively mundane behaviour of the UCKG is also something criticised by other Brazilian Pentecostal denominations, especially its obsession with wealth. Nonetheless, it seems that what is mundane and what is emotional are interpreted differently in the UCKG church than in others. Spreading the word of God, through politics or via the wealth of its members and donors, is not a merely mundane act. There is always a spiritual component in those actions.

Miracles and other benefits of the Holy Spirit should be explained by the supernatural power of faith. Macedo's book *O Poder Sobrenatural da Fé*⁷⁵ (2008) can offer guidance in the understanding of faith and its supernatural powers through the vision of the highest pastor of the UCKG. Macedo divides faith into two kinds, both in accordance with rational faith, and both materialising what is expected of them. The first is natural faith, which concerns natural phenomena and the expectation of forthcoming action. This faith is God-given, and helps men to exercise the freedom conferred upon them. For example, Macedo (Ibid: 52) says that a farmer should prepare the soil and observe climate conditions to plant a seed. The farmer expects a good harvest in return for his calculations of the climate conditions, which follows a logic of first giving before receiving. This would be natural faith, the capacity to plan by using rationality aligned with experience to achieve a goal in the material world. Unlike natural faith, which every human possesses, supernatural faith develops only in those who have 'ears to listen to the word of God' (Ibid.: 53). This faith does not act by itself; it needs the acceptance of God and then the action of the Holy Spirit. It is a faith in the impossible, capable of miracles like healing diseases, acquiring wealth and receiving all the other benefits, which seem to be unachievable. Macedo also observes (Ibid.: 51) that supernatural faith is the only form of communication between the material and spiritual worlds, or perhaps the only 'right' way of doing it. Both the rational and the miraculous are in the official discourse of the church.

The possibility of the aforementioned communication between the material and spiritual worlds has two implications for the church's theology, one highlighted by Macedo in the cited passage and the other neglected, although it is nevertheless highlighted in many of the church's gatherings and even in the specific book mentioned. The first deals with the church's understanding of a living God. It is impossible to communicate spiritually through faith with a God absent from the material world, which would resemble only the scientific propositions of a world ruled by preconceived natural laws – God-given or not. The UCKG

⁷⁵ 'The supernatural power of Faith' in English.

follows the assumptions of other Pentecostal churches around the world, such as, for example, Nigerian Pentecostalism, which describes the Catholic and older Protestant churches as 'dead churches' (Wariboko, 2014: 26). The living God preached by the UCKG church is autonomous from natural laws, but as we shall see later, He is not autonomous from the promises He made.

The second and neglected part to which Macedo refers is the connection to what is sinful and can open the doors for demonic forces to enter. I will discuss this further in the next chapter. Nevertheless, as pointed out by Campos (1999a: 357-358), the expropriation of symbols that are considered demonic and the belief in the spiritual warfare between good and evil at every moment and in all places do not make the UCKG deny other religious practices and beliefs. Instead, a reaffirmation of the power of these religions is present precisely in the need to engage oneself against them, in a supernatural faith that acknowledges not only God, but the also the Devil, in a binary interpretation of the spiritual world.

A living God can act in the lives of members, helping them in their daily struggles and in what seems impossible to overcome. Through testimonials after brief healing prayers, the pastors show in the services how God has helped people just by their use of supernatural faith. It is also a way of criticizing other Christian denominations, especially the Catholic Church, where almost no miracles occur and services are quieter⁷⁶. The UCKG's living God performs so many miracles on a daily basis that this can be interpreted as a trivialisation of these phenomena. Nonetheless, it is in accordance with the Manichean struggle between good and evil preached by the church. If something good happens, it is because of God. If something bad happens and prevails, it is because of the Devil. The UCKG's theodicy has a utilitarian characteristic.

An example of this overcoming of evil in the members from the Madrid society appeared in a testimonial (01/11/2015) by a male member of the church, who spoke to an audience of more than 500 hundred people about his economic achievements after conversion. He told how he had opened a business just after joining the church, and given everything to God, and is now earning tons of money. He also said that Saturdays are days on which he does not work at his business so there is free time to work for God. Bishop Gilberto Santana, who was interviewing the member, asked him about the economic crisis, and the man answered: 'I do not know what that is'. However, towards the end of 2015, around

⁷⁶ With the exception of the Charismatic Renewal movement in Catholicism, which provides services very similar to those of Pentecostalism.

20% of Spain's population was unemployed⁷⁷. The UCKG's living God of miracles was the answer to the economic crisis, even without much guidance on how to succeed. The path appears to be only effort, hard work, audacity with investments and especially putting God (and the church) before everything.

The man's testimonial about achieving prosperity, and the characteristic of saying how important it is to follow the recommendation of the church regarding God's priorities, makes a statement not only about the restoration of the covenant, but also about the form bargaining with the Almighty. For someone to receive, they must first give. In the usual order of UCKG services, after hearing this testimonial of prosperity, people are invited to donate money to the church. Marketing wealth is a strategy for receiving more donations, which are understood as a sacrifice to God. However, before turning to the subject of sacrifice, I must further consider the work ethic of the church in Madrid.

6.5 Investing in God: super-action and sacrifice

An article on the Familia Unida's website, 'Porque todo lo trabajador tiene su valor!'⁷⁸ (because every worker has value), publicises the institutional message regarding work. The first lines of the text describe how work is considered the main way to live with dignity. Work must always be done with precision, in a professional manner and in response to requirements. If workers follow these guidelines, the church observes that the individual may complain when his or her rights are not respected. Obedience, then, is the first basis for the work ethic of the church. However, the article admits three occasions when it is legitimate to complain about work conditions. First, when earnings are not compatible with the work done. Second, when the worker does not have the necessary or minimum conditions to do his or her job. Third, when the 'voice, value, initiative, and desire for improvement in your sector are not recognised (by others)'. The first two are regular issues regarding work conditions. However, the third seems to relate to the church's premises of wealth, especially the desire for improvement.

During my first months in Madrid, sermons and flyers regularly contained the word *superacción*, which was a form of prayer chain⁷⁹. The word was split in two, especially by Bishop Santana, becoming *super acción*. While the single word *superación* means overcoming, it becomes 'super action' when split. The bishop used the example (01/11/2015) of the physicist Stephen Hawking to address the first meaning, that of

⁷⁷ In: https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2016/04/28/internacional/1461825960_689667.html. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

⁷⁸ In: <http://familiaunida.es/evento/porque-todo-trabajador-tiene-su-valor/>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

⁷⁹ I received a flyer with nine empty spaces for services, on which I was to mark an x on those dates that I attended.

overcoming. Hawking could overcome his physical conditions and be one of the most important people in the world in his area. A video with Hawking was shown before the sermon, and I have to say that it was quite a surprise for me to see a positive message using his image. I thought at the beginning of the video that the church would say something about his physical condition, regarding his agnostic beliefs. However, this researcher's prejudice was, thankfully, wrong. In the *Familia Unida* magazine published in the last week of October of 2015⁸⁰, the term *super acción* (with a plus sign between the words, suggesting the two meanings that I have already mentioned) was on the cover. On page 7 were the words: 'un cambio de actitud puede darte el poder para cambiar cualquier situación... ¡Tú eres más que un vencedor!' (Free translation: a change of attitude can give you the power to change any situation... You are more than a winner!). On the following pages, the magazine tells the story of a couple, Claudia and Daniel, in which the husband was a drug addict and used to steal money from his wife. After their conversion and the guidance of the church, the husband was cured and the wife had now opened a business. Her 'super action' of joining the church and later bringing her husband had been the way to overcome their problems.

'Super action' nevertheless remains implicit in the opening of a new business, which also resembles the desire for improvement at work. The church's message is tied to impatience about keeping the same job for a long time, as observed by Zygmunt Bauman (2005), to the necessity of consumerism and to the calculation of risk (Beck, 1992) in order to achieve something. Bauman (2005: 134) provides the example of a girl who sees her father as an anti-hero, since he has the security of a job that he has kept for a long time. The church's 'super action' follows a similar path in business: to achieve something better and improve economic status requires risk, and sometimes, a detachment from the security of keeping a single job for decades. The same occurs with the church's characteristic of sacrifice.

The interpretation of sacrifice by the UCKG is the most important pillar, not only in relation to the church's prosperity theology, but also to the practices and behaviours of individuals with regard to the church in general. These practices and behaviours follow the characteristic of investment and detachment as previously described. There are specific kinds of sacrifice and ways of performing them; some please God more than others. The Bible contains a famous passage in the fourth part of the book of the Genesis, when Cain and Abel both make sacrifices to God. The first was not appreciated by God, while the second was. Afterwards, Cain murdered Abel and was condemned by God to live in an

⁸⁰ Edition XXV, week 25 to 31 of October of 2015.

unfruitful land. The reason why God disliked Cain's sacrifice was because of what he sacrificed and, especially for the UCKG, how he sacrificed it. The usual understanding of this passage, which becomes clearer when a person analyses the Old Testament as a whole, is that God would rather receive an animal sacrifice like the one made by Abel, than a harvest, as in Cain's case. Blood is literally something sacred for Christianity, from the sheep sacrificed by Abel, to the blood of Christ.

The sacrifice of blood is, in the UCKG's interpretation, a good kind of sacrifice. According to Macedo's book on the theme, *O Sacrifício Perfeito*⁸¹ (2001), the first thing a member needs to understand is the benefits of being a tither – or a sacrificer. There are differences between the two. The former (sacrificer) are those who give something to the church as an act of faith. Macedo understands the act of offering to the church as following the example of Christ himself, since he was the ultimate and most perfect sacrifice, and as way for a person to approach God (Macedo, 2001: 15).

Then there is the tithe, the importance and theological meaning of which is explained by UCKG pastors and bishops almost on a daily basis. According to Bishop Carlos Rocha, the tithe represents ten per cent of all the member earns financially. He makes an analogy with the tree of knowledge of good and evil to explain why the tithe should be given to the church. God said that the tree belonged to him and Adam should not touch it. As already mentioned, the bishop observed that Adam's disobedience was responsible for the original sin, which led humankind towards damnation. The payment of tithes works in a similar way. It is something that should not be questioned since it is God's business, and even if the church misuses the money, it is His problem. On the same night (02/11/2016), the bishop also said that the church needs money to continue its social work, its rental payments and its expansion to other places where there are no temples or help centres yet. As Macedo pointed out, which summarises prosperity theology with respect to the institutional necessity of growth, '... the money is the church's blood, because it represents the people's lives (work, sweat, intelligence and the effort to be obtained)' (Macedo, 2001: 19). Tithers do the minimum, while sacrificers are those who really have an active and rational faith. Hence, the UCKG follows a path similar to that of traditional Puritanism, as observed by R. H. Tawney, by trying to 'moralize economic relations by treating every transaction as a case of personal conduct, involving personal responsibility' (Tawney, 1971: 96). The church preaches nonconformity with one's own economic status; even if a member already has a prosperous life, more is always achievable. The

⁸¹ The perfect sacrifice.

unstoppable expansion of the institution and its macro-status requires the message of an unstoppable economic growth at the micro-level of the members.

There are cases in which a person does not have any money to give to the church and it is therefore impossible to contribute economically. Nevertheless, the church is pleased to receive other kinds of sacrifices in support of its expansion; money is the blood, but a body cannot live on money alone. In this case, Bishop Macedo (2001: 24-25) distinguishes three kinds of sacrifice that are important to the church, which should be done by every member if possible. The first is physical sacrifice, or evangelisation, which means working for the church without charge. This kind of sacrifice is related to social work in poor neighbourhoods, in which the member – usually the assistant – spreads the word of God. It also includes many daily tasks, such as cleaning the temples and helping the pastors to pray, perform exorcisms and organise the church services. Second is spiritual sacrifice, which should be performed by every member, including those who make physical sacrifices, but which also makes it possible for those who are unable to perform the first kind of sacrifice to participate. Spiritual sacrifice is participation in prayer chains⁸² and fasting, according to the church's recommendations, which promise to have beneficial effects during the time that someone is engaged in them. Third comes the already mentioned financial sacrifice, which is how the church will be able to spread its message via the media and by building temples in places where it does not yet have them. Financial sacrifice is perhaps the most important of all three sacrifices, since it is able to help the church with money for propaganda, providing the UCKG with infrastructure and the ability to recruit new members via the UCKG's global media.

Sacrifice is also a way to test God's word by charging Him (Macedo, 2008: 161; 2010: 73). If one gives, He must give back, and this is the theological basis for the huge amount of money donated by members to the church. The biggest financial sacrifices I saw were in two videos shown during UCKG night services, both in November of 2016. The first was from a Portuguese couple, who said that they had sold an apartment for 220,000 euros to donate to the church; the second was about a male member who, among other things, donated a jet airplane to the church. At the Atocha altar in Madrid, the maximum amount of money I saw sacrificed (20/06/2016) was when a male member promised to donate between 5 and 6 thousand euros. Members who sacrifice the largest amounts of money are the ones with financial benefits from former campaigns and acts of sacrifice. In almost every testimonial that I heard and conversation that I had on this theme, members started with less money, and after seeing the benefits of challenging God's

⁸² Prayer chains are sessions of religious services that share a common goal.

word, they become more and more engaged. The church's guidelines preach that if you hold God accountable for his promises of wealth, he is obliged to comply (Macedo, 2010: 76). This is the same kind of sacrifice as the Israelis' coercion of God, which imposes a pact between humans and the Almighty (Weber, 1978: 423). This also resembles the UCKG's inheritance with regard to the Old Testament.

Testimonials always show cases of success after overcoming a bad situation. Most of the members are struggling with a tough situation when they first arrive at the church. Pastor Richard said once (06/06/2016) that if someone had no problems, they would not seek the church in the first place. This shows why the church is considered to be a 'spiritual first aid post', since the symbolic good offered has a huge appeal for people in despair. An earlier name used by the church in Madrid was *Pare de Sufrir*, a name still acknowledged by non-members in the city who remain unfamiliar with the church's new branding. In Spanish, *pare de sufrir* means 'stop suffering', and this fits perfectly with the miracles commonly presented in the services. The church changed its name after its struggles with the newspaper *El País*, as observed in the third chapter. The idea of suffering is a very open signifier; options for worldviews in modern society are multiple, and the same applies to suffering. The absence of borders between the material and the immaterial world preached by the UCKG means that every aspect – good or bad – in an individual's life could be understood in terms of a spiritual relation with a member's actions. Hence, whenever there is disease, bankruptcy, family disunity or basically any aspect considered to be negative, or that takes members on a downward path in a stratified society, suffering is said to be present. Most church members have really experienced the agony of social decline, and their main goal is to keep growing economically to avoid a return to this kind of suffering. To overcome the possibilities of a drop in socio-economic status, they need to be fully devoted to God. The message of behavioural change is the thread that runs through all the main aspects of the UCKG theology mentioned in this chapter up to now.

In the services in Madrid, the biblical basis for monetary sacrifice comes from the books of Mark (12: 41-44) and Luke (21: 1-4). There is a part in which Jesus is watching the sacrifices of the Israeli people, while a widow arrives with just a few coins and donates them. Jesus then gathers his followers and says that the widow's sacrifice is more valuable than all the others, which were donations of the wealthy. In the UCKG, Bishop Gilberto Santana (25/10/2017), before asking for donations, interpreted this biblical passage with a statement clearly aligned to the church's theology of sacrifice. According to him, a person who has fifty thousand euros and donates ten thousand is not giving his

or her best, while a person who has 200 euros and gives it all is. Santana also stated that this kind of monetary contribution is like a tax: if one does not give, no service is possible.

‘Super action’ and sacrifice are two sides of the same coin: investment. While the former is related to entering the church and the emphatic preaching of initiative, the latter concerns investment in the church. The detachment and improvement associated with the former requires the regularity of the latter. The speculative side of engaging in new business ventures is encouraged and stimulated by the solid spiritual basis of the church. As Melinda Cooper observed:

The ethic of late Protestantism (Pentecostalism⁸³) is much more investment, than work-oriented, much more amenable to the temptations of financial capital than the disciplines of labor, and evangelical Christians have found a welcome ally in the writings of various free-market and supply-side economists. (Cooper. 2008: 156).

Jean and John L. Comaroff (2012) take an approach similar to that of Melinda Cooper, observing that Pentecostalism speaks both to the neoliberal promises of personalised rather than communal wealth and to the impossibility, and even despair, of people in need who do not achieve prosperity. Taking African Pentecostalism as an example, they observe that

(...) the world-historical process which came to be symbolized by the events of 1989 held out the prospect that everyone would be set free to accumulate and speculate, to consume, and to indulge repressed cravings in a universe of less government, greater privatisation, more opulence and infinite enterprise. (...) In sum, occult economies in general, and Neoprotestant religious movements in particular – in Africa and elsewhere – are a response to the perception of an epochal shift in the constitution of the lived world (...). (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2012: 74-75).

The UCKG’s theology aligns itself with Comaroff’s and Cooper’s approaches by creating the need to try new things economically in order to give money to the church and increase the benefits – material and spiritual – even further. This follows a logic of investment in the spiritual. Sacrificing without any guarantee of return offers members a discourse with a more speculative ethic regarding money. The widow pleased Jesus with her offer, but no material return is described as a consequence of his approval of her sacrifice. The UCKG functions in another manner: through the restoration of the pact of wealth, in which

⁸³ My parenthesis.

sacrifice will lead to a material return, and through a devotional and fully engaged faith in the promises of God. The internalisation of this kind of practice, combined with an ethic of investment and the absence of attachment to any work that has no prospect of growth, gives UCKG members a highly speculative attitude to the market. The number of testimonials of members starting new business is enormous, which helps to further encourage other members to do the same.

The UCKG's belief system with regard to money differs from others that resist the power of capital at a certain level. Michael Taussing's ethnography in the Cauca Valley, Colombia, analysed the practice of the baptism of money (*bautizo del billete*), in which the people in that region believed that sometimes the godfather or godmother hides money in their hands during the baptism of a child. A Catholic priest then baptises the banknote instead of the baby, without knowing it. The people from the Cauca Valley believe that money, after being put into circulation, will always return to its owner, impoverishing one person in order to make the other person responsible for the baptism of money wealthier. It would be unnatural for the people there to have capital, according to Taussing, since money's role is only one of exchange, not of creating further wealth via interest (Taussig, 2010: 184-190). The UCKG differs from this logic, classifying money and capital together; the difference is more subtle and Manichean. The one who blesses the money with real sacrifice will be able to obtain more money. The specification of how is less important; everything that is legal, follows the moral codes of the UCKG, and generates profit, is valid. However, the only way to obtain more money is to sacrifice some to the church. Speculation, hard work, and investment are all legitimate. Maintaining the logic of sacrifice is more important than how one proceeds to obtain profit.

The economists Rachel McCleary and Robert Barro observed, while explaining Weber's Protestant Ethic, that John Wesley preached the motto 'gain all you can, save all you can, give all you can'. According to them:

However, he (Wesley) regretted that he had been more successful in promoting the first two tenets than the third. But the first two – akin to Weber's work ethic and thrift – are probably more important than charity as underpinnings of a productive economy. Wesley also regretted that, as his congregants became richer, they became less devout – thus giving an early empirical expression of the secularization hypothesis. (McCleary and Barro, 2006: 51).

The UCKG discourse regarding sacrifice based on the expansion of the work of God worldwide not only encourages the practice of routinely donating to the church, but also

the discourse of broadening the church's mission all around the world. The work ethic and thrift of the Protestant ethic as well as of John Wesley's phrase are also important, but they come afterwards, as exemplified by the sermon about the widow. First, you give, then, you save, and even if you do not have much, you should give something. However, despite Wesley's complaints, the discourse of sacrifice is internalised in such a way that the cases of people who became richer by giving a huge amount of money to the church are emphasised, at least in the regularly given testimonials. The Holy Fire of Israel campaign is the best way to observe the sacrifices of the wealthiest.

6.6 The Holy Fire of Israel

The church's most famous campaign with regard to material benefits is the Holy Fire of Israel, which usually occurs twice a year. Using the same logic of making a sacrifice to God to earn more in the future, the time of the Holy Fire of Israel is when big sacrifices are requested. The UCKG push for money donations starts to become even more common, with testimonials of wealthy people who have participated in this campaign and benefitted from it. The scripts of the testimonials are usually the same: a person or a family is in financial crisis and sometimes has other problems too, and by giving an amount of money that represents a real sacrifice – which means something that will be missed and will have a huge impact on their personal or family economy – they overcome financial difficulties. I was able to see most of the sermons about the Holy Fire of Israel in Madrid, during June of 2016, when there was massive publicity for the event.

The church uses well-edited videos of people's testimonials and material proof. Filming usually takes place on a big property that 'God gave' to those who are testifying, and includes pictures or films of other properties as well as cars. Other family members, who are not seen as immediate (i.e. husband and wife), also testify to how their lives have been changed by the Holy Fire of Israel campaign. On one occasion (28/06/2016), a video of a family was shown in which a husband and wife were completely bankrupt before participating in the campaign. With their sacrifice, they achieved a new and different life, and their children were able to testify to their parents' changed circumstances, which included an enormous house. After this video was shown, Pastor Alberto told the members that the family continues to give 150 thousand *reais* – around 30 thousand pounds – every year for each member of the family to the Holy Fire of Israel campaign. The role model of the perfect sacrificer is not just the one who benefits, but also the one who also sacrifices the most, and pleases God with his faith.

After the sacrifice, the people involved in the testimonial attest to how God has changed their lives, with new business opportunities or similar possibilities. This propaganda for

the prospect of wealth as a result of the Holy Fire of Israel is the most infamous campaign among non-members: in Brazil, videos of the pastors and bishops begging for money and asking the members to sell their cars and even properties as a form of sacrifice are extremely common. It is common for non-members to mock this campaign, especially on social media. From the sister of a UCKG female member from the city of Vitória, in the Brazilian state of Espírito Santo, I heard about the huge struggles between her father and her sister during this time. The practices of sacrificing uncommon amounts of money and properties during this campaign have the biggest impact on family members who are not part of the church. It is hard to explain to someone who does not share the same faith how sacrificing a property to an already wealthy and globalised church is an act that will please God.

Examples of sacrifices for the Holy Fire of Israel also occurred in the UCKG in Madrid. On a Monday night (20/06/2016), Pastor Richard illustrated such a sacrifice with the story of King Solomon and his holocausts to God; it was only after the biblical character started sacrificing more that God gave back. Nevertheless, this campaign asks for huge sacrifices, and the pastor observed that only people giving a thousand euros or more would be able to participate. After interviewing a couple and showing a video of them with a similar message – the further you go with the sacrifice, the more you will get in return – , the pastor summoned to the altar everyone who planned to donate ten thousand euros to the Holy Fire of Israel. No one responded. He then asked for eight or seven thousand. Nobody again. Richard then asked for those who were going to donate six or five thousand euros, and an assistant went to the altar to give an envelope to the pastor. Richard asked the man if he was doing this of his own free will, to which he replied positively. Two or three thousand euros were then requested, and the couple in the video went to the altar. The pastor and members subsequently asked the same question and gave similar responses, respectively. When Richard asked for one thousand euros, seven people went to the altar; all of them were asked the same question and gave the same response. This service was far from being one of the most crowded that I attended during my fieldwork, with no more than eighty people. However, even with this limited number present, the church was able to earn at least fifteen thousand euros, which is still not as much as the Brazilian example shown by Alberto, but which gives an idea of what a full, crowded service with around ten times the number of participants that day might bring.

The article on the Familia Unida website about the aforementioned couple⁸⁴, Diego and Patricia, illustrates the logic of sacrifice. They had always wanted to have their own

⁸⁴ In: <http://familiaunida.es/diego-y-patricia/>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

business, but at the time were too comfortable with their situation. They then sacrificed everything they had, but their plans for new enterprise were almost absent. Diego was suddenly fired from his job and was in a bad situation since he had donated his car, which was the only property they had at that time, to the church. He was sick of his situation and had the idea to start a new business. Diego began to have meetings with business-people, saying he wanted to start his new business and that a partner would bring the money, but at the time he could not even get a loan. During the next Holy Fire of Israel campaign, Diego said that he and his wife donated seven thousand euros and acquired a business of 180 thousand euros. The next year, they donated twice as much, so that they could improve their business even further and achieve greater prosperity.

The Holy Fire of Israel exemplifies a campaign that has the capitalistic logic of investing money to earn more profits. The sacrifice, as Diego showed, may have the characteristic of an investment on which one might expect a return. This follows a logic similar to that of making a regular sacrifice to the church, except that much bigger donations are made. Selling properties to raise a donation is common for members who participate in this campaign, which tries to encourage people to give more than they can afford. However, I believe that not everyone is so concerned about achieving a higher status in the church by the maximum amount of money to it, since Ricardo Mariano (2012:175) found a member in Brazil who had modified the Xerox copy of his payment check so that the church would not charge him 10% of his full salary. The only thing that makes the Holy Fire of Israel different from regular sacrifices is the amount of money, which gives this campaign a more elitist characteristic. Only members with a reasonable amount of money can donate, which impels the poorer members to make risky economic transactions to satisfy the church's principles. However, if they are bold about giving to God, this audacity may also be incorporated into their daily and mundane business transactions. The ethics of investment of the church in Madrid work not only for members who have and want more; they also work for people who have come to Madrid (immigrants, for example), who mostly have little or nothing and want to achieve all the benefits promised in the Garden of Eden.

In this chapter, I have analysed the theological aspects of the UCKG's discourse. These aspects guide the worldview of the church and are internalised by its members. Furthermore, some characteristics promoted by the church, such as the restoration of the pact between men and God through the sacrifice of money – by giving it to the church –, also help to promote the internalisation of a discourse of entrepreneurship and investment, which are linked to the economic tendencies of the world today. These were the main characteristics of the prosperity theology preached by the church in Madrid,

which included campaigns like the Holy Fire of Israel, in which the discourse of sacrifice, donation and financial acquisition become more frequent. In the next chapter, I make further observations about the theology and practices of the church regarding its other main aspect, the struggle against the Devil, which are also known as the theology of spiritual warfare, highlighting the main points and specifications of the practices in Madrid.

Chapter 7

The secularisation of the demons: the enemies of the UCKG in Madrid

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I observe what is acknowledged to be one of the most important characteristics of the UCKG: the theology of spiritual warfare. I also analyse the church's historical enemies in Brazil to elucidate how these differ from its enemies in Madrid. Following a path similar to that of the history of Pentecostalism, the church has gone through many adaptations in its discourse, to make it more easily understood by people from a plurality of cultural backgrounds. Chapter 8 is a continuation of this observation, with themes directly linked to the spiritual warfare of the church in Madrid, in addition to a particularly more meticulous analysis of self-othering and exorcisms.

The Devil is a very important tool in the Manichaean discourse of the church. He is, as asserted by Ricardo Mariano (2003), the protagonist in the church's services. However, as observed by many of those who have studied the UCKG (Almeida, 2009; Mariz, 1999; Mariano, 2012; Oro, 2005; Silva, 2005; 2007), the main target of its belligerent discourse is Afro-Brazilian religions and their pantheon. My main debate here focuses especially on the anthropophagic characteristic of the church as proposed by Ronaldo Almeida (2009: 123), who follows the analysis of cannibalism proposed by Claude Levi-Strauss (2014), who in turn regards it as a way of absorbing enemies' strength. In the demonisation of Afro-Brazilian entities, and the regular exorcisms of these entities in Brazil, the UCKG shows itself to be a better option in the religious market. It also re-signifies the entities so that Christ can overcome their power.

Nevertheless, in Madrid, where there is a lack of symbolic understanding of those entities, and even of Pentecostal exorcism as a regular practice – since there are far fewer Pentecostals in Spain than in Brazil –, the church has to adapt itself to a new reality. Its enemies are more related to the older antagonists of Christianity in Europe – esotericism and the historical ties to witchery and Satanism– as well as the UCKG's secular enemies, inasmuch as the focus is largely on problems in members' lives and not really on other religions. The secularisation of demons, as I shall indicate, does not mean a total absence of their religious nature, since 'everything bad in this world has its origins in Satan and his demons' (Macedo, 1987: 103). Nevertheless, the anthropophagic character of the church in Madrid seems to lose its relevance as a strategy for attracting members of other religions.

7.2 Spiritual warfare

The spiritual warfare preached by the UCKG has its roots in the Brazilian Pentecostalism of the 1960s, which began exorcising Afro-Brazilian entities during its services. David Miranda, from the God is Love church, was the first in his ascetic denomination to interview the incorporated *exús* of Umbanda and Candomblé, who were exorcised after confessing everything they had done to destroy the possessed person's life. Robert McAlister from the New Life church was Macedo's mentor in Pentecostalism and wrote a book about the conversion of a *mãe de santo* (a priestess from the Afro-Brazilian religions). In the book, McAlister explains the demonic characteristics of entities from those religions, making clear that a person who incorporates them is possessed with an evil entity.

The struggle between Pentecostal leaders and the Catholic Church in Brazil began even earlier, in the second decade of the twentieth century. In 1995, the episode of the kicking of the saint, in which the pastor Sergio Von Helde kicked the patroness of Brazil, Our Lady of Aparecida, during a broadcast on Record TV, showed the iconoclastic side of the UCKG and an aspect of this tradition of struggle between the two religions. While kicking the image, Helde said that the statue was ugly and represented nothing holy for Christianity. Macedo later discussed this episode, suggesting that it was 'the worst thing that happened in the work of the UCKG'⁸⁵. The Brazilian people were so outraged by Helde's act that Macedo had to remove him from UCKG television shows. The iconoclastic side of the church took on a battle, in the kicking of the saint episode, that it could not win. Catholicism and devotion to the patroness of Brazil is too great to be fought against without a cost. From that point on, the UCKG realised that choosing a weaker enemy would be a better strategy for winning the spiritual battle.

In the existing academic literature, the most visible aspect of the UCKG's spiritual warfare is the one aforementioned one related to the great struggle against Afro-Brazilian entities, at least on Brazilian soil. Nonetheless, in other places without the cultural background of these traditional Brazilian religions, the UCKG has had to adapt its discourse to a different reality. In Africa, for instance, the church has to deal with *sangomas* on a daily basis, and so the demonisation of their practices, which are defined as witchery, becomes the natural strategic choice to attract new members (Wyk, 2014: 46-47). In other places, such as Uruguay and Argentina, the UCKG has used a different approach: the demonisation of Afro-Brazilian religions in these countries, where the people already know about these traditions, was a successful way of establishing the church. There are many other examples of demonisation, such as that of Anglicanism in the UK, the Orthodox Church

⁸⁵ In: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DsIViDnaeDE>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

in Russia and even the numerous gods of Hinduism (Freston, 2005: 45; Wyk, 2014: 53). As David Bradnick (2015: 162) observed ‘... the majority of the Pentecostals, especially those in the global South, who resist secularism’s disenchantment ... retain a keen awareness that the world is full of spirits. This ability to synthesise Pentecostal beliefs with indigenous perspectives is a major reason that Pentecostalism has grown significantly in the past century’. The UCKG engages in deep dialogue with the imaginary substrata of ordinary people who are not strongly affected by secular disbelief and scepticism, and who still believe in the magical power of spiritual entities, whether they are evil or good.

Demonic forces for Pentecostals, in general, are real spiritual entities or personae, which means that they are not dispersed abstractions, though they do not have faces (Mafra, 2002: 209). The evangelist William Hamner Piper, in 1910, observed that the early Pentecostals followed a Wesleyan-Holiness demonological approach to demons, seeing them as fallen angels who joined Satan’s rebellion against God. Therefore, these entities are not just a destructive principle; they actually have personality (Bradnick, 2015: 161). Piper’s observations do not exclude the possibility of the demonic being a principle, however, which is the reason why there are so many approaches to Pentecostal spirituality (including demonology and Tillich’s pneumatology) in academic theology (Yong and Wariboko, 2015), especially the perspective of a correlation between spiritual and existential actualities (Bradnick, 2015: 159). Nonetheless, as I will now observe, the fluidity of demonic forces as a principle is as important as their materialisation. The destructive characteristic of demonic forces in the UCKG’s preaching also has a personality behind it. This is the reason why people who happen to go to a specific cursed place – in Madrid, sermons usually mention the places where witches and wizards assist their clientele –, or belong to a family in which an ancestor has made an evil pact, may be the target of evil entities. Both individual and social actions can bring a person under the influence of evil; sometimes they may not even be aware of, or looking for, satanic spirits.

The action of demonising almost everything that is seen as wrong or that simply does not follow the church’s theological principles is a powerful form of persuasion to attract new members to church dogma and to effect an observable transformation. The UCKG creates, thus, enemies common to most of its members in Madrid; some local, some global. The creation of the other in Madrid must be aligned with the social reality of the majority of both immigrants and local members, without getting lost in a nonsensical struggle with enemies too deeply connected with, or disconnected from, the community.

7.3 The UCKG's others in Madrid

7.3.1 Esotericism

There are numerous scholars in the social sciences who emphasise the creation of the other – the othering process – as a powerful method that also creates a social identity for a given social group. Edward Said (1979; 1994) observes how Western culture made Oriental culture the other. Said analyses cultural imperialism with a focus on the material produced especially by Western academia and writers: a distorted image of homogeneity and inferiority. Elias and Scotson (1994: xxiii) also observed how the process of making group B inferior can aid in the construction of social charisma in group A, even when there are almost no differences in religion, ethnicity, cultural background or economic status. Their study focused on the differentiation of one group as created by the other, when both only differed according to the amount of time that they had lived in a community; all other economic, social, cultural and religious aspects were very similar. *Pars pro toto* is often used as a strategy by a group to highlight the good aspects of 'us' and the bad aspects of 'them', in which the best individuals of one group are used as role models for the insiders, while the worst individuals are seen as examples of the outsiders.

Another author not often used in the social analyses of religious groups, but who made similar observations on this theme, was the economist Frederick von Hayek. According to him, the negative aspect of finding an enemy and consequently a division between 'us' and 'them' – insiders and outsiders – is an essential ingredient for uniting a group towards a common action (Hayek, 2008: 148). The creation of an enemy, for all these authors, has tremendous relevance for the construction of a social group identity.

Zygmunt Bauman observed the importance of exclusion for a community in the following passage from his book *Liquid Modernity*:

The inner harmony of the communal world shines and glitters against the background of the obscure and tangled jungle which starts on the other side of the turnpike. It is there, to that wilderness, that people huddling in the warmth of shared identity dump (or hope to banish) the fears which prompted them to seek the communal shelter. In Jock Young's words, 'The desire to demonise others is based on the ontological uncertainties' of those inside. An 'inclusive community' would be a contradiction in terms. Communal fraternity would be incomplete, perhaps unthinkable but certainly unviable, without that inborn fratricidal inclination. (Bauman, 2006: 172).

I concur with Bauman's understanding that a community needs the other to maintain itself. However, my main concern here is to specify the kinds of enemies, or others, that the UCKG has in Madrid. For such an analysis, we need to understand this process in Brazil, by turning to the adaptations observed in my fieldwork and by indicating the nuances of both. But first we should take a brief look at what the literature on the church in Brazil says about the demonisation of others in that country. I will then consider those 'others' in Madrid who are most targeted in the UCKG's discourse.

In studies of the UCKG, the focus on the theological aspect of spiritual warfare is huge. Cecília Mariz sees the spiritual warfare of Brazilian Pentecostal churches as following the tradition of Christian dualism, in which everything bad comes from the Devil, comparing this theological strategy with witch-hunts in the modern era. She also observes the dissemination of those churches as strictly related to exorcism and the fight against evil (Mariz, 1999: 33-34). Valdelice Santos (2010: 24) brings the religious background of Bishop Macedo into the equation in order to understand his warfare against Afro-Brazilian religions, Catholicism and Spiritism, showing that his familiarity with these religions comes from his former affiliations to Catholicism – as a child – and to Umbanda, before his conversion to Pentecostalism. In principle, the UCKG's creation of the other not only followed the logic of the social environment in which the church grew, but also drew on the experience of Macedo, who did not achieve the blessings in other religions that he received from Pentecostalism⁸⁶. The othering process of the UCKG in Madrid is enormous; there is preaching against atheism and nonbelievers, and also against icons or images, which exemplifies its criticism of Catholicism and even other Pentecostal denominations. Thus, members can connect the church's message to any of their religious or non-religious pasts while they are listening to the sermon.

Unlike in Brazilian society, in Madrid only a small number of people are aware of Afro-Brazilian religions. In the UCKG's services at the temple where I conducted my research, there were a few Brazilians, but a large number of people came from other parts of the world – especially countries in South America, Africa and Spain. The strategy of fighting against what the church considers to be demonic forces in Brazil seems to lose its appeal on Iberian soil. It needs a new enemy. Nonetheless, the presence of those entities during exorcisms is not completely absent. In the *Señales* service (26/06/2016), Pastor Alberto called the entity that possessed a girl a *pomba-gira*, which is a common entity, especially

⁸⁶ In his biography, Macedo talks about the moment when a spiritualist leader tried to heal him by praying. The Pentecostal Bishop says that he was cured from his warts for a while, but that they came back worse than ever (Tavolaro and Lemos, 2007: 233).

in Candomblé, that represents the spirit of a gypsy prostitute, who usually engages in fortune-telling with cards.

The presence of these entities in UCKG services follows a similar path in Madrid's esoteric shops; they are present, but on a smaller scale than in Brazil⁸⁷. The specific entities are gone, but the practices still continue. Spanish society has had to deal with esoteric programmes on the radio since the 1980s and on television in the 1990s. On the first night I spent in Madrid for fieldwork, in October of 2015, I turned on the TV and on one channel, there was a man reading what the cards he had dealt said about the future of someone to whom he was talking on the phone. In addition to this practice of Tarot, other phenomena linked with esotericism, such as astrology and divination, are also common in Spanish TV broadcasting. There were at least thirteen programmes on these subjects between 2014 and 2015 (Cid-Leal et al., 2015: 6). People who need to achieve a specific goal or solve a specific problem often use these spiritual services. The symbolic product offered has the characteristic of a magical service, which does not make further social bonds between practitioners (Durkheim, 1995: 42)⁸⁸.

The UCKG's strategy in Madrid is to attract people in despair or in need of a specific spiritual service, sometimes in a manner very similar to that of the aforementioned esotericism. More than once a pastor or an assistant approached me with the question: 'what is your problem?' The confused look on their faces at my usual negative response (with regard to any kind of problem) says a lot about the kind of situation with which they are familiar. The church reveals itself as spiritual first aid when struggling over the same public, not only with regular religious affiliations, but also with esotericism and other forms of magical aid – recalling the previously mentioned *Pare de Sufrir* slogan. Nevertheless, as I observe in the next chapter, belonging to the church means more than just receiving

⁸⁷ I found a few images of these entities in esoteric stores in downtown Madrid, including a full-sized one representing an African warrior entity. There were also a few books about the theme.

⁸⁸ Other authors in the sociology of religion deal with what is commonly called the New Age, in the last decades of the 20th century. This movement, according to Wouter Hanegraaff, critiques Western secular popular culture (1996: 522) and has its roots in Western esotericism, but also draws on concepts and philosophies from the East, from new secular and traditional beliefs such as UFOs and astrology. The movement can be seen as religious *bricolage*, with syncretic cultural and religious forms that are able to formulate meaning related to a religion of the self (Partridge, 2005) with a holistic view integrating the cosmos and humanity (Guerriero et al., 2016: 14-18). The Being completely deinstitutionalized, the New Age movement is definitely the opposite of the UCKG, which has a strong bureaucracy and rigid rules. The New Age movement produces what Renée de la Torre calls 'a system of informal webs' with the socialisation of participants' experiences (in Guerriero et al., 2016: 16). Nonetheless, the dispersion of beliefs gives a form of religious self-service to these movements, in which a person can acquire what is more convenient to him or her.

spiritual and material blessings. The church can be highly magical and its clientele can appear with many different needs.

Esotericism comes from an old popular tradition with roots in popular culture in the medieval period. According to Silvia de Federici (2015), the witchcraft against which the Catholic Church fought at beginning of the Modern Era was a confrontation with the magical view of the non-separation of the spiritual and the material. This also had implications for work, since that view is not compatible with the capitalistic rationalisation of labour, inasmuch as magic was an instrument for someone to gain some profit without that sort of work. Federici also observes that the renewal of these beliefs today, in spiritual movements such as the New Age, do not represent a threat to the uniformity of behaviour, since these movements – someone consulting astrology before going to work, for example – have been incorporated by a capitalistic rationality and no longer challenge it (Federici, 2015: 198-200).

Jeffrey B. Russell (1995) observed witchcraft historically, using a three-way perspective. The first is worldwide sorcery, in which sorcerers perform simple magic, with the aim of changing the material realm around them. The second, which Russell calls a witch-craze, awakened towards the end of the Middle Ages and began with the Inquisition of the Catholic Church, spreading itself through Protestant countries after the Reformation and remaining strong until the 1700s. This kind of witchcraft was generally seen as diabolical by Christianity in Europe and was the sort observed by Federici. The third, which corresponds to the esotericism analysed here, is a neo-pagan religiosity in which most deities and beliefs relate to some sort of ancient knowledge of old gods. However, the primitivism of the UCKG, which almost fully embraced Old Testament laws, considers all such beliefs demonic. The Devil is the protagonist, and anything other than a spiritual power given by the Christian God is satanic.

Esotericism is one of the most important enemies in the spiritual realm of the UCKG in Madrid. The dualistic view of the theology of spiritual warfare is that the Devil must be present in what is considered a wrong religiosity; esotericism becomes part of a huge satanic plan and goes by the name of witchery. In one service (09/11/2016), Bishop Carlos Rocha asked everyone in the crowded audience if the UCKG was their first choice when they had a problem. 'We all go to doctors first, don't we?', he said, while everybody agreed. 'Afterwards, when the regular medicine does not work, we got to the sorcerers, don't we?', he added, with the whole crowd agreeing with him. *Brujería* – witchery – is a very common belief, especially in Latin American and African countries. Not only the Spanish people, but also the vast community of immigrants who attend the church, are

familiar with these practices. The UCKG preaches that anyone who is in contact with objects or people engaged in any of these diabolical practices – divination, favours through contact with spiritual entities and rituals for emotional causes – opens the door for evil entities to enter.

The similarity between the symbolic promises of the UCKG and those of esotericism put them, at least from the former's perspective, on a collision course. UCKG recommendations for spiritual cleansing target especially those who have had any kind of contact with mystics, fortune-tellers, witches and so on. Since this is a very diffuse kind of religiosity, to which many Catholics share an aversion, the enemy is a safer target, with almost no possibility of public questioning. Nonetheless, the Holy Spirit offers, to members of the church, benefits like those provided by 'witches'. With the aim of empowering members' spiritual lives, Bishop Rocha created a campaign with a regular battery (from a TV remote control), saying that the campaign was a God-given prophecy that symbolized the predicted benefit for those who took part in the campaign. Pastor Lenin (09/06/2016) undertook a similar action while asking for a monetary sacrifice from the members, 'prophesising' that everyone who gave to the church would receive ten times the amount of money in the near future. Both Bishop Rocha's campaign and Pastor Lenin's prophecy resemble the practices of fortune-tellers with respect to the way to behave in order to achieve something in the near future.

Historically, men like Thomas Hobbes proposed the persecution of witches, while their main concern was with civic obedience. Hobbes did not believe in the effective power of witches, like many of his contemporary fellows, but wanted them to be punished for false belief, due to the possibility that witchcraft might spread (Federici, 2015: 201-202). Unlike Anglo-Saxon philosophers like Hobbes, Michael Taussig (2010: 73) observed that in the colonisation of Latin America, the Spanish colonisers and their descendants always feared the supernatural powers of the slaves. The UCKG follows a similar path that legitimises all the powers of these practices by aligning itself with the underlying beliefs of popular religions, even while considering them to be demonic. As Max Weber (1978: 424) already indicated, religions have historically strived to outdo each other, after which the outdone religion's gods continue living as demons. The belief in such a dualistic worldview, in which everything that belongs to 'us' is good and everything that comes from 'them' is bad, does not exclude the power of 'them' in the UCKG. The difference lies in the legitimation of God that the institution possesses, which makes it a better choice in the symbolic market, at least in members' eyes.

The UCKG also strives to bring those who have no ties religious institutions (like believers in the esoteric) together in a more substantial way by increasing members' social bonds with the church. This is very appealing, especially for immigrants who do not know many people in a new environment, and whose social life is completely solitary or revolves solely around their families. Mariz (1999: 33) observed that religious affiliation today contains both individualistic characteristics – as exemplified by a process that she calls self-bricolage, in which an individual chooses what to accept as holy – and the growth of authoritarian institutions, which control their members with strongly disciplined practices. The UCKG's demonisation of esotericism is not only linked to what it sees as sinful practices, in addition to competition against a different religiosity (that nonetheless provides similar religious goods). It also has the trait of combatting the freedom to decide what to follow. The religion of the self, characterised by individual choice about which practices and beliefs to incorporate, is also an evil from the church's perspective. Nevertheless, for a society in which there is a possibility of choice, there must be a space for individual freedom in members' religious beliefs. The UCKG settles this need for freedom of belief not with a more open conceptualization of God and His blessings (which would be logical), but with quite the opposite: a pluralistic and fluid conception of the Devil.

7.3.2 The secular and nonbelievers: the image of a decadent and sceptical Europe

How do UCKG members deal with the secular world? First, it is important to understand what we mean by secularisation⁸⁹ and secular. In *A Secular Age* (2007: 1-4) Charles Taylor offers three distinct understandings of secularity. The first is religion's retreat from the public sphere – from politics, for example. The second involves the decline of personal belief in religion. The third involves the conditions of belief and unbelief, in which belief in God is one option among many. Taylor does not see this as the twilight of religion, but the growth of secularism in Western society is a reality for him. This perspective can be related to Weber's assumptions about ascetic Protestantism, particularly Calvinism, but also, later on, science. This process, which he calls the disenchantment of the world, has two non-exclusive characteristics according to the Brazilian sociologist Antônio Flávio Pierucci (2005): the retreat of magical explanations of world phenomena and the absence of ultimate meaning.

Wuornos Hanegraaff (2000) observed that secularisation was a factor that contributed to the birth (or rebirth) of esotericism in Europe. This process does not have anything to do with the secularisation theory formulated by sociologists such as Peter Berger (1973),

⁸⁹ I will also avoid the term secularism, mostly because I agree with Paul Cliteur (2010: 3), who sees it as a normative ethical creed not based on religion.

who believed that the continuous disenchantment of the world by scientific prepositions would make religions slowly decrease in numbers. Hanegraaff is more concerned with the absence of the monopoly of a single religion in the public sphere, as evident by the plurality of beliefs. Esotericism for him, thus, is the process of mixing Western with Eastern religious practices – or what practitioners of Western esotericism interpret as Eastern –, which is only possible in a secular society in which the freedom of religious belief is a guaranteed social right. The ‘Easternization’ of Western Esotericism is also a theme observed by Christopher Partridge (2005), who further observed how an occulture – the popularisation of a culture of the occult – is gaining force in Western society (vampires, zombies, new forms of Satanism and so on). All of these are only possible in a society different from Europe until the 17th and 18th centuries, when heresy and witchcraft were still punished with death (Russell, 1995: 122).

Spanish society has been affected by this wave of secularisation, as proposed by Hanegraaff, but it also currently has a considerably high number of non-believers and atheists. According to data from the Centre for Sociological Research (CIS, 2014), in Spanish society, 68.4% declared themselves Catholics, 16.8% non-religious, and 9.6% atheist, while other religions only constituted 2.3%. Among people between the ages of 18 and 24, 47.1% were non-religious and atheist, while 48.4% declared themselves to be Catholic. The church has probably learnt from its experience in other countries worldwide, where the UCKG has had many struggles against the predominant Christian religion. Engaging in an open dispute with the Catholic Church is not a good strategy, since, as we have seen with the episode of the kicking of the saint, it is possible to cause outrage throughout a society.

Services that preach against non-believers are very common. In the final prayer of one service, Pastor Alberto (15/10/2016) begged God to end atheism, saying that even non-believers know that the end-times are coming, and asked God’s mercy for everyone. Nevertheless, there are no atheist demons, or at least I have not seen any demon saying that he/she was the cause of atheism, but a discourse that regards Europe as a continent full of unbelievers is quite common in South American Pentecostalism. Pedro Ari Oro (2014) saw the Argentinian pastor Carlos Annacondia’s discourse of the ‘reconquest’ of Europe as a way to legitimize a spiritual internationalisation of his church, and he engaged its members in a global enterprise for Christ. Mafra (2002: 62) analysed the UCKG and its belief in the re-Christianisation of Europe, since its pastors leave Brazil for a more educated part of the world, believing that the people there must be educated in the spirituality of the church.

In the first service in which I met Pastor Maximiliano, he asked me from where I was. I answered: Brazil. He nodded his head positively, which I understood as a signal that something more was to come. And indeed, he did start preaching, in response to my answer, about how easy it is to get people inside the doors of the church in Brazil: 'you just ask and a bunch of people come inside the church'. Afterwards, Maximiliano began preaching to other people present, making a comparison between Brazil and Spain: 'here people do not come to the church. It is harder, but I do believe that God is now touching them and things are getting better'. The assistant, I., said a similar thing, comparing the UCKG in Portugal and Spain: 'here things are harder; in Portugal the services are always crowded'. They did not blame the power of the Devil, as the pastor in Uruguay had done (Oro, 2004: 147), to explain why Brazil still has a higher number of members. Nevertheless, people in the church who know its activities outside Spain also know how difficult it still is to compete for the incredulous souls of a more secularised society.

Rodrigues and Silva (2015: 1389) observed how Brazilian and Cuban female missionaries (assistants) in Barcelona were strongly committed to their duty to create a view of improbable actions, such as bringing Christianity back – in an original form – to Europeans. The Brazilian female assistant I., who was the first person with whom I ever engaged in a conversation about my fieldwork, usually helped people with their UCKG practice after services. On a Friday (17/06/2017), after the first service of the night – there are usually two or three on this day of the week – I. was looking for the other assistants at the entrance to the church. I started to talk with her and she looked at another assistant younger than her and said to me: 'you see, even the assistants here arrive late to church, things are difficult'. I. has been a member of the church for around 35 years and she has a view similar to that of the missionaries described by Rodrigues and Silva. She always tries to help as much as she can, and is devoted to church activities.

A text written by the Bishop Renato Cardoso, translated from Portuguese to Spanish, is still on the website of the church in Spain⁹⁰. The title of the text is 'I do not believe in God anymore', and it begins with the letter of a twelve-year-old girl, who lost her father suddenly when she was six. The girl says that she has not believed in God since the death of her father and feels a grudge when she tries to talk with the Almighty. The most important point she makes is that she has introduced herself to scientific knowledge and considers herself to be a 'person of science', who does not fear the Devil anymore. In the last paragraph of this letter, problems appear: the girl was diagnosed with anorexia nervosa, depression and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). She also describes how

⁹⁰ In: <http://centrodeayudauniversal.es/no-creo-mas-dios/>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

her relationships with other young people her age have changed, since she became a more quiet and sarcastic person. Salvation for her has become empty. Bishop Renato Cardoso responds to her letter by using the example of his life. He says that his father died for him when he was twelve, not physically, but when he (the future bishop) discovered that his father was having an extramarital affair. The bishop says that, after all that time, this fact has made him strong, using a quote from Nietzsche (without citing the German philosopher): 'what does not kill you, makes you stronger'. Afterwards, he replies specifically to the girl's points: he says that religion is bad – it is common to Pentecostals to say that they do not have a religion, that their religion is Jesus; this is also an implicit attack on the Catholic Church, which is the religion that had 'corrupted' Christianity. The church clearly distinguishes itself from Catholic liturgy, and takes a softer line, in its own view. This is why the UCKG's official discourse refers to itself as the church of a living God, who is not only more active – with miracles happening all the time – but also more passionate than the God of classical Catholicism.

Bishop Cardoso also says that her scientific knowledge is a good thing, since she is writing so well and is clearly more advanced than other people of her age are. Furthermore, according to him, it is also a good thing that she does not fear the Devil, since he is despicable. Cardoso says that he will pray for her, so that she can talk to God again without any resentment, and that he is sure that she will get better as he does so.

The girl's letter to Bishop Cardoso illustrates not only the UCKG's discursive strategy of implicitly attacking the Catholic Church, as previously discussed, but also her non-belief. Since she has stopped talking to God and going to church, many problems have occurred in her life, with respect to both her personal health and social life. The message is clear: nobody can achieve a life of plenitude without God. The girl seems smart to the bishop, but that is far from being enough. Her lack of attendance at church and engagement with God have made it possible for demons to manifest themselves in the girl's life. Bishop Cardoso does not say this explicitly, but nonetheless, if all the bad things that happen in a person's life originate in the Devil, as Bishop Macedo says, the fact that she has had different kinds of disturbances in her life immediately after ending her affiliation with God indicates the action of evil entities in the girl's life.

In one sermon (20/06/2016), Pastor Alberto preached about a woman who went to the church with her daughter. The woman, as described by Alberto, was old and blind, and could not walk, since she arrived at the church in a wheelchair. Alberto said that after he said a strong prayer for the woman's health at the altar, she started to walk and see again in front of her daughter. However, even with clear evidence of the miracle in front of her,

according to the pastor, the daughter still did not believe in the powers of the church and he was not able to convince her. More explicitly, on 25/05/2016, Bishop Gilberto Santana made a similar affirmation about atheists' spiritual ignorance, as in the aforementioned citation from Mafra⁹¹. According to the priest, atheists are people who have not had the experience of God or who have not wanted it. In both cases, their superior spiritual knowledge of members means that they are in some way superior to, and more powerful than, nonbelievers. In Madrid, this kind of discourse gives members a licence to overcome not only evil, but also the incredulity that they believe Europeans have. Even though the majority of people in Spain are Christian, the number of non-religious people and non-believers seems to have grown in recent years, hence the creation of a plausible strategy to attract them to the church or at least provide UCKG members with an official discourse with which to combat them.

7.4 A fluid demonology: an adaptable and plural evil

As previously mentioned, Mariz observed that religions fall into two distinctive extremes with respect to their relationships with institutions. The first extreme, as the French sociologist Danièle Hervieu-Léger (2008) and Christopher Partridge (2005) suggested, understands religion as something related to the self. For both authors, religious movements today have a more individualistic approach, and people can separate what they believe from what they do not, making their religious affiliation less institutional and more idiosyncratic. The other extreme is when individuals are fully devoted to a group or an institution, sometimes with a denial of modern values (Rodrigues, 2005: 221). There are affiliations between these extremes: people with formal religious affiliations and points of view that conflict with the institution, people with no formal religion but with a very conservative religious point of view and people in transit between one institution and another⁹².

The UCKG in Madrid probably has similar in-between cases, but members are usually influenced by both extremes. The second extreme is the most obvious, being the most visible characteristic of the church: a highly controlled and controlling hierarchical institution that regulates practices, preaching and campaigns. The first point of view, as the numerous testimonials and institutional message indicate, is related to a fluid understanding of evil, characterised not only by named national entities, but also by

⁹¹ On page 114.

⁹² There are even people with a *bricolage* religion in the Brazilian case, such as, for example, a woman who took Catholicism as her cultural basis and after an accident complemented her faith by participating in the services of the UCKG without a rupture from her affiliation (Rumstain and Almeida, 2009: 42-43). In Madrid, although there are probably cases like this one, members who mix their religions are not well regarded by the more committed members.

causes that become manifest in a member's life. Wyk (2014: 56) observed that the demons are not well described, which means that there is huge scope for imagining what a demonic force actually is. She observed some sort of fluidity in the practices of the UCKG, but she drew on authors who analysed the incorporation of practices from other religions such as Catholicism and traditional Brazilian religiosity (Wyk, 2014: 55)⁹³. However, my concern here is more with the fluidity of the UCKG's demonology. Bishop Macedo, for example, discusses ten signs of demonic possessions, and all of them have a very diffuse form and can fit almost every problem of an individual:

- 1- Jitters
- 2- Headaches
- 3- Insomnia
- 4- Fear
- 5- Constant Fainting
- 6- Suicidal Wishes
- 7- Diseases for which doctors have not found the cause
- 8- Visions of figures or hearing voices
- 9- Addiction
- 10- Depression

(Macedo, 1987: 35)

These symptoms are very open to interpretation, scattered and possibly confusing to members, especially as Macedo observes that not everyone who has these conditions is possessed, although most of them are (Macedo, 1987: 35), and that these are far from the only signs of possession. Pastor Maximiliano told me after a service (18/10/2016) that a person with an addiction to drugs or alcohol can search for help in psychiatry. Nevertheless, if no one finds and delivers the person from the diabolic entity manifesting this disease, the secular cure will only work for a short time until the evil entity becomes manifest again. Maximiliano also explained succinctly, during one of his sermons, what constitutes a diabolical action in a member's life, and what does not. According to him, every person has difficulties and struggles in life. Nonetheless, if the pain and obstacles persist for too long, the probability that it is the work of an evil entity is high.

⁹³ Wyk cites Birman and Lehmann (1999) and Freston (2005), probably because these are both academic works written in English. In Portuguese, there are many other authors who have analysed the incorporation of older religious practices by the UCKG (Almeida, 2009; Mafra, 2002; Mariano, 2007 and 2012; Silva, 2007 and 2015: 200)

At the beginning of many of the services, the first prayer is usually for spiritual cleansing. Even on days when there are no exorcisms (most days); the shout of *sa*⁹⁴ (get out) at the end of the prayer is directed at evil entities that may be around the members. Therefore, the Devil's forces may attack any aspect of someone's life, since all an evil entity wants is to make someone's life a living hell. The possibilities of infestation by demons are even broader for all the preachers in the church; entities can even come from past relatives, like a father or a grandfather. During my visits to Madrid, I saw almost every pastor and bishop talk about how a family member who had made an evil pact in past generations can be the cause of all the trouble. Pastor Lenin tied demons to the destruction of families (23/10/2015) and to the witchery of other family members, which may affect everyone in the family (19/11/2015). Pastor Richard explained during a night service (17/06/2016), forming a line close to the altar with four assistants, how demons affected many generations. The first assistant in the line represented the great-grandfather, the second the grandfather, the third the father and the fourth the UCKG member. As he grabbed the first assistant in the line, Richard explained that here are examples of great-grandfathers making pacts with the Devil and the evil spirit then tormenting the family from that generation right down to the member's generation. As usual, pastors adhered to the official church discourse of a diabolic heritage. Inheriting demonic presence can remove blame from the person tormented by wrong actions in his/her past, creating a friendlier environment for those who feel guilty about their own situation of despair. This also helps to construct the need to save the whole family. Most couples in the UCKG in Madrid usually start coming to the church separately; the conversion of one is the trigger for the conversion of all other family members.

A fluid demonology with a huge capacity for adaptation within a belligerent spiritual discourse is easier when almost every problem with regard to health, wealth and relationships is seen as the work of satanic forces. Therefore, the openness of the church's demonology in these kinds of situations provides a broader range of possibilities of dialogue with the pre-existing cultural environment. Nonetheless, this openness also regards aspects of the individual's life. Since any disease or financial problem can be seen as the work of the Devil, almost every person in a globalised world can fit into the message of the church. The appeal of this kind of discourse is that it can be made to match an 'other' in almost any social structure that contains a belief in supernatural religious or spiritual activities.

⁹⁴ The most interesting thing is that the word is in Portuguese. Even Spanish pastors often scream the word in Portuguese.

Demons are never completely absent from the services of the UCKG. The manifested entities are never fully cast out. A demonic presence is not only a way of materializing what a demon can do to a person; it is also a spiritual belief, as noted by Wariboko⁹⁵. God is the only one able to achieve complete victory in the apocalypse. Empowerment given by the Holy Spirit only allows a person to expel the evil from the church temporarily, but it always returns. There is similar reasoning about the role of the *exús* in many Brazilian Pentecostal services (Silva, 2015): they are cast out, but they are 'guests'⁹⁶ who always return. Winning a battle does not mean being free; every time an evil is overcome another one emerges in a different form (Bradnick, 2015: 160).

Hence, the demonology of the UCKG is fluid with regard to the action of the Devil's entities in the world. It has four main characteristics. First, anything that goes wrong mentally or physically in the lives of a member, such as with respect to wealth, relationships, family or even any kind of failure to achieve a goal, may be a symptom of evil. Second, as a global religious enterprise, the UCKG needs to adapt its demons to each location; they must be comprehensible to the religious clientele of the church. Third, the inheritance of, or unwitting contact with, a demonic presence makes it possible for a member to overcome a family life of wrongdoing, which also removes most of his/her responsibility for 'mistaken' actions and practices – since the demons are inherited. Fourth, even after demons have been expelled, they can, and usually do, return, so it is not only important but also necessary to maintain a constant vigilance in social relationships and behaviours.

This fluid demonology gives the UCKG the characteristic of a religious panacea. Since every bad aspect of life is considered demonic, there is a sort of spiritual pathologisation of any aspect of life in which someone is unsuccessful. The UCKG transforms everything seen as bad in an individual's life, especially poverty, which becomes a spiritual disease, into something that comes from a world infested by demons. Since the borders between the spiritual and material realms in the UCKG discourse are blurry, the spiritual panacea of the church expands its ability to cure all aspects of an individual's life. If everything is pathological (demonic), then one must need a panacea capable of curing everything. The fluidity of the church's demonology also works dialectically with the fluidity of the cures it provides.

7.5 Becoming the symptoms: the absence of religious anthropophagy

⁹⁵ In: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ggNXEILVwzY>. During a lecture at Boston University. More precisely at 26:00. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

⁹⁶ Wariboko's expression in the video.

In the absence of prior knowledge of Afro-Brazilian entities, and with the discourse of a decadent and sceptical Europe, there is a change in the spiritual warfare of the church. Demons still infest the world, but have their own regional characteristics. In Madrid, it was quite common to see people who were possessed by demons be interviewed by pastors and bishops, just as the church does worldwide. Nevertheless, compared to demonic forces in Brazil, which act in a way similar to that of the entities of Afro-Brazilian religions, especially those of Candomblé, the demons' performances in Madrid are different. As I will observe, even the names of the entities have become more secular, as demons name themselves after the symptoms described by Macedo.

Alfredo Oliva described a regular exorcism in the Brazilian UCKG as follows:

A woman possessed by a demon is the first one. 'What is your name (the pastor asks)'? 'Exú Caveira, I want to kill all of her kin'. 'What did you get (he asks again)'? 'A black rooster to kill all her family'. 'What did you do to her daughter (he asks once more)'? 'Prostitution, drinking, cigarettes, everything she likes' (Oliva, 2007: 94)⁹⁷.

We can observe that the demon has a specific name: in this case, Exú Caveira. This follows a path similar to that of other exorcisms performed by the church in Brazil. Demons usually have names of traditional evil entities from Christianity and from Afro-Brazilian religions, as in the aforementioned case. This means that the demons are spiritual entities with a symbolic religious meaning. I proposed that they have been secularised, in a perspective aligned with that of Peter Berger, who sees secularisation as the 'process by which sectors of society and culture are removed from the domination of religious institutions and symbols' (Berger, 1973: 113). In this sense, as I indicate below, exorcisms in Madrid have had their symbolic religious meaning removed, at least at some level, in comparison to the Brazilian ones.

In a service led by Maximiliano (06/11/2016), the pastor, as usual, interviewed a girl possessed by an entity during the exorcism. He asked the possessed girl to tell him the name of the entity, to which she replied 'failure and unhappiness'. Unlike in the UCKG services in Brazil, the demon no longer calls itself an *exú* or other classic name for the Devil, such as Beelzebub or Baphomet. The girl's performance did not include claw-shaped hands, formed by the contraction of the fingers to make the hands look similar to animal claws, a process that is very similar to the incorporation of people in Candomblé and to the possession of demons in the UCKG at its home country. In Afro-Brazilian

⁹⁷ Free translation from the Portuguese.

religions, the *pomba gira*, an entity related to women in Brazil, usually laughs and dances, spinning violently, even when men receive this spirit. In the UCKG, pastors spiritually imprison these entities during the exorcisms. The girl in the service never laughed or made gestures resembling the *pomba gira* during her incorporation; she just whispered an answer when the pastor asked her something. Maximiliano also had trouble getting her to obey his commands; he asked her to pass through a door that was near the altar, and when she refused, he asked God to intervene for a while, until she finally entered it. The girl appeared to be in an almost aphasic state at times, not responding and just looking down while the pastor was screaming at her. There was hardly any conversation between the pastor and the entity, nor was there any propaganda against the evil actions of other religions by the *pomba gira* – since it is common that the church’s evil entities in Brazil propagandise against other religions, saying they belong to a specific religion or church.

During my research in Madrid, I never saw any of the possessed referring to themselves as an entity from the Afro-Brazilian religions. The only time that I saw someone calling the demon a *pomba gira* (an entity mostly known as the spirit of a prostitute) was in the *Señales* service, led by Pastor Alberto, as previously mentioned. Nonetheless, the possessed person did not say the name of the demon. Furthermore, I was able to see demons claiming that they were the cause of bankruptcy, depression, drug addiction and many other symptoms commonly accepted by the church as having origins in Satan. However, demons also named themselves – as in the example of the aforementioned girl – according to the symptoms they caused. In most exorcisms, the person in charge of the deliverance never asked the names of the demons, which seems plausible if we take into consideration the absence of knowledge of entities demonised by the UCKG, since most people in the church are not Brazilian. The only exception was the exorcism of R., a Brazilian woman who had recently moved to Madrid, who performed enthusiastically a few times. Hence, the fluid demonology of the church adapted itself to a more secular environment, at least in relation to the demonic forces. Performances were also less enthusiastic; sometimes there were no guttural voices, claws were absent, the gestures of the *pomba gira* were lacking, too, and communication in the interviews contained much less information in comparison to the church in Brazil, where the demons give theological advice and say bad things about competing Pentecostal denominations⁹⁸. It is worth

⁹⁸ In a video on YouTube, the possessed person is interviewed by Macedo, and talks about the actions of the Devil inside her. She also says, during her trance, that Macedo’s church leads to salvation, and that demonic forces command the World Church of the Power of God, whose leader, Valdemiro Santiago, she even imitates in gestures and words. At: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JKZD124-Ucl>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

remembering that, even when evil entities in Brazil do not refer to themselves as Afro-Brazilian in origin, they perform in a way similar to that of possessed people in Candomblé. Discussion with entities, who usually talk about the misguided behaviour of the members and even demonise other Pentecostal preachers, are also absent. In Madrid, the possessed individual usually answers the questions of the pastors with moaning, and most of the time it takes a while to gather even the simplest information, like what the demon is doing in the person's life.

In movies and books about exorcism, having the name of the demon gives power over the entity. In Brazil, the church follows a similar path, but not in Madrid. The power of the church is, according to its characteristic as a panacea, not really about overcoming a particular evil with a symbolic religious meaning. As I observed at the beginning of the chapter, Ronaldo Almeida (2009: 123) has analysed how competition with Afro-Brazilian religions has given UCKG exorcisms in Brazil an anthropophagic characteristic. This is a way to absorb the power of these entities, by continually believing in them and even performing like them, while offering a new symbolic good – the salvation of the UCKG – which shows itself to be better. Nonetheless, in the case of Madrid, the church has lost its anthropophagic characteristic regarding these entities. The focus is on the Devil himself as a problem that can occur in someone's life. He is not the cause; he is the problem itself. Of course, the characteristic of showing itself to be a better option than esotericism, atheism or even other religions is still present, which may represent some sort of anthropophagic characteristic. It is arguable that the church still has an anthropophagic characteristic by feeding symbolically on the overcoming problems in individuals' lives. However, the reduction in this symbolic cannibalism with regard to specific religions can be seen not only in the entities' loss of religious significance, but also in the reduction in the number of exorcisms practiced. I went to many services on Friday nights, when it was most likely that exorcisms would happen, and in a few of them, no evil entities were incorporated in any members. The Devil as *personae*, in Madrid, is not only diminishing as a character, but also decreasing his manifestations.

7.6 Muslims paying tithes: interreligious dialogue in the UCKG in Madrid

The reduction of the anthropophagic characteristic of the church in Madrid brings other consequences. I was lucky to be present in the last service (07/06/2016) when Pastor Alberto congregated with Muslims and Hindus. The service had the features of a restoration of wealth session, and people from other religions were present because food was going to be donated. After this specific service, the time for donations was moved to

an earlier time of the day – when there were no services at all –, and in the following week, there was no significant Muslim participation in the service.

When I arrived at the church, Pastor Alberto came in right behind me to start the service. While he was passing by me, I could see wheelbarrows and bags along the wall of the church, which I later realised had been brought by the Muslims to carry the donated food. The service had around fifty participants, and most of the Muslims and Hindus were women. There was one Muslim man with a few women, but he was not much involved in what followed. Pastor Alberto summoned everyone to come near the altar, asking everybody to hold hands: Pentecostals, Muslims, Hindus (of whom there were only two or three) and curious people who were in the service. After this preaching, when the pastor blessed everybody, Alberto started to talk about the church and how important and sacred it is, since it connects men and God directly, an argument which may have been an implicit criticism of Catholicism and the mediation of the saints.

Later, Alberto began to preach to the people there, talking about the prophet Isaiah, and asking a Muslim woman if she knew about him. The woman responded affirmatively with a nod of her head. Alberto then said that Isaiah was the only person – I do believe he was considering Jesus to be a non-human being – in the Bible capable of both curing people and casting out demons. The pastor is probably aware of the recognition of Isaiah as a prophet in Islam, since historians of the Islamic tradition often read a few passages of his book in the Bible as a prophesy of the coming of Muhammad (Isaiah, 42: 1-12) or a prediction of his migration from Mecca to Medina (Isaiah, 21: 11-17). Considering the history of friction between Islam and Spain since the Inquisition, when Muslims were expelled from the country in massive numbers, especially at the beginning of the 17th century (Kamen, 1979: 126), and also considering the framing of Islam as ‘other’ in the UCKG in Angola (Sampaio, 2014: 12), it was quite a new thing to preach directly to Muslims, particularly about Isaiah.

The sermon continued with Alberto even putting his hands on the head of a woman to bless her. The Muslims seemed not to know what would come next, often looking to each other as if trying to gain some sort of encouragement to engage in the practices. However, none of them looked uncomfortable about the pastor’s preaching and practices. This was confirmed when Alberto asked for monetary contributions from the congregation. At first, I thought that only regular members of the church would give money, which was what happened at the beginning. However, two Muslim women returned to the seats where their handbags were, grabbed a few coins and went back towards the altar to give an offering to God.

Alberto ended the service with a prayer blessing every religion present in the service, even including atheists, so that everybody could receive the benefits of God. I started to talk with the assistant I. about other issues, and went back to chase the pastor to find out who the Muslims were. He told me that many people from other religions attend church to receive donations; the Muslims in particular came mostly from the Spanish cities of Ceuta and Melilla in the North of Africa, which border Morocco. Helping these people in need gives the church a social value. However, efforts like those made by Alberto to engage non-members in the services are rare in the UCKG.

The reciprocity of the interreligious service in Madrid is an indication that the anthropophagic characteristic of the church in Madrid is shrinking. Furthermore, it is also a way to counter accusations of Islamophobia, which is commonly observed in Spanish history and in the more orthodox kinds of Christianity. Nonetheless, if the church has a process of othering witchcraft and also, at some level, the non-believers of a decadent Europe, is there still room for another kind of othering? I do believe so. In the next chapter, I will argue that individual salvation in connection with the fluid and secularised demons of the church opens the possibility for self-othering, a process more related to the experiences of the individual and less to the attacking other groups. This process can widen the demonology of the UCKG in Madrid even further, making the presence of demonic forces an even more pervasive trait.

Chapter 8

Exorcisms, testimonials and the self-other: deliverance from the past

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter, in continuation from the previous one, I further analyse characteristics of the UCKG's spiritual warfare in Madrid, extending it to the moment of conversion. The chapter begins with examples of exorcisms and some insights into why they happen more with women than with men. I try to link this phenomenon with the lower status of women in the church's official discourse, which makes them an easier target for demonic activities.

In the second part of the chapter I examine some testimonials I obtained from different sources that were useful for my research, such as interviews, YouTube videos, testimonials in sermons and even a member trying to take me to a service by using her own example. This last example is very common practice among UCKG members, who engage in a very valuable form of proselytising for the church. Testimonials offer living proof of how members' lives change after conversion, usually in terms of material benefits, health issues and family relationships.

After examining exorcisms and testimonials, I discuss what I believe to be the main characteristic of the UCKG's spiritual warfare and transformation in Madrid: the process of self-othering. Taking into consideration the literature about the creation of an other as an important tool in shaping group identity, I draw particularly on the work of Elias and Scotson (1994). UCKG members engage in an internal spiritual battle between belief and non-belief, which I analysed in the last chapter with regard to the spiritual enemies of the church in Madrid. Their testimonials are usually about a misguided past of consecutive failures and a better present and future, a process which gives the general idea of self-improvement or subjectivation (Marshall, 2009: 131) by conversion. Hence, a member's internal battle, which I call self-othering, is an important tool to help us understand the transformation of an individual into a member.

The church, therefore, gives members an opportunity to be part of a new social group and a new history, but the very broad and fluid demonology creates a plurality of demons that cause numerous problems of different kinds, resulting in a plurality of testimonials by its members.

8.2 Exorcisms and gender: the Devil's preference for women

One of the most notable and odd practices of the UCKG are the exorcisms. These rituals materialise important aspects concerning both the institutional and member understandings of the world. The church website says that demons are under the Devil's command; they are immortal and have more power than humans⁹⁹. They are decadent entities which can no longer be saved by God, and they spend their limitless time trying to bring eternal damnation to human beings by causing them to deviate from the Almighty¹⁰⁰. Hence, the most important thing about demonic entities is their capacity to damage and harm people's lives in every possible way, which I discussed in the last chapter when I discussed the fluidity of demonic forces. The church considers all incorporations of entities to be demonic, if we remove the Holy Spirit from the equation. The difference between the Holy Spirit and demonic manifestations is very easy to grasp if someone is in a meeting in which both are present. The Holy Spirit seems devotional, with members' experiencing full control over and memory of their acts during its manifestation. Incorporated entities perform differently and use different gestures, while the pastor or any other person who represents God and is blessed by the Holy Spirit always has more power than the possessing demons.

I analyse here exorcisms that I saw during my fieldwork in Atocha in order to try and understand the main characteristics of people who manifest these evil entities, what the demons' most common practices are, and how the ritual occurs. Furthermore, I will add a few comments about the importance of these rituals to the members and how it is related to the church's performances of exorcism in Madrid.

Exorcism I (23/10/2015): This was a strong prayer service, with Pastor Lenin in charge, urging people to pass under an enormous veil in the corridor. The veil had been on the altar, and I saw it there a few times afterwards, but not very often. During the brief time that members were walking through the corridor between the chairs and under the veil, the pastor and his assistants were shouting belligerent prayers, as the pastor had coordinated them to fight strongly against the Devil a few moments before. While people were receiving the blessings, a woman started to enter into a trance, with her eyes closed and a shaky walk. A few moments afterwards, she started to manifest an evil entity. However, unlike other exorcisms that I had been used to seeing in the UCKG and other Pentecostal churches in Brazil, there was no interview of the evil entity. Pastor Lenin grabbed her and put both of his hands on her head, saying the word *queima* (burn) repeatedly, until he called on everybody in the church to expel the entity with the word *sai*

⁹⁹ <http://www.universal.org/noticia/2015/06/30/demonios-e-possessoes-33489.html>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

¹⁰⁰ In the cited article, they used the biblical passages of Matthew, 13: 3-9; Mark, 4: 1-20; Luke, 8: 4-15.

(get out) in the name of Jesus. The person possessed by demonic behaviour during the *queima* part acted very similarly in comparison to other UCKG exorcisms: the evil entity begins to feel the flames of the Holy Spirit burning, and starts to scream in what seems to be excruciating pain before being cast out. It is a contrast to the 'Stop Suffering' logo of the church, in which the evil entity responsible, in this case, for making the woman sore and anxious, has to suffer before it is exorcised. For the church and the other members, making the evil entity suffer is a way of proving their power over evil and, therefore, their alignment with God, who is the source of this power. To the possessed member, the ritual of making the entity suffer with a spiritual burning is a moment to return all the suffering they have experienced to its originator, before totally expelling of the demonic force along with the symptoms of suffering. The best way to struggle against these forces is to go to church often, have full devotion to Jesus, and engage in specific practices like fasting and praying. The church stresses that a person should not only use the name of Jesus as a medicine to treat demonic forces; the name should also be used with full devotion. When pastors call upon the name of Jesus, this is the right way to preach, according to Kenneth Hagin, one of the most important theologians of Pentecostalism. According to Hagin (2010), to call Jesus' name is the only way to avoid evil in all its forms.

Exorcism II (06/11/2015): Another characteristic common to UCKG exorcisms all around the world was illustrated by another strong prayer/deliverance service. The exorcism took place after an initial strong prayer, when a young girl, no more than 25 years old, began to shake and scream very loudly while, in front of her, an assistant was holding the back of her hand in a clinching position. The manifested entity gave an interview to Pastor Lenin, who was responsible for the exorcism that day. This happens quite commonly in Bishop Macedo's exorcisms; he acquires information about what is happening in the life of the members affected by demonic forces. Lenin first asked the demon to put the girl's hands behind her back, as if she was in handcuffs. Unlike the Brazilians who are familiar with entities from Afro-Brazilian religions, such as Umbanda and Candomblé, and usually curl their fingers like claws, the girl held her fingers straight.

The interview was very rough, since the possessed woman was fighting against the pastor's commands. He asked what the demon was doing in the woman's life, and the response included misery, depression and suicidal thoughts. Lenin then asked how many demons were inside the member, and the response in a guttural voice was two hundred thousand. After the same process described above, involving a collective and repeated scream of *queima*, the woman was freed from all the demons. However, she had to keep coming to the church to make sure that the spiritual cleansing lasted. In Spain, there are no political issues in interviews with evil entities, at least in the ones that I saw. The

message for the girl to keep coming to the church was internalised by threats that the evil entity would return, bringing all her problems back with it. Thus, it is not just the good things or gifts that result from conversion and full devotion which maintain the member's church attendance, but rather the fear of evil and especially of its activities in someone's life that is perhaps the best mode of persuasion in the UCKG.

Exorcism III (17/06/2016): On another Friday night, at the beginning of the strong prayer service, after a very inspired and belligerent prayer against evil entities, a Brazilian woman, R., started to scream while a female assistant was holding her. Her screams were louder than those of the possessed who come from other parts of Latin America. Pastor Richard got closer to her, and she fell on her knees to the ground. The preacher asked the assistant to lift her up with care, avoiding any kind of injuries. The interview with this possessed middle-aged woman began with answers about what the evil entity was doing in her life. The entity was responsible for the drug addiction and prostitution of family members. However, her language was very odd to Spanish speakers, since it contained many Portuguese words – the aforementioned *Portunhol*. Richard asked the demonic entity to speak in Spanish in a strong and almost disrespectful way. The mistreatment of possessed people is common, but not with aggressive gestures or violence, and it is always directed towards the demon, as a way of humiliating it. Once again, the woman started to speak in a characteristic guttural voice, but in an incorrect form of Spanish, and after a few more questions, the pastor asked again for the entity to speak correctly. This then happened a third time: the possessed woman was incapable of speaking correctly and responded to the pastor's demand in a loud guttural scream, in Portuguese: 'Eu não sei falar espanhol!' (I do not speak Spanish!). After this, the pastor decided that it was time to cast the demon out, following the same ritual, repeating first *queima* and then *sai*. The church's multiculturalism demonstrated linguistic limitations when a person was unable to speak Spanish even when possessed! Nonetheless, as Llana van Wyk (2014: 70) has observed, the demons of the UCKG enter into dialogue with both the global and the local. This woman had had the evil entities in her life ever since she lived in Brazil. She had brought the Brazilian *capeta* (devil) with her all the way to Spain, and unlike in Catholicism, in which a demon can and should speak in different languages – especially biblical ones –, it is possible for a demon to fail to acknowledge a specific language.

A similar pattern occurs with all exorcised people after the evil entities have left their bodies. They all regain full awareness, and become very emotional, sometimes with tears in their eyes. They usually do not remember clearly the struggle between their possessed version and the holy men who have just taken the demonic force from their beings. They

are always relieved and offer testimonials of immediate improvements in relation to their feelings. People often say that they came to the church charged with bad energy, and after the exorcisms, they all felt lighter and relieved. The person in charge of the exorcism always recommends that the exorcised person come back to the church and continue to maintain regular visits to avoid further action by evil entities. The only way to save oneself and remain saved is by devotion and regularity.

Exorcism IV (26/06/2016): In the *Señales* special service, led by Pastor Alberto on a Sunday afternoon, the number of possessions was similar to that in Brazil. The service was crowded, and later the pastor explained to me that he used a language that was easier for non-members to understand, since, according to him, there were many in the service. The gathering started with a prayer, and afterwards, Alberto showed a video on the screen of the church of a possessed man in a market, consequently observing that this was proof that evil entities existed everywhere. After the video, a stronger prayer began, with people among the crowd acting very emotionally. A few entities manifested in some people near the altar, after Alberto called on them to appear. The Brazilian woman R., who was again possessed by the non-Spanish speaking demon, was among them. This was also the first time that I saw a man possessed, after a pastor pointed at him and made eye contact – one pastor or one bishop heads the bigger and more important services, but usually, as in this case, there are more pastors around, even from other temples of the church in Madrid. Neither could be exorcised by Alberto, so other pastors undertook the task and expelled the demons from the possessed.

The head pastor was more concerned with another woman whom he took to the altar. Her husband followed her, while she was almost in a catatonic state, talking very quietly and only after the pastor had made repeated efforts to get her to speak. Alberto began to interview the husband who was not possessed. The man said that they were having difficulties with the marriage, as the woman never stayed at home and did not want to do anything. Alberto then turned to the woman again, who was having a difficult time answering his questions, which caused the pastor to command the demon to stop confusing her. The demon then said that its main goal was to destroy their marriage. However, as I observed when I discussed the secularisation of demons, what was missing were hands curled into claws, a guttural voice and the possessed person calling herself by the name of an evil entity from the UCKG's demonological pantheon.

After the entity manifested itself, the whole interview became a spiritual battle between the pastor and the possessed woman. Alberto had a wooden cross in his hands and started to put it on the girl's forehead. They both fell to the ground, with the pastor still

making the same motion with the cross, and after a while he started to scream the word *queima*, which made the girl scream in agony. During this process, Alberto said: burn *pomba gira*, a demon that according to Bishop Macedo (2005b: 37) is responsible for making women too sexualised. This was the only time that I saw a pastor calling the name of an Afro-Brazilian entity in my fieldwork. However, the girl never referred to herself as a *pomba gira*. Her demon was named by Pastor Alberto, a representative of the UCKG's official discourse in Brazil, despite his desire to be more inclusive in his sermons for the local people and non-members that attended the services.

Exorcisms follow a few sociological patterns. Most of the possessed people I saw in Madrid were women, something that Bishop Gilberto Santana helped me to observe, since he asked in a crowded service on a Sunday morning how many people there had been freed from evil entities. Between 5 and 10% of the people raised their hands, of whom the great majority were women. Roger Bastide (1973), who did his research in Brazil, studied Candomblé possessions and observed that the rituals and gestures of possessed people followed patterns, and had a certain moment to occur, controlled by the social group (Costa and Moraes Júnior, 2014: 78). Ronaldo Almeida (2009) used Bastide's work to analyse possessions in the UCKG. I would add the characteristic of self-othering, the concept I developed in the last chapter, into this equation. As Julio Caro Baroja observed, 'the exterior signs of possession are almost always the same. The individuality disappears and a new demonic individuality, emerged like an attack, substitutes it (...)'. (Baroja, 1978: 185-186). Thus, I believe that demonic incorporations in the UCKG are group performances in the context of cultural practices and performances, but with room for individualities. All the aforementioned possessed people had demons that gave them a different personality. However, this new personality is always linked to their past or present problems, making it an antithesis. If the member suffers from different kinds of problems, a new persona is responsible for causing them.

It is also necessary to explain why women are the most common target of evil entities. Lewis observed that oppressed people in a condition of lower status, which in modern society includes almost all women, most commonly experience religious ecstasy¹⁰¹. Lewis also understands that marginal religions, which could include sects from a Weberian perspective, attract the subordinated in general, especially women (1977: 178). Hence, despite the fact that discussions of gender by male academics in the early 1970s¹⁰² were still in their early stages, Lewis provided a substantial analysis of women and religious ecstasy, which can help in the case of the UCKG in Madrid, since women

¹⁰¹ Lewis analyses the statistics of the Tarantela, which is a popular religious practice in Italy (1977: 126).

¹⁰² The book was first printed in 1971.

are who mostly attend the services. Nevertheless, a discourse that regards women as more susceptible to the Devil's work is nothing new in Spanish society. The main book that inspired the Inquisition and the witch-hunt, *Malleus Maleficarum*, understood women as an easier target for evil forces since '(...) they were weaker, more stupid, superstitious and sensual' (Russell, 1995: 69). The same occurs in the UCKG, since church discourse understands women as more inclined to possess evil entities and be disturbed by them (Pimentel, 2005: 25). Bishop Macedo also puts women in a lower status position, saying that a woman's main job is to assist a man with procreation, educate the children, care for the house, and act in emotional ways: 'the man is the head, but the woman is the heart' (Macedo, 2007: 18). The leader of the UCKG goes further, saying that even if a woman is not married to a member of the church, she should be submissive to him (Macedo, 2005b: 40).

The cases of the possessed women described above follow a similar social pattern. They are all struggling with social pressures, economic and/or matrimonial difficulties and especially temptations and actions that go against correct behaviour as preached by the church. The feeling of failure in a competitive society is common, especially for those lower down the Spanish social scale: immigrant women. Moreover, with the church's spiritual justifications of oppression and the non-successes that these women are having in their lives, the manifestation of entities frees them, in a certain way, from the guilt of being responsible for their own lives. Furthermore, the symbolic break made from the old self represents a newly born person, who must follow the rules, gestures, attitudes and behaviours preached by the UCKG. To understand these new ideas brought by the UCKG, the member should also understand his or her former behaviour as sinful. Thus, a self-otherness is the only way towards a re-signification of the self. The dialectical movement of the self in relation to its old and sinful past through a new, opulent existence in the presence of the grace of the Holy Spirit is what the UCKG provides best. Testimonials, exorcisms, baptisms and prayers are all focused on the sinful past and the blessed present and future. One of the pillars of UCKG theology is that, without a real testimonial of the change in someone's life, there is no real entry into the new faith, as Pastor Alberto observed. Without the old self, there is no new one; a new religion in a new environment needs proofs of its effectiveness in the lives of the members. The exorcisms are part of the process of becoming a new member, like a rite of passage, a material example that shows how a bad condition can be overturned by a few words and gestures from holy men, in order for a possessed person to be reborn and freed from the evil spirits.

As I observed in the last chapter, demonic forces leave the church members through exorcism, but they always come back. There are two ways this can happen: the first is via members who fall, materially or spiritually, which is blamed not only on their own actions, but also on the actions of these evil forces. The other way is, of course, through the process of internalising church discourse towards newcomers, who must understand that their problems are a dialectic between personal actions (e.g. their unholy former faith or disbelief) and demonic actions. Therefore, internalisation of the discourse and learning the performativity of the exorcisms are fundamental pillars of UCKG practice, not only in relation to rebirth, but also with respect to managing the problems of the newly initiated members of the church.

8.3 Individual salvation: the bishop's example

The Brazilian sociologist Antônio Flávio Pierucci analysed the growth of Brazilian Pentecostalism and the impact of its changes in that country. He understands the movement as a religion that has the character of individual salvation (Pierucci: 2006, 122). This is not new, since R. H. Tawney (1971) observed something similar about earlier phases of Protestantism. However, Pierucci uses recent data and focuses on Pentecostalism, something that Tawney's book, originally released in 1926, does not. From Pierucci's perspective, religion can transform individuals, removing them from their former lives and routinised communities. He follows Max Weber, who observed religion as a possible tool for social transformation. Nevertheless, if religion provides a path towards social mobility, there is a need to change an individual's mentality; personal change will be the first step to social transformation.

The UCKG's fluid demonology is its most obvious and most efficient discourse to induce newcomers to acknowledge their own deviance. The transformation of members' lives, therefore, works in a dialectic with their past. The application of this idea of a misguided past without God, is present at the beginning of every testimonial inside the church. It is difficult to choose a specific testimonial as an example of the general idea of a dialectic between a misguided past and a prosperous future with the UCKG, because they are so numerous and so standardised that we have an excess of options. I am using the testimonial of Bishop Gilberto Santana, for two main reasons. First, because I went to many services preached by him, in which he often said things about his past life before his full conversion to the church. Furthermore, there is a publicly available video on YouTube¹⁰³ that tells his life history before and after his conversion. Another reason is that, according to his story, at the beginning of his conversion he shared with other church

¹⁰³ In: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZRZ5Yy-JrnY>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

members an initial lack of motivation to abide by the strict rules of the church. Gilberto Santana, like many other members, first came to the church and then left it for a brief period, though he returned later.

His biographical video asserts that he came from a broken family with an alcoholic father and a hopelessly sick brother. Gilberto suffered from fears and visions. Then his family came to the UCKG and was rebuilt by their connection with the word of God. Nonetheless, after a romantic disappointment, Gilberto left the church for three years, while his family members were still active and faithful. The video says that the bishop-to-be became acquainted with vicious practices and nightclubs, deviating even further from the church's guidelines, which made him depressed and lonely. During a church TV show on a Saturday afternoon, Gilberto got in touch with the religious message again, and received the Holy Spirit after six months. He became a missionary pastor, preaching the gospel worldwide, and also meeting his wife on one of his trips abroad. The video does not explain, however, the dramatic tone of Santana's family conversion. In one service (01/11/2015) he preached, while he was making his theological assumptions about the full devotion of a member to God, he used his mother as an example. She was the first in his family to convert, was threatened with death by the bishop's father, but was still able to persuade everyone in the family to join the church after a while. With a broken family, a misguided everyday behaviour and a sick brother, Gilberto had every reason to see his life as a failure from every angle.

The bishop's biography confirms Pierucci's assertion that the UCKG is also a universal religion of individual salvation. The whole family converted altogether, curing and rebuilding their bonds, but Gilberto was a rebel who left the church even after being blessed. The example of falling again into mundane temptations is important, because the church still bears a stigma about providing miracles in emergencies. Full salvation and receiving the Holy Spirit are also personal achievements. Hence, Santana had to understand that his life was deviant not once, but twice. His biography serves as an example for people who leave the church after receiving what they want; a member should recognise his or her past as a sinful and deviant path and remain in the church, even in good times. Members should also remain constantly vigilant, with the mediation of the church, since the threat of the return of demons is always present.

Unlike many other testimonials, Gilberto's video does not display his prosperity. The most important testimonial for a preacher is the transformation from a sinful past to a future empowered by the Holy Spirit. Leaders set an example, but advertising the prosperity of leaders as individuals is avoided; only the regular members reveal the miracle of money

and material blessings. To show pastors and bishops living a life of luxury – and not all pastors do – could be seen as an exploitation of members who live in poverty and are persuaded to donate money. However, the prosperity of pastors and bishops is implicit in their sermons and testimonials of change. In one afternoon service (01/11/2016), Pastor Maximiliano said that when he first arrived at the church his family did not have any money to pay the tithes and sacrifices. This provoked shame, according to him, but his empowerment – spiritual and material – through the payment of tithes is implicit in his preaching, since he now works for the church and helps other members to receive blessings as well.

Examples of testimonials that focus on the prosperity of members occur in every meeting regarding financial recovery; it is almost impossible to get through an entire week of going to church without seeing one. The principle of sacrifice – giving first to receive in turn – is always present. It happens in different ways. The most common testimonials come from the people from the Atocha temple itself, and via videos made by people worldwide. These videos are usually from Brazil (which require subtitles) or other countries in Latin America¹⁰⁴. The importance of testimonials is huge for church purposes; it is the main marketing approach to make those who have benefited from the Holy Spirit visible among other members and newcomers. Conversations among members after the services always use the experience of older members and assistants in order to teach beginners how to become more committed to the church's activities and theology.

Another example is the Spanish assistant Ro. (14/06/2016), who asked me if I was a new member. I replied that I was a researcher who was studying the church for doctoral purposes. She simply did not care and said that I should be in the service on Sunday, which would be good for me – and implicitly for my salvation. I had previously scheduled to go at another time on that Sunday. She wanted me to come to the afternoon service, while I wanted to be in the morning one, which was the most crowded. When I was reluctant to accept her invitation, Ro appealed to her own experience, saying: 'at first, I was like you; I did not commit myself totally to the church. I was a partial member and I lived a partial life'. Her past, seen as misguided, worked in her testimonial to exemplify how the micro propaganda of the UCKG's discourse works, with a 'before' of deviation and an 'after' of glory. She asked for my cell phone number and my name, in case I did not show up at the service, so that she could pray vicariously for me. Nonetheless, despite

¹⁰⁴ Sometimes the videos can come from other places in Europe as well. Bishop Carlos Rocha played one from his home country, Portugal (16/11/2016), in which a couple talked about how their business was ruined and how, after joining the church, they owned countless apartments in that country. The bishop had to translate the general idea from the video, which did not have subtitles.

prayers on others' behalf, salvation must come from a personal choice to be at services; to be fully there, not partially.

The experiences of Ro. and Gilberto apply to almost every member who sometimes doubts the real benefits of the church. Changes must be visible and acknowledged by the person who joins, which may be used later as a testimonial to be shared with all the other members of the church. However, individual salvation needs an important self-understanding of one's deviant life before conversion. In the next section, I will further discuss the process that I call self-othering, trying to find some patterns in this logic of using the past as an example of a bad thing in the discourses of church members.

8.4 Self-othering in testimonials

The examples of Gilberto Santana and Ro. indicate that the personal shift towards a different life is the main core of the church's message to newcomers. Others outside the church – Catholics, practitioners of Afro-Brazilian religions, members of other Pentecostal denominations and unbelievers, to name a few – identify with a more personal and fluid other: fears, bankruptcy, family problems and so on. Thus, the UCKG works by othering not only other religious groups, but also individual practices and conditions. Craig Svonkin (2010) proposed self-othering as a concept, without much concern for the sociological impact, since he was more interested in illustrating the difference between the past and the present of the writer Allen Ginsberg. Svonkin (2010: 167) explained that the self-othering of the beatnik writer was

(...) a psycho-historical move in which a poet attempt to kills off his white, male, American-identified self and adopt a subaltern ego, a marginalized series of fragmented identities, or an operatic, syncretic, hybridized identity, in order to create a sense of poetic freedom (...).

I believe that on a social and individual level, the UCKG promotes a process similar to the one observed by Svonkin. Nonetheless, unlike Ginsberg's self-othering, which made him try to 'kill' his old dominant identity to become subaltern in his writing – at least in Svonkin's opinion –, the self-othering in the UCKG works in another way: the transformation divides the past of a lower being, at some level, from the present/future of a potential successful and fulfilled new being.

The ontological transformation of a regular person into a member must include an acknowledgment of an evil and deviant past. A huge and important part of it is related to a form of social failure. Bankruptcy means that a provider was not effective in his social role within the family; an unfaithful husband sets a bad example in a monogamist Christian

family; and even an unhealthy person may be an example of deviation from the word of God. Recognising the errors of the past is not only a process of opening up one's mistakes to the public via testimonials, but also a way of remembering what the member does not want to experience anymore. The pattern is similar:

The message is always the same: before the conversion – an unbeliever, nervous, unhappy, depressed, bewildered, sick, full of upsets from childhood and vicious, an afflicted and empty soul, life is a disappointment and suicide is the solution for numerous problems. After conversion: an optimistic believer, fulfilled, full of peace, love and joy. (Rodrigues and Ruuth, 1999: 110).

To the analyses of Rodrigues and Ruuth I would add the characteristics of poverty and prosperity, which were left out of their paragraph, but which are perhaps the most valuable for the church. The resemblance to the Narcotics or Alcoholics Anonymous group therapy is huge, and perhaps the psychology underlying both is similar. The member has to deal with a past full of problems and live one day at a time. A constant awareness of his or her own actions must be maintained. Self-othering seems to be a logical step for a church that preaches the transformation of lives with material proof given by God. Salvation becomes more mundane and exists in dialectical friction with the before and after of conversion. Testimonials like the ones already mentioned are the most important marketing tool of the church, which uses longstanding members as examples for newcomers.

Attributing an inferior social value to other groups (Elias and Scotson, 1994: xv), which is another strategy used by the UCKG to construct external 'others' (with regard to different religious groups), becomes internalised and spiritual. The inferior being, the stranger, the other, is the very same individual along with his/her former affiliations or non-beliefs. This process follows a pattern similar to that proposed by Elias and Scotson, such as the *pars pro toto* argument (Elias and Scotson, 1994: xix). In the case of Winston Parva, the name they chose for the anonymous city where they studied the process of differentiation of social groups, one of the communities used what is considered 'best' to make an affirmation of the whole group – in this case, their own. The 'worst' or the anomic was the image of the other group, which tended not to follow social rules properly.

In the UCKG's case in Madrid, the discovery of a new member's problematic past/present – or if one is already a member and is making a testimonial, of one's past in particular – is one of the most common characteristics. Members, as in the aforementioned cases and in the observations made by Ruuth and Rodrigues, follow a similar path: the bad

aspects of a former life, before one's conversion to the church. This does not mean that people do not have any problems in their lives; it means that, while speaking as a member of the church to a public audience in the form of a testimonial, they highlight only the worst part of their former lives. These rules also apply to their new lives after rebirth by the Holy Spirit; testimonials focus only on the best aspects of members' lives. If a person is poor but has achieved a cure for a disease, the economic aspects are absent from the testimonial and the focus is on health. If the person benefitted materially from the Holy Spirit, the testimonial will be about that.

8.4.1 Examples of self-othering in testimonials

I rely on four examples to observe this aspect of self-othering in the UCKG in Madrid. I chose people from different backgrounds, genders and ages to convey a sense of self-othering as a quasi-generalised characteristic of the church in Spain. Perhaps in Brazil cases may vary more, since there are more people born to parents who are already members of the church. However, this is rare in Madrid, and as far as I could see from the data I collected, only children of a young age were born as church members.

Case 1- I. was a Brazilian woman, an assistant, of around 65 years old, and a member for more than thirty years. In a conversation with me, I. told me she had suffered from severe shyness and panic syndrome before becoming a member of the church in Brazil, decades ago. She also highlighted how the church had helped her to achieve material benefits – a high salary in Brazil as a school principal – through sacrifice. She had already donated 25 thousand *reais* (around 6 thousand pounds) to the church all at once. I. considered herself to be the most successful among her siblings, though she had had more difficulties than them, and believed herself to be the least clever. She had completely overcome her problems through God and her non-member sisters could not understand how successful she was. She gave the credit to God and to the church.

Case 2 – D. was a Brazilian man, around 30 years old, and a regular member for more than 10 years. D. had moved to Spain thinking it would be easy to find a job and get rich. He did not have any money when he arrived at the Familia Unida building in Madrid. 'I had nothing more than two t-shirts,' he said to me. D. had a background of religious pilgrimage: he was born into a Catholic family, but tried Brazilian Spiritism, the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Brazilian Assemblies of God. He said that Catholicism is soft on homosexuality, since 'everyone who reads the Bible knows that this is forbidden,' D. says. He also complained about members from the Assemblies of God, who lack motivation for enrichment, saying that 'People who come from there to the UCKG are surprised that you can make money and be saved.'

Case 3 – G. was a Colombian woman who had been a regular member for about 3 years and was around 20 years old. She had come from a family ‘destroyed by drug addiction.’ When she was twelve, G. started to drink and smoke cigarettes, later getting into marijuana. At 15 years old, G. became initiated into witchcraft and had an abortion. She had had contacts with dead people – because of her contact with witchcraft – and seen dark figures all the time that haunted her. Just before coming to the church for the first time, G. was suffering from depression and had suicidal urges. During that time, she was invited to come to the UCKG, and when she found out about the church, she brought her family. She was cured of her addictions and depression; she also no longer had any contact with the ‘dark side of the spiritual world’.

Case 4 – W. was a Brazilian woman who had been a member for more than ten years and was around 40 years old. W. had chronic pain in her abdomen, which caused her so much despair and depression that she had twice thought about killing herself and ended up in a psychiatric hospital. W. also had a very troubled relationship with a man – she implicitly referred to some sort of domestic violence during this time. She went to the church and started to sacrifice in the Holy Fire of Israel from the very first day. ‘I needed fast results,’ W. said. All of her problems disappeared; she had no pain anymore and was engaged to another man. W. said that ‘the church helped me learn how to forgive.’

Conversion to the church is followed by spiritual healing in all aspects of someone’s life. Letting the past go does not mean the complete absence of it. The antithesis between non-affiliation to the church and the new affiliation is always present. We can also see that a plurality of blessings is achieved; the cures are social, economic, spiritual and even biological. The fluidity of the demonic attacks creates, as mentioned in the last chapter, a religious panacea that transcends salvation in the spiritual realm: blessings, cures and salvations are to be achieved on Earth.

This kind of conversion as preached by the UCKG is in line with the assumptions of Danièle Hervieu-Léger (2008: 109), who sees that this change occurs when a person has left an older religious identity, or did not have any kind of affiliation at all, to incorporate a new religious identity. According to Hervieu-Léger, the most common argument is the ‘deception’ with regard to the former affiliation (I would add that in some cases there is no affiliation), which was incapable of giving answers to his or her social and spiritual questions. The process in the UCKG is similar, but self-othering works not only by creating a new identity and seeing the deception practiced by a former affiliation. It goes further, demonising and bringing back the failures of the past to highlight the new prosperous and healthy life. The older identity, seen as mistaken and demonic, is interdependent, and is

as important as the new one in the testimonials. The UCKG sells the possibility of overcoming mundane problems with spirituality.

When, in an interview after a service (29/06/2016), Pastor Alberto told me that the most important things for the church are the changes in someone's life and receiving the Holy Spirit, he also acknowledged the importance of people's testimonials after experiencing both. Individual salvation serves as an example that makes it easier for newcomers to understand and internalise the message of a misguided past in which the church's guidelines for salvation were not known or followed, and which usually brings about the need for self-othering. The demonisation of the former self is capable of empowering the new self. It gives the new self a form of charisma through the blessing of the Holy Spirit, and also gives a new sociability, full of people with similar problems in the past that were capable of overcoming them. The bad experiences of members are re-signified to the public, as a form of propaganda, to demonstrate the absence of grace and how, with the restoration of the covenant with God, a person can achieve unimaginable blessings. It is not the church, members, pastors, bishops or even Edir Macedo who has this distinction; the legitimacy comes from God, through the Almighty's words in the Bible, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and the material and spiritual benefits of the Holy Spirit. As Elias and Scotson (1994: xxxv) observed, the group that stigmatises is free of responsibility while stigmatising others and even themselves. Legitimacy, as the ideal Weberian type of charismatic domination proposes, comes directly from the force that created the world – in this case, the Christian God.

The creation of the other, inside and outside the individual, concerns the experience of the group and the member in his or her own subjectivity to the Holy Spirit; blessings prove the pneumatological aspects of the UCKG's theology. The demonisation of other religious groups and the individual's former behaviour add to the material gifts in someone's life and legitimise even more the idea of being in a state of grace. D.'s case indicates that the blessings are bestowed upon full engagement with the church's interpretation of God, which means renouncing not only former practices, such as condemning his own former Pentecostal affiliation, but also the practices of unfamiliar groups, like those of the LGBT community. The outside enemy and the inside enemy work in a dialectical movement of control. It is a process similar to the one observed by Michel Foucault (2011: 311) regarding the Cynics:

(...) this relationship to the truth of oneself, of what one can do and of the flow of one's representation, must be coupled with also with another relationship, which is of the supervision of the others.

Self-othering and the othering of different groups are both ways of controlling members. The relation between 'them' and the former self seems to be relevant in the sense of a non-exclusive construction; the old self's demons and others' demons are two sides of the same coin, and are tools to construct a new being and a sense of belonging to a new 'us.'

Sociological approaches regarding the construction of the 'other' as a way of defining the identity of a social group, in the case of the UCKG, having also a religiosity of the self, not in relation to what the members choose as their practices and beliefs, but in what they decide is wrong and deviant. Self-othering shows the relation of the UCKG and Pentecostalism in general to late modernity; it is neither a simple reaction against it nor an affirmation (Comaroff, 2012; Taylor, 2015: 207). While it has the characteristics of the restoration of health and wealth, less asceticism and greater fulfilment in comparison with older Brazilian Pentecostal groups, the UCKG also believes that if commitment to God is taken out of the equation, the demonic can manifest itself. Self-othering is the denial of a purely materialistic and secular practice, while the transformations made by the Holy Spirit give an individual the possibility to enjoy material blessings without the threat of damnation.

The perspective of individual salvation proposed by Pierucci helps construct this kind of othering process. However, this process does not mean that the church does not create enemies outside, especially social groups. It also does not mean that the problems from which someone seeks a personal and individual salvation are not socially constructed. The problems of the people in Madrid may be very different from those in Africa, for example, where the church has to deal more with infectious diseases such as HIV and extreme poverty. In Madrid, preaching about health and wealth is constructed with local demons and local problems. Even if it is for immigrants, who constitute a large proportion of church members, the message still tries to improve their condition by demonising their old selves. If there is some sort of empowerment through the Holy Spirit, it can be seen in an image of the past without the church as misguided and diabolical, while after conversion a better self-understanding has been created, even if both images are sometimes emphasised as a way of promoting the church's image. Members' testimonials are the most common means of advertising the UCKG's message of success. Making members look as good as possible, and the past as bad as possible, is way of showing the importance of conversion.

8.5 The Pentecostal principle: the unstoppable transformation

On the last night of my third visit to Madrid, I called a taxi and the driver asked me what I was doing in the city. 'I am studying a Pentecostal church', I replied in Spanish. He asked where it was, and as I explained, he realised that it was *Pare de Sufrir* (Stop Suffering), which is the marketing name of the UCKG in Spain. The self-othering concept that I proposed earlier has correlations with what Nimi Wariboko (2012) calls the Pentecostal principle, as does the 'stop suffering' slogan. To conclude this chapter, I believe that a sociological explanation of the transformation of the self by religious means should be aligned with a theological explanation of how these transformations occur. The UCKG's message must be adaptable enough to address many newcomers, since almost everyone in the church in Madrid has converted from another religion, with the exception of the children of already converted members. A church with individual salvation characteristics, and with the self-othering, in which a new identity is created, must have a theological foundation.

The Pentecostal principle is Wariboko's answer to a Tillichian correlation between the Catholic substance and the Protestant principle. I will draw on Wariboko's interpretation of Paul Tillich's concepts to make some further considerations:

(...) The first, which Tillich calls the Catholic, attempts to capture, encode and encapsulate normative practices. The second (the Protestant Principle) is oriented, on the contrary, toward keeping the cultural open and beyond any determinate structuration. The former is a way of grounding obligations and subjection to established cooperative human practices; the latter is an expression of freedom of human beings (their freedom to always find alternatives to any extant form). (Wariboko, 2012: 14).

The Catholic substance is less important in Wariboko's Pentecostal principle than the Protestant principle. The capacity for freedom and disruptiveness towards institutions is present in both Protestantism and Pentecostalism, however, according to Wariboko, the former needs the creative capacity of the latter, with creativity meaning 'the everyday act of working together to reach the full stature of being transparent to the divine creativity' (Wariboko, 2012: 204). Wariboko's assumption regarding creativity follows Tillich's method of correlation, which means that the questions of a given society must be answered with specific characteristics from that society (1972: 10). Therefore, ethics must be temporal (Wariboko, 2012: 119). Pentecostalism would come as an answer to plurality, having both the capacity for the new and the capacity for freedom in the creation of this new. Wariboko uses the event of the Pentecost (Acts, 2), when people started to speak

in different tongues when they received the Holy Spirit, to observe that people can and should talk in many languages, which defines the plurality of Pentecostalism. 'The Pentecostal principle is the capacity to begin' (Wariboko, 2012: 1), with many different beginnings being possible.

'Stop suffering' is not only a UCKG campaign in Madrid, but also its principle. People in need of health, wealth or the reconstruction of social bonds are those who are targeted by the message of the church. Suffering here does not mean only physical suffering. It also means spiritual, mental, social and economic suffering. To stop is to break with – at least in theory – an old self, transforming it, or, as Wariboko (2012: 13) points out, starting a new life with a new beginning, not with regeneration. The Pentecostal principle shines on the identity of new members; the capacity for a new beginning, a new-birth, is present when the Holy Spirit arrives in one's life. The possibility of transformation, of beginning and re-signifying old practices from a new perspective, brings to the equation the possibility of a new beginning. The Nigerian theologian sees Pentecostalism as a creative impulse with pure means, which gives it the power to reinvent itself at every moment.

The UCKG in Madrid aligns itself with the Pentecostal principle. The self-othering of the church works as a tool that disrupts former practices and promotes the constant possibility of upgrading and reconstructing a member's life. This follows not only the logic of being in a state of grace all the time, but also a capitalistic logic of accumulation and a subjectivist logic of constant self-improvement. However, I believe that the process of conversion, the cleansing of all evils by exorcism and the baptism of the Holy Spirit is important, too, inasmuch as they are all rituals of the transformation of the individual into a church member. The process of conversion and self-othering gives the member a new habitus and ethos, and with these, a new way to interpret him/herself ontologically in the world. Testimonials are the best way to re-affirm the visible rupture between the old self and the new one. Furthermore, spiritual growth – which also means material growth – needs to be continuous. The church proposes a rupture and the entrance of a new logic of the self, more linked with a continuous accumulation of spiritual empowerment and benefits from the Holy Spirit, the latter of which comes alongside the former. The UCKG in Madrid offers a new spiritually based life with material benefits. The same issue appears in the Familia Unida's website article titled 'Nuestras Creencias' (Our Beliefs)¹⁰⁵:

El Bautismo en las Aguas es un punto clave para aquellos que realmente quieren una nueva vida con Jesús. A través de esto, hay una ruptura con la vida natural y alianza con la verdadera vida cristiana, dejando de existir el

¹⁰⁵ In: <http://familiaunida.es/quienes-somos/nuestras-creencias/>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

dominio del pecado sobre nuestro 'yo'. (Free translation: Baptism in water is a key point for those who really want a new life with Jesus. Through this, there is a break with natural life and a covenant with the true Christian life, with the dominion of sin ceasing to exist in our 'self').

The new life is a God-given thing coming from baptism in water. This practice cleanses the other self, the old one, and follows a long history in Christianity of redemption and conversion, with the most acknowledged figures perhaps being Paul in the Bible and Augustine in post-biblical Christian thought. The re-signifying process of the UCKG in Madrid and conversion to the church gives people, especially poor immigrants, the opportunity to obtain a new self, absolved of the failures and problems of the old one. Furthermore, as the last two chapters about the church's theology have also indicated, the converted receive a new spirituality with the possibility of climbing the social ladder and entering into a multicultural capitalistic logic with a new meaning. The bridge between tradition and modernity, and the sense of self-responsibility that Pentecostalism produces (Martin, 2002: 129), is also a bridge between the past and present self, and a sense of a new direction to forgiveness from the mistaken and misguided past.

Exorcism, as a form of cleansing and beginning a new life, is another important theological practice. The demons can return, along with the old self and its old ways. The necessity of following strict rules of behaviour in the new self also needs a way to deal with deviance. Exorcism is a practice to continue the new beginning while providing a performative incorporation of the Devil. The past always haunts the present, and to avoid old mistakes one must maintain one's focus on the theological guidelines of the church. Self-othering appears in the most explicit way, with the self-other (demon) telling all the problems in someone's life. It also shows members that they can be possessed if they do not remain with God at every moment and in every action. Both baptism and exorcism are tools to give a member his/her role in life, as a faithful and holy husband, wife, and tither. Obedience is the only way to have a new beginning, since, for the UCKG, bad things happen with disobedience, as Macedo observes (2012: 84). Meanwhile, Tillich (2010: 240) understands the demonic as the destructive structures of creative forces.

The importance of Macedo's perspective will be shown in the next chapter. It is through obedience in response to preaching about behaviours and even mindsets, in a ritual of reinforcement, that a member can receive the benefits of the church. The possibilities for a creative re-birth, and for empowerment, are present in the UCKG. However, they can be achieved only through the internalisation of the church message with the structures of a new present – which are the church's guidelines – as something almost inflexible. Thus,

I shall now focus on the importance of church rules as a way to achieve better gifts from God and to accumulate greater status inside the hierarchy. I use one of the church campaigns, the Daniel Fast, which is usually left out analyses of the church in favour of the more famous Holy Fire of Israel, which I observed in Chapter Six on prosperity theology. The Daniel Fast, unlike the Holy Fire, is less concerned with the monetary sacrifice of members and more with spiritual sacrifice, which means the control of behaviour outside the church, thus reinforcing the hierarchy of the church.

Chapter 9

The reinforcement of rituals: The Daniel Fast, Holy Supper and other institutional forms of control

9.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I analyse, broadly, the ways that the church controls its members. For examples, I use both the Daniel Fast, a church campaign that preaches the disconnection of the faithful from non-religious subjects, and the Holy Supper. These campaigns illustrate some aspects of the church's control over the practices of members, even out of doors, with regard to their bodily practices and especially their minds. These campaigns, therefore, confirm the observations of Roberto DaMatta (1997) with respect to other kinds of events in Brazilian society, especially the 'Dia da Pátria' (a celebration of Brazil's Independence Day), which has the characteristic of a revival of a rite of passage, analysed as a ritual of reinforcement.

The church's rituals of reinforcement also highlight two important aspects related to institutional control. The first is the manner in which this kind of control makes possible the accumulation of social (or religious) capital for those who follow the church's recommendations. The second is the way it subverts the excessive materialism of the church with a more ascetic characteristic. The characteristic of those rituals does not mean that the church changes its direction, but that the main goal of these campaigns, especially the Daniel Fast, is to renew – and possibly increase – the spirituality of church members. As Ruth Marshall observed (2009: 208), religious authority remains something related to the spiritual and ethical state of the individual. However, since the UCKG in Madrid is an institution with a clear hierarchy, and different bishops alternate as head of the church in the city, the authority seems to be attached to the institution and its premises, not only to the leaders.

To observe the pattern of institutional control, I also refer to Macedo's book about the Daniel Fast, *Jejum de Daniel* (2012), church blogs, and especially my fieldwork in Madrid during the campaigns. However, since the control that the church exercises on its members extends beyond the campaign, I observe other aspects of control as well, such as the coordination of prayers by the pastors, and the use of visibility and shame towards its members as control devices. The latter do not concern only the regular members, but the assistants and pastors as well, since the more social capital one has, the more one can exercise one's control over others. Furthermore, through my personal experience with a member that occurred outside the church, I will try to exemplify how the

church maintains control, even when a person is not a member, but represents the institution in some kind of way.

9.2 Ascension through the Holy Spirit: The Daniel Fast campaign

The Daniel Fast was an organised campaign that occurred while I was visiting the Familia Unida in June of 2016. This is a new campaign began in the year of 2011 (Manduchi, 2014: 41). It usually lasts for 21 days, occurring once or twice a year and worldwide, and the one I was able to observe started on 5 June and ended on the 26th day of the same month. The campaign is, in my opinion, the most representative practice related to the institutional obsession with spiritual cleanliness. Bishops in Brazil, such as Renato Cardoso, explained the fasting on their blogs¹⁰⁶, and even Bishop Macedo himself made daily videos during the campaign to help encourage the people to do it.

This fast diverges from the usual interpretations of the Biblical book of Daniel made by other churches. During my observation, pastors fasted from 18:00 until the morning of the next day, which was also to be followed by the members. However, it did not stop there. The institutional message about the fast was one of complete abstention from non-necessary or un-godly things. As Bishop Renato Cardoso suggested, the person undertaking the fast should go to work, because of the need to provide food for the family. But one should not engage in purposeless conversations that did not involve God. Abstinence was from anything unrelated to God, or to primary needs such as eating and going to the bathroom, for example. Books, movies, theatres, conversations, news, and any kind of practices that deviate from the rules were strictly forbidden, if they are only for entertainment. The practice of fasting is one way for a member to achieve a state of grace, according to Pastor Alberto. The other two practices that belong to the triumvirate of living in a state of grace are paying tithes and praying. This trio of practices is the most important thing for UCKG members. Nonetheless, when there are no campaigns that involve fasting, this practice is not discussed as much as the other two.

I will translate from Portuguese the four steps of the Daniel Fast, as Nubia Onara explains them:

1- Meditate on the Word of God. This is not about the amount of reading, but about what you absorb from what you are reading; 2- Go to church during these 21 days as much as you can to seek the Holy Spirit. 3- Have your own time with God outside the church, too. Reserve periods for praying. Praying connects the mind directly with God, and this should be done at any time or

¹⁰⁶ In: <http://blogs.universal.org/renatocardoso/blog/jejum-de-daniel/>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

any place. 4- Try to absorb spiritual content; use the UCKG apps in your cell phone or tablet; follow universal.org and the blogs of the UCKG and Bishop Macedo; listen to the Rede Aleluia radio; watch the *The Ten Commandments* soap opera on Record TV, biblical movies and special Christian content on Univer. But be careful: do not visit every website or watch every video just because their content is Christian, because if you do you may have the same problem: getting too much information.¹⁰⁷

This passage gives a general idea of the campaign's objectives. The first, as Clara Mafra observed (2002), is taking possession of the word of God, which means taking examples from the Bible and applying them on a daily basis, based on the exegesis of the UCKG. The second is related to institutional commitment, the main goal of the church being always to have its members as close to its buildings as possible. The third relates to the more specific point that I will discuss in this chapter, a form of control and asceticism with regard to avoiding mundane distractions. The fourth is connected with exposure to the church's media products, even though most of them are free. This is another form of control outside the church.

The issue of *Familia Unida* magazine from June of 2016 says that members must choose the spiritual side, and that the material side must come second. This choice would be the guarantee of safeguarding the success of the fast. To achieve better material benefits, one must make the material subordinate to the spiritual, at least during this campaign. The magazine also offers five explicit examples of what someone will achieve if the campaign is done correctly: '1- Detoxification (which means the ascetic state preached by the church) is the need for one to give proper importance to the spiritual side. 2- The strength that a person's spirit lacks since he or she is weak and lost. 3- Sanctification; purification and renovation. 4- The absolute renewal of one's relationship with God. 5- The Spirit of God living within!¹⁰⁸'. Spiritual cleansing is the point most highlighted in the magazine and in the services, inasmuch as being clean is the foundation of all the other points.

However, for some, the fast is not just spiritual. The church in Madrid did not preach during the campaign – at least not strongly – that its regular members should avoid eating. However, Pastor Alberto (22/06/2017) said that he was not eating at night, and it seemed that the more he avoided eating, the more people were trying to give him food. As Bishop

¹⁰⁷ In: <https://www.universal.org/noticias/o-que-fazer-nos-21-dias-do-jejum-de-daniel>.

¹⁰⁸ Free translation.

Renato Cardoso says¹⁰⁹, the main goal of the Daniel Fast campaign is to avoid non-spiritual things. He provides examples to help members understand properly. The first thing to avoid is the internet: according to the bishop, if someone needs this for work, as he himself does, then he/she should keep using it, but only for that purpose. One should avoid non-spiritual things like checking the comments on photos on Facebook. The second example was about going to the gym. The bishop observed that a member should keep going to the gym, but avoid listening to secular songs, either those broadcast in the gym, or on his/her iPod. The member should listen to spiritual music and religious messages. These two examples, along with the four points explained by Onara, show how a member should behave during the campaign: in a more ascetic way than usual.

The main explanation for this ascetic fasting with respect to the thoughts and minds of the members is about fully understanding the message received from God. According to the global leader of the UCKG, the word of God (Bible) was given to humanity not to be kept in the heart (feelings) but in order for a person to rationalise and mediate, and thus receive blessings. Macedo (2012: 23) says, 'God is wisdom not emotion. Faith has to do with the spirit, and thus with intelligence and reason'. Furthermore, the most distinctive aspect of Macedo's preaching as a Pentecostal leader is related to birth control, in which he contrasts the heart (emotion) with reason:

When a person gives in to the voice of the heart, she/he stops serving the spirit to serve the soul. And this has been the main reason why they do bad things, such as suicide, marrying and divorcing irresponsibly, leaving a number of children without families, thinking that all children that come were given by God – and this is not true, because children are only and exclusively created by the will of the couple, independently of the will of God, because if the husband and wife did not sleep together, and did not have sexual intercourse, no child would be born... (Macedo, 2012: 23-24)¹¹⁰.

In the cited passage, Macedo combines the preoccupation of the church with the life of its members. The biopolitics of the church is important for understanding its uniqueness in the Pentecostal world. First, the issue that most Pentecostals have, and which Macedo exposes here, is a preoccupation with getting married before having sex. As Carlos Rocha preached in Atocha (02/11/2017) that even those who have had sex before marriage should stop doing it and wait for the proper moment – after marriage – to recommence.

¹⁰⁹ In: <https://www.mixcloud.com/brcardoso/o-que-e-o-jejum-de-daniel-como-fazer/>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

¹¹⁰ Free translation.

The second preoccupation is with birth control. This is the point that distinguishes the church from most Pentecostal denominations, as far as I know. Macedo not only condemns the person involved in the procreation of children as irresponsible for having them, but also – and this is not in the book – advocates abortion, which is demonised by most – if not all – mainstream Brazilian Pentecostal leaders.

Macedo says¹¹¹ that abortion must not be carried out indiscriminately, but it must be allowed. His arguments are similar to those most used by people in Brazil who are pro-abortion: many women do not have the material conditions to raise a child; they often have abortions in clandestine clinics¹¹², and many of them die because of the poor conditions in these environments. The bishop also observes that the children of poor women often become criminals, since they do not have good resources for their development as human beings. Macedo even cites the biblical passage (Mathew, 26: 24)¹¹³ in which, at least in his interpretation, Jesus says that his traitor should not have been born; an abortion would have been a better fit for Judas than betraying the son of God. The leader of the UCKG worldwide advocates a control of one's own actions; it is by a form of self-control that someone will achieve a both better life in this world and salvation. The two are joined in a manner that allows for even the possibility of abortion, forbidden by most Christian and Pentecostal denominations, in order to have a well-planned life in this world.

The church also encourages its pastors to not have children with their wives. This policy already rendered the church a lawsuit from a former pastor, in which the UCKG had to pay one hundred thousand *reais* to him (around twenty thousand pounds). The church promised the former a bishop position in Africa, if he agreed to have a vasectomy, since the church needed his full commitment to his job, which left no time for kids¹¹⁴. Church pastors' avoiding having children is common everywhere. In Madrid, most of the pastors, whom I knew, did not have any kids. The church blends its guidelines and commitment with the campaigns and forms of control of the body. In addition, due to the fact that pastors do not have children in most cases, it becomes easier for the UCKG leaders to

¹¹¹ In: <http://blogs.universal.org/bispomacedo/2010/09/03/jesus-fala-sobre-o-aborto/>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

¹¹² Abortion is forbidden in Brazil, with a few exceptions, such as anencephaly of the foetus and pregnancy occasioned by rape.

¹¹³ The full passage is 'The Son of Man will go just as it is written about him. But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born'.

¹¹⁴ In: <https://economia.uol.com.br/empregos-e-carreiras/noticias/redacao/2014/10/20/universal-e-condenada-a-pagar-r-100-mil-a-ex-pastor-que-fez-vasectomia.htm>. Accessed: 08/08/2018.

move them around from place to place, since the only ones involved are the pastors and their wives.

As another way of helping those participating in the campaign, its three-week duration was divided into separate weeks, with different biblical messages for each day. The first week would be the most difficult for those who had never participated before, according to the official flyers for the campaign. The tip given was that people should not watch secular media of any kind, and use products, such as books and movies, that were published or recommended by Familia Unida. The second week has more of a spiritual and self-cleansing characteristic: it should be the week during which everyone eliminates old resentments and grudges. The third and final week is the one for members to avoid temptations of any kind. It is a week for deep soul-searching and reaching out to the Holy Spirit, by engaging in prayer and reading the Bible.

The flyer, as with most elements in the UCKG's institutional message, has a small space for members to note changes that have occurred in his/her life during the campaign. The sense of time divided between past and future, in which the member has to do something to achieve a greater good, is present in most church campaigns.

During the fast, a total focus on the Bible and on the absence of material distractions was in the sermons of almost every service that I attended. Church radio programmes were also aimed at a spiritual cleansing from these worldly distractions. Most of the preaching was very similar to the recommendations on the campaign flyer. The services I attended during this campaign contained a similar message of continuing the church's asceticism beyond the walls of the church. In this period, it was much harder to get information from members after the services, since most went home immediately, which can be interpreted as commitment to the campaign, at least near church property. This shows the importance of behaving the same in church and outside, as preached by Macedo (2012: 183).

The last day of the campaign was celebrated with the 18.00 service on Sunday 26/06/2016. The name of the service was *Señales* – signs – and the flyer indicated that it would contain material proof of miracles. Pastor Alberto was in charge of this service, which was a little bigger than most of the UCKG's services. The spiritual healing involved an open bottle of water, which received spiritual empowerment from the light of the church, giving it a magical characteristic able to heal people from any kind of disease if they had enough faith. When the sermon was over, all the people in the church took a sip of water to receive healing.

Since I have already discussed the exorcisms in the *Señales* service, my main focus here is on the testimonials of the benefits of the Daniel Fast campaign. However, the spiritual

cleansing of the campaign brought many demons out of members' closets. This service contained the greatest number of exorcisms of all the ones I attended at the UCKG in Madrid. After the spiritual deliverance, a line with almost twenty people who had been healed during the process was formed close to the altar so that they could give testimonials. One man interviewed said that he had had nodes for almost 4 years and that his deliverance from evil spirits, which had taken place during the campaign, had cured him on that very day. Other members followed a similar path, as the campaign ending that day had cured diseases and pains from which members had suffered for years. Pastor Alberto, after the testimonials, said that he would continue fasting until he got to forty days, which is the 'number of victory'.

The main objectives of the Daniel Fast are that the members be all committed to 'one faith, one spirit, and one heart' (Macedo, 2012: 152) and withdraw their minds from the material world. However, as I believe that the most important characteristics of the church are self-othering (transformation) and commitment to the church's spiritual guidelines, my focus will be on the latter, for which the word 'renewal' is often used by the pastors in this campaign. As Macedo (Ibid.: 164) observes 'Fasting for 21 days teaches us how to proceed and not let the lesson remain in the past. In this way, our life will always be renewed by the Holy Spirit...' The renewing of vows in the church, through the Daniel Fast, follows the strictness of asceticism. This could be interpreted as the reinforcement of order, as proposed by the Brazilian anthropologist Roberto DaMatta (1997:137), who observed that Independence Day in Brazil is a historical rite of passage commemorating the beginning of political autonomy in Brazil. However, the legitimisation of this ritual lies in the hands of the constituted powers, as it is organised according to a clear separation between the public and the armed forces that take charge of the celebration on this day and that receive the people's salutation (Ibid.: 54-56).

The Daniel Fast also reinforces another rite of passage: the detachment of the mundane and misguided world through conversion. It is additionally a way of exercising self-othering; since most of the people are already converted, it is a time to prevent the re-emergence of behaviours from a formerly misguided life. Asceticism and frugality become the essence of the sermons. The control of common behaviours is now taken to another level, inasmuch as the mind must be cleansed from everything else that is not basic – such as eating and working – and must focus exclusively on God. However, the difference between the UCKG and the 'Dia da Pátria' lies not in the structure, but in the way in which the hierarchy is legitimised. It is not by saluting the pastors and bishops that the reinforcement takes shape; but rather by obedience, imitation and following the recommendations of those higher up the hierarchy.

9.3 The Holy Supper

The Holy Supper is the imitation of the biblical Last Supper, when Jesus divided the bread and wine among the apostles, making them his flesh and blood, respectively (Mark, 14: 22-24). The church's Holy Supper happens more often and cannot be considered a campaign, but more of a quasi-regular practice. I saw it in around 5% of the services that I attended, but that number may be exaggerated, since I focused more on the bigger services, and considering the total number of services that the church provides, the number would be at least weekly if the percentage is correct. In any case, the holy supper is an important way to gather members around the church's practice, as well as a source of a paradox in the church's theology as preached in Madrid.

The Holy Supper often occurs when the pastor or bishop in charge of the service asks the assistants to serve a small piece of bread and must (grape juice) to all the people in the audience. Everything is prepared beforehand, and when the leader requests it, even in a crowded service, the work of the assistants is very diligent and efficient. I saw an entire crowded service (19/10/2016) in which the assistants took no more than five minutes to feed the symbolic elements to almost everyone. After everyone has received the elements, the preacher begins a prayer to bless the elements and all of those that eat them. He then asks everyone to eat the body of Christ first (bread) and then to drink his blood (must).

Gil Anidjar (2015), in his book *Blood: A Critique of Christianity*, analysed the relationship of this religion to its obsession with blood. He observed the obsession with the blood of Christ not only as way of acquiring his powers by drinking his blood – he left flesh out of most of his discussion –, but also as way of belonging to Jesus' kin, which would lead in the 16th century to the Pureza de Sangre (purity of blood, in Spanish). This would help to create a community formed by blood relations, and, eventually, to the old Christians of Spain pitting themselves against the nobles and new Christians, among which the vast majority were converted Jews. The old Christians were defenders of the purity of Christianity (Anidjar 2014: 55-77).

The characteristics of transformation and cleanness come from different times, but in the UCKG the holy supper was able to mix both in an ambivalent understanding of its own practice. The Familia Unida's website¹¹⁵ has an article with the following message:

¿Sientes un vacío en el interior? ¿Un dolor incontrolable? ¿Ansiedad?
¿Opresión? ¿Ignorado hasta el punto sentirte rechazado de todo y de todos,

¹¹⁵ In: <http://centrodeayudauniversal.es/evento/santa-cena/>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

incluso de Dios? Ésto se debe a que tu vida espiritual necesita de un gran cuidado de tu parte. Pero, ¿cómo? (...) Su Cuerpo y Su Sangre por la Humanidad, y fue este acto que nos permite llegar a la Salvación de nuestra propia alma. Así que participar de la Santa Cena no es sólo recordar Su Acto, sino recibir la revelación del Espíritu Santo directamente a nuestro espíritu.

(Free translation: Do you feel empty within? Do you have uncontrollable pain? Anxiety? Oppression? Do you feel ignored to the point that you feel rejected by everything and by everyone, including God? This is due to the need to care more for your spiritual life. But, how? (...) His (Jesus) body and His blood (were given) to humanity, and this act was what allowed us to arrive at the salvation of our own soul. So, participating in the Holy Supper is not only to recall His act, but to receive the revelation of the Holy Spirit directly in our spirit.)

In the aforementioned passage, posted on 14/01/2015, the message is explicit: the Holy Supper is for everyone, even for those who feel rejected by God. Hence, it seems that the symbolic act of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ allows the Holy Spirit to enter the consumer. This is akin to Anidjar's first interpretation of blood in Christianity, in which he, of course, speaks much more about the relationship between this religiosity and blood, but for practical reasons I have only taken the two most convenient interpretations for my purposes. The church magazine also publishes three testimonials about life-changing experiences, and only one says that the experience was fruitful for renewing the member's faith. The other two are about changing habits and being cured from addictions (Familia Unida, 2016: 9).

In another article¹¹⁶ on the church's website, posted on 02/08/2017, the message is:

En el libro 'En los pasos de Jesús', el obispo Edir Macedo explica quién puede participar de la Sagrada Ceremonia. El apóstol Pablo afirma, en el libro de 1 Corintios 11:27-30: 'De manera que cualquiera que comiere este pan o bebiere esta copa del Señor indignamente, será culpado del cuerpo y de la sangre del Señor. Por tanto, pruébese cada uno a sí mismo, y coma así del pan, y beba de la copa. Porque el que come y bebe indignamente, sin discernir el cuerpo del Señor, juicio come y bebe para sí'. El apóstol no da una definición de lo que se entiende por indignidad. Por lo tanto, puede verse que sólo puede participar de la mesa del Señor aquellos cuyas vidas fueron

¹¹⁶ <http://centrodeayudauniversal.es/evento/santa-cena-2/>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

realmente lavadas por la sangre del Cordero, esto es, aquellos que mantienen sus conciencias purificadas por la paz de Dios.

(Free translation: In the book 'In Jesus' Footsteps', Bishop Macedo explains who can participate in the Sacred Ceremony: The apostle Paul affirms, in 1 Corinthians 11:27-30¹¹⁷: 'So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.' The apostle did not give any definition of what indignity means. Thus, it can be seen that only those who have had their lives washed by the blood of the Lamb may participate at the table of the Lord – those who maintain their conscience purified by the peace of the Spirit.

In this second passage, the theological principles of participation change. It is limited to those who are not living a new life with the spirit. The inclusiveness of the theology of the church is excluded. The Holy Supper as a campaign differs from the Daniel Fast, which is both a form of controlling all members not yet used to the practices of the church and a way of renewing vows to God for older members. The two directions of the Holy Supper are opposite: on the one hand, it allows neophytes and even disbelievers to participate, on the other, it does not allow them to join. However, in both cases, empowerment by the Holy Spirit is present, either through transformation or through renewal. Nonetheless, the second case also highlights the need to do something right: the need for a purified conscience. Anidjar's second point, highlighted above, seems to fit here, in that, with the inclusiveness of the church, there is a sense of some members being more pure – those who sacrifice and commit more – than others.

The Holy Supper is therefore the opposite of the Daniel Fast: while the former focuses on eating, the latter focuses on avoiding things. However, purity of consciousness is the main exercise in the Daniel Fast, which needs – at least in the second interpretation – a purified mind to participate. Both are ways of exercising control over members' practices and an attempt to encourage the internalisation of a sense of correctness and commitment by following certain guidelines and reinforcing them with Biblical rituals. However, even more subtle gestures are institutionally controlled, as evident in the campaigns of the Holy Supper and the Daniel Fast, although they are not the only ones.

¹¹⁷ I took the direct translation of this biblical part from Biblegateway.com.

9.4 Kinds of prayer and other institutionalised performances: controlling members' behaviour

The church also controls members' performances inside its doors, during almost every service, in other ways beyond the campaigns. I focus here on types of prayer inside the church, not only as performance, but also as symbolic economics, with the leaders sharing the empowerment by the Holy Spirit in a sort of trickle-down logic. Thus, bishops and pastors, who have already accumulated symbolic power through engagement in the performances and behaviours imposed by the church, now have a duty to teach similar manners to average members of the UCKG. First, I will describe how the kinds of prayer work in Madrid. I have divided them into the three most important ones that I recognised in the Atocha Temple: *regular prayer*, *stronger prayer* and *group prayer*. Each takes a different form and has different actions and aims.

Regular prayer, as the name says, is the most common kind of prayer in the UCKG. It begins with the usual devotional praying, when the hands of members are raised to shoulder height, or hold a part of their bodies as indicated by the pastor (e.g. the heart, if it is a devotional prayer, or sometimes a specific part that needs healing). These kinds of prayer are quiet in comparison to strong prayer, but they are far from silent. Church members are encouraged to speak directly with God, asking for his forgiveness and any kind of goods that the almighty can provide. Sometimes regular prayers become very emotional, and people often cry while praying, especially when the pastor starts to talk about human mistakes in general, which can be ascribed to almost anyone in the church. Tears and emotion also appear when the pastor asks members to grab a photo of a family member or make a vow to God that includes family issues. The members often carry photos and even albums of their relatives and loved ones to make special prayers for them, usually holding the photos or pointing in the direction of the altar. Regular prayers occur mostly at the beginning of a service and at the end, and are of variable duration. I went to a few services in which a devotional regular prayer lasted almost the entire service. Nonetheless, they usually take just a few minutes or even seconds. The sacred objects used in the services also help with the spiritual purification and unction of the members before they start a regular prayer, which is not necessary but common.

Strong prayers are those in which ecstasy is always involved. They most often occur in deliverance services, but that does not exclude them from other UCKG services. Gestures in strong prayers are rougher and more expressive than those in regular prayers. Sometimes screaming and stamping are involved, and when everybody inside the church engages in a strong prayer, the noise becomes particularly loud.

There are also the prayers in the deliverance services in which demonic entities manifest themselves, especially when a pastor or an assistant puts his/her hands on the heads of the members to help with deliverance. I had assistants imposing their hands a couple times on my head to deliver me from the evil. In my case, and also for most other people, when they put their hands on me, it did not produce an entity. Nonetheless, the gesture is similar: an assistant will put his/her hands on the head of a person, while repeating strong words against the curses, problems and issues that he/she might have, and asking God to solve the problems and bless the person. This always ended with the assistant or pastor saying the word *sai* (get out), which reveals his/her belief that all problems are linked to the spiritual world. The usage of the word *sai* also occurs in strong prayers conducted by pastors, in which everyone is involved. Every wealth service commanded by Pastor Richard had a strong prayer at the beginning to expel demonic forces that were obstructing the financial lives of the members. All of these prayers ended with Richard telling all the bad things to 'get out' (*sai*) of the members. When he did this, all the people in the church put their own hands on their heads and screamed 'get out', throwing their hands as if they were pushing away a bad entity, from the front of their heads towards their backs.

Sometimes, a prayer can begin as a regular prayer and become a strong prayer with the coordination of the pastors. Costa and Júnior Moraes (2014: 80), while studying the Brazilian Candomblé tradition, observed how rituals are coordinated socially or, in his words, 'manipulated by specialists. The same occurs with all the kinds of prayers in the UCKG in Madrid. However, in strong prayers, this becomes more obvious, as those in charge of services usually start raising their voices while praying, something that is replicated quickly among the assistants and other members. In addition, sometimes the pastors or bishops directly recommend that people put more enthusiasm into a prayer, which is similar to coordination by specialists in Candomblé.

Group prayers are perhaps the best way to gather the members together as a community inside the church. They become an army of God in the struggle against the Devil. A common way of gathering the members occurs when the church is empty and the pastor asks everyone to approach the altar, hold their hands high and pray together in a circle. When the service is crowded, the pastor asks everyone to hold hands with the people near them, and sometimes he even tells them to say hello to the people next to them. The leaders of the church are aware of how impersonal a UCKG service can be, having the characteristic of a service provider to a customer. Therefore, it is important to make people in the church bond with each other socially and spiritually. Songs are another important tool for group prayers. These range from devotional songs played by a young

man who is a pastor in-training, to a *cappella* songs that are performed when good singers (like Pastor Alberto) are preaching and even to music that has easy-to-learn choreography, usually taught by the pastor just before the song begins. Hence, the gospel market of the UCKG is very important for gathering members, especially because most of the regulars have a good knowledge of the lyrics. When the pastor wants to play a new song, the screen on the altar shows the lyrics so that everyone can sing it together.

Recognising the types of prayer is important for analysing the process of learning the gestures and behaviour of the UCKG in Madrid. The best way to see how pastors and assistants teach members the right way to practice their faith is by observing the repression of bad gestures and behaviour. In a service led by Pastor Lenin (16/06/2016), a new song was introduced for members to sing, parts of which involved choreography for their arms. However, since most people did not yet know the song, and the screen showed only the lyrics, and not how to perform the dance, Lenin had to stop the song to teach them the right way to dance to it. Such examples also extend to small church campaigns. Pastor Maximiliano (06/11/2016) asked all members to write on a slip of paper the thing that was most harmful in their lives. After a prayer, everyone was invited to put their paper slips in a plastic bottle containing water, oil and salt. The pastor then said that he was going to say a prayer for everyone, every day at midnight, 'to cause a spiritual earthquake' in their lives. After the service, I was talking with the assistant, I., when a woman came over to us with the paper still in her hands. The assistant suddenly stopped our conversation to tell the woman that she needed to go back into the temple and ask the pastor to put the paper inside the bottle, saying 'this is very strong, you should do it now'.

The laying on of hands during prayers is also a form of control. After an interview with the assistant F. (she was the interviewer most of the time), during which she asked me about my research, family and religiosity, her main concern was with my salvation. 'You can finish you research, but saving your soul is more important. If you came here, it was because God wanted it', F. said to me. A deliverance service began after our conversation (06/11/2015), headed by Pastor Lenin. During a strong prayer, Lenin asked the assistants to help other members with their prayers, and I saw F. asking another assistant something. After their brief conversation, the other assistant came towards me. He asked me if everything was all right with me, to which I replied with a 'yes'. The assistant then put his hand on my head, saying: 'demons get out of this young man, leave his family and stop messing with his financial life'. The assistant finally said the word *sai*, taking his hands abruptly from my head, in a synchronised motion, and I thanked him for his blessing. F. made me participate in the service, since I was just beginning my fieldwork

in Madrid and everybody was receiving the same blessing from the assistants and pastor. Contact with others who are more spiritually advanced than regular members is a form mediating blessings and spiritual empowerment.

In my interview with Alberto, he observed that it was his will power and commitment to serving more that made the church ask him to become a pastor. He said that this applies to everyone. The assistant I. commonly complained about the lack of commitment by younger assistants. I. is only able to complain about other assistants because of her social capital of more than 30 years serving the church and spending Sundays from 6:00 to 21:00 working for the church. It is her commitment that has earned her the recognition of others, including church leaders. In my first talk with Pastor Maximiliano, after I told him that I. was helping me with things that I needed for my research, he said: 'That woman is a warrior'. I never heard him speak of anyone else like that, with the exception of the bishops; not even other pastors. There are people in the church who can testify to material achievements, but commitment to the rules of the church gave I. more symbolic capital inside the church than them, even though she is financially much worse off than other members. It is due to her ascetic commitment to leadership and regular reinforcement of the rules, practices and rituals of the church, and not because of her financial status, that this kind of recognition comes.

Bishop Gilberto Santana was the person most emphatic in his repression of bad behaviours during the services that I attended in Madrid. In one crowded service on a Sunday Morning (05/06/2016), Santana woke a woman up during his sermon, saying that people who are there just to be religious should not waste their time. The UCKG, according to him, is for people who want to find God and make progress in their lives. The woman, already awake, listened to Santana preach directly at her while he stared at her. He said that people who were tired should go to services later in the day and rest during the morning. After his sermon, Santana asked the woman to forgive his comments about her behaviour, but if she did not forgive him 'that is your problem', he said sharply. Bishop Carlos Rocha was usually less sharp than Santana in the way that he taught correct gestures to members. In one service (16/11/2016), after praying more vigorously than the members, Rocha stopped everything and asked everyone to put more emotion into their prayers. 'Prayer shall not be hysterical or desperate, but a strong claim that asks God for anything you want'. Santana did something similar to Rocha in a service (01/11/2016), when he asked everybody to pray in a group holding hands. He then started to pray more vigorously, but meanwhile the crowd, involved in a more devotional prayer, did not follow him. He then suddenly stopped everything and said: 'friends, look at the person beside you with whom you are holding hands, say good morning, and ask this person to put more

effort into this prayer, to give more!'. I was holding hands with a church assistant, a middle-aged man who, by that point, had realised that I was not a member of the church but nonetheless asked me 'to give more', while holding back his laughter, probably already knowing it would not work.

Those more experienced and higher up in the church hierarchy also try to avoid exposing their own particular problems that have not yet received a blessing. The assistant I. prayed as a regular member in many services that aimed at prosperity. She used yellow – a colour that represents money – in most of them. After many conversations, she told me that she was waiting for money from her pension to be released. This was information she kept hidden in most of the proselytising that I saw her doing both inside and outside the church. Bad things are kept from the public. Another example of this occurred (08/11/2016) when pastor Maximiliano told a neophyte woman, who was complaining about her pain during his sermon, that her problems concerned only the pastors and not the other members. While resolved problems must be publicised, the examples indicate that the enduring problems must be solved privately.

The main concern in Madrid is lack of commitment and the problematic performances of regular church members, as the examples indicate. As an example of the latter, the Brazilian woman possessed in the *Señales* service (26/06/2016) was repressed, too. Since Alberto already had a possessed person to interview and the screams of the Brazilian woman were too loud, he looked angrily to the assistant in charge of the exorcism of that woman. He asked the assistant to finish exorcising the evil entity at once, since her performance was much more emphatic than that of others present who were also possessed. Even demonic forces need to follow some rules in their gestures. The interviews, the hands behind the back, the scream when the pastor says 'burn', all of these are repeated and sometimes requested by the pastor who screams to the incorporated person to put his/her hands behind him/her and even to kneel. Making a member perform correctly suggests a kind of repressive control by the church, which is also present on a daily basis in the church.

9.5 The researcher as a control device in church: visibility and shame

The division of members is very clear to anyone who often participates in UCKG church services. I observed these divisions in Chapter 5. However, if we want to understand how a member's stature grows in the eyes of his/her community, the only way is to observe how the church's discourse also controls members' behaviour outside the church. Furthermore, the process of accumulating social capital and status in the UCKG comes from total commitment to the rules and prescriptions proposed by the church. Members

have opportunities to accumulate more social capital via charisma, the demonstration of commitment to the church's activities, the recognition and demonstration of institutionally approved performances, the confidence in church superiors and the interest in 'serving more', in the words of Pastor Alberto.

The life trajectory of members counts a lot in relation to social or religious capital in the UCKG, as observed in the previous chapter through the concept of self-othering. However, as Roberta Campos (2011)¹¹⁸ observed, in Brazilian Pentecostalism, legitimacy is also related to the capacity to spread charisma to other members, via performances learned and copied from the leader. Hence, the UCKG's ability is not just related to the charisma of the institution or leaders, but also to the empowerment of members via devotional performances and recognition of other members. To accumulate social capital and spread charisma through the members, it is important to perform in the right way. Furthermore, the control devices are not mere institutional recommendations; they also exercise a level of coercion on the members.

All the aforementioned church practices are a form of member empowerment, inasmuch as those ready and able to receive miracles are seen, of course, as better in the eyes of others. Pastor Pablo preached the most explicit examples of these accumulations of power in the services he led. He was the most theatrical preacher that I saw in the UCKG in Madrid. In addition, he clearly observed and stimulated a division of power between the members, emphasising stratification.

During one sermon (11/11/2016), Pablo said that, before he became a preacher, he did not know how the bishops and pastors had so much power. After his nomination as a pastor, he discovered that the most important thing is the covenant with God, and as a result, power flows directly from the almighty. To achieve this, a person needs to have total faith in His powers. However, the power of the church is not limited to pastors and bishops. In another of his services (13/11/2016), Pablo gathered together all the assistants in a very crowded service – there were around a dozen – with the lights almost completely out. He then prayed for the spiritual empowerment of the assistants, saying: 'the power is in your hands, now you shall turn to the other people here present and bless them'. Pablo distinguished the assistants from the regular members, showing that they were higher in the church hierarchy.

Nonetheless, for someone to participate and become a member, there must be visible empowerment of the members by the pastors. There are many ways of doing this. In the

¹¹⁸ Citing Campos as well, José Edilson Teles (2015) uses the same approach.

same service, Pablo made an enormous circle containing all the people in the gathering. He turned the lights down and held a candle near every person in the church, including me – it took about half an hour to talk with everyone –, saying the words ‘receive the light’ while looking directly into everyone’s eyes. This sort of empowerment includes another aspect: making each member visible to the group. This kind of visibility is very subtle in the UCKG in Madrid, but it is also very important. The most common church practice regarding visibility is to gather all members close to the altar in almost every service. The altar, as I indicated in the third chapter, has a symbolic meaning, since it works as a bridge that connects the members with God. However, in crowded services, people are asked to approach the altar according to their own specific characteristics. For instance, I saw people summoned there based on many different characteristics: if they were married, single, women, men, young, tithers, a member for more than five years or who has participated in a specific campaign, and many more.

In less crowded services, since many seats stay empty, this process of gathering brings the people attending the service closer to each other, which also makes it easier to pray in a group. Incidentally, holding hands is only possible this way in an empty service. This process is also a way for people to get to know each other, which helped me in my conversations with members, since I became more and more familiar with them. However, the people most visible in the church are the tithers. Everybody is asked at least once in a service to give money to the church – usually twice, but I was able to see services in which a pastor called the members to give money three times. When a person gets off his/her bench and approaches the altar, all the other members can see who gives money in cash or by credit card, but not how much they give. If a person attends church regularly, it is easy to see those who pay and those who do not. Since the sacrifice of money is so important to the church, a failure to donate brings shame to a member. This is the reason why Pastor Maximiliano (01/11/2016) said that he was ashamed when he joined the church and could not give anything because his family was poor. As Elias (2011: 243) observed, shame is an important device that can make people either avoid or internalise particular practices. I believe that this performance, which includes preaching and examples from a pastor’s life history, is important in the pedagogy of the institutional message. Maximiliano’s sharing of his shame with the members had the aim of making them incorporate this practice. As everyone sees each other in every service, it is easier to observe who is following and who is not following the church’s guidelines.

The visibility of members’ actions is related to the shame of those who do not follow the rules of the church correctly. Embarrassment is a strong tool in the internalisation of the institutional guidelines, as Gilberto Santana’s rudeness to a sleeping woman indicates.

The implications of this visibility among members as a way to control practices go hand in hand with the sharing of spiritual power in the church. By receiving a miracle and making it visible – through a testimonial, presence at church or paying tithes for examples –, the members become representatives of institutional control, or at least the ones who are seen at church.

Sometimes it is not easy to deal with all the codes of the institution, which are many, and the temptations of the mundane and satanic world are huge. This, perhaps, is the reason why a few members have a seasonal affiliation with the church, going back and forth in their commitment to it. One night, I witnessed an example of this struggle against the very strict rules of the church, in the middle of the street. I was walking in central Madrid, in Anton Martin square, I crossed Atocha Street close to a betting shop. It was a bit late and I was going to have dinner, so my mind was on what to eat and I wanted to cross the busy street as quickly as possible. There was a familiar face near the casino, whom I did not recognise at first, but who looked at me in a very embarrassed way. It was one of the members of the church, looking at the front of the building, where betting odds were written on the glass window. I did not say hi while walking past, because he probably did not know that I was only doing research – it was at the beginning of my fieldwork in Madrid, in November of 2015 – and because I did not recognise him at first.

The man that I had passed by was from the addiction group, composed mostly of men who were struggling with their vices and unrecommended mundane behaviours. I saw his internal struggle with himself when he was looking at the door of a betting shop, less than one mile from the church. When I turned back, after a brief moment of processing the fact that I actually knew him in order to say hi, he was already walking away from the door. It is a guess, but my feeling was that I acted as an observer of practices and of what is understood to be good behaviour for the church. Just recognising me as someone who was at the church seemed to have made this man make his final decision about whether to gamble or not on that day. I became a tool of the church when the man saw me as a symbol of it. The shame of been seen by someone who was possibly another member of the church probably caused his quick abandonment of a wrong practice. Becoming a member by means of the self-othering (my point of view) or by achieving a miracle (as the theological guidelines of the church propose) also offers micro-control over other members. Even if I had not received the Holy Spirit as institutional practices demand, just my presence in the church was enough to make me represent the UCKG. The member and I never discussed that specific moment afterwards, because I never wanted to embarrass him more than I thought I already had.

The institutional message follows the members anywhere they go, and their belief in an immanent spiritual realm, which resembles the material world, is always present, considering that even a control device like me can help with institutional control. If, as Roberta Campos observed, charisma is spread among all the members, they also represent the institution's control devices. I was not a member, but just the knowledge that I went to the church on a regular basis probably made the member feel ashamed of what he was considering (gambling) and he just stopped. If the leaders share their charisma with other members, they also share members' capacity to control each other with only their presence. Institutional practices and rituals of reinforcement are one way in which correct behaviour as preached by the church is internalised. My visible participation in the services made me a symbol that reinforced the right way to behave outside the church, in a dispersed kind of control that goes beyond the building as a sacred place. The UCKG was able to turn even the researcher into an enforcement device.

In this chapter, I have observed how the UCKG in Madrid controls members' practices and gestures, with a focus on the campaigns that function as rituals of reinforcement. Furthermore, by correcting members' behaviour, the church creates reinforcement devices able to control its members more broadly. In the next and final chapter of this thesis, I engage with the wider academic debate on the church, Pentecostalism and the sociology of religion. Using the assumptions of one of the most well regarded Brazilian sociologists, Antonio Flavio Pierucci, I will examine whether the UCKG in Madrid functions as a social cement for its members – from a Durkhemian perspective – or whether it is a solvent – from a Weberian perspective – that promotes social change, or whether we need to interpret it from another perspective. In this context, it seems relevant to observe, also, how Pentecostalism is seen, in a broader sense, by other authors.

Chapter 10

Between change and integration: a borderless church

10.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I analyse the UCKG in Madrid in relation to the opposing perspectives outlined by the Brazilian sociologist Antonio Flávio Pierucci, in a broader discussion of the sociology of religion. According to this author (Pierucci, 2006), Pentecostalism is, as I mentioned earlier in Chapter 8, a religion of individual salvation. Pierucci's assumption is that the individualistic characteristics of Pentecostalism are in line with Max Weber's understanding of religion as a form of social change, or in Pierucci's words, as a solvent, which works by transforming church members' mentality and interpretation of the world. In contrast, Pierucci pitches Durkheim's understanding of religion's role in society as a sort of social cement that gathers people together and binds them to norms.

I will also outline, briefly, the debate between Ruth Marshall and Nimi Wariboko on the concept of sovereignty, while trying to observe how Pierucci's ideas can be included in that discussion, too. It seems that while Marshall, a political scientist, understands Pentecostalism as a kind of negative theology – similar to Pierucci's solvent –, Wariboko, as a Pentecostal preacher himself, understands it more as a communitarian binder, in the more Durkheimian sense of social cement.

My fieldwork in the church in Madrid left me confused about what to think about the church from day one – I had read Pierucci's paper before even starting my research and his definitions were always in my mind. However, after a while, I felt that both of the points of view outlined by Pierucci – the transformation of the members (the process that I called self-othering) and the capacity to create new bonds with a new community of the spirit – were not only valid, but also not mutually exclusive.

To analyse religion as solvent and cement, I also will rely on the Temple of Solomon in order to observe this characteristic of the integration of a community amidst a dialectic of destruction or re-configuration of the past. This new temple provides us with a general idea of how a Pentecostal church creates an identity beyond borders, by materialising its symbolic meaning. The communitarian characteristics of the church have also appeared before in different parts of this thesis. However, it seems relevant to observe another characteristic of the church's communitarian integration, since most of the thesis gives examples of the theological transformations of the church, in relation to money, members' past lives prior to conversion, the demonic and so on. The point of this chapter is to

observe the dialectic between transformation and integration, with former linked to Weber and the latter to Durkheim, as Pierucci proposed.

10.2 Pierucci's view of Pentecostalism: religion as a solvent

In the erudition exam¹¹⁹ for the position of professor at the University of São Paulo, which was later published as a paper in the academic journal *Novos Estudos*, Antonio Flavio Pierucci observed the characteristics of Pentecostalism in relation to the Weberian concept of social change by religion, while distinguishing it from the Durkheimian perspective:

Contrary to Durkheim, for whom the role of religion is to reconnect the individual with the society to which he belongs, this essay states that nowadays religion's social power is quite the opposite: it separates people from its origins. Taking Max Weber's work as a guideline, it argues that a universal religion of individual salvation, the religious form that usually predominates, works as a device that disconnects people from their mother-culture (Pierucci, 2006: 111).

To explain the changes made by religion in this new social configuration, Pierucci introduces the concept of religion as a solvent¹²⁰, and goes further by observing the Brazilian census, which shows that Afro-Brazilian religions are disappearing while Pentecostalism is gaining ground (Ibid.: 112-114). He later observes, still based on data, how Pentecostalism has, statistically, a large number of black members in Brazil, and that the next largest number consists of *pardos*, who are ethnically mixed (white, black and indigenous), while among people practicing Afro-Brazilian religions the majority is white (51.2%). Hence, evangelical churches are more acceptable to black people than Afro-Brazilian religions.

The Brazilian sociologist then goes further in his understanding of the individual salvation of Pentecostalism, which I discussed in the eighth chapter. To sum up Pierucci's view:

The *universal* religion of *individual* salvation unravel people from established communitarian routines and untangles them from plots already given by communication and subordination only to, once *individualised*, liberated and autonomous, commit them as individuals in the constitution of a new

¹¹⁹ A kind of exam for a position similar to that of a lecturer, which is very common in some universities in Brazil.

¹²⁰ He first introduces the concept in German, *Religion als Lösemittel*, and then in Portuguese, *religião como solvente*.

community (...) that turned them to a subjective meaning entirely distinct, new, other: as Weber says, *ausschliesslich religiös*¹²¹ (Ibid.: 122).

Pierucci's concern in this paper is to observe the changing aspects of Brazilian Pentecostalism. To clarify even further, according to him, Pentecostalism is the religious form that has created a rupture with a past. Durkheim's perspective on religion, according to the Brazilian sociologist, does not match Pierucci's understanding of Brazilian Pentecostalism – and if we follow its concern with being *born again* in other parts of the globe, the differences go even further. To emphasise his criticism of Durkheim's sociological theory, Pierucci draws on Raymond Aron. Pierucci (Ibid.: 125) cites Aron's book in the original French. Let me now reproduce the quote used by Pierucci in English, from Aron's book, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought*:

Durkheim says, 'Society creates a religion when it is in a state of agitation' (...) (The) individuals experience a psychic state in which they react to impersonal forces both immanent and transcendent. Such an interpretation of religions amounts to a causal explanation. Social ferment is *favourable* to the rise of religions. (...) Which means that if the object of worship is *societies*, there are only *religions*: tribal religions, national religions. In this case, the essence of religion would be to inspire in men a fanatical devotion to partial groups, to pledge each man's devotion to a collectivity and, by the same token, his hostility to other collectivities.

It seems to me absolutely inconceivable to define the essence of religion in terms of the worship which the individual pledges to the group, for in my eyes the essence of impiety is precisely the worship of social order. To suggest that the object of religious feeling is society transfigured is not to save but to degrade that human reality which sociology (of religion) seeks to understand (Aron: 1971: 67-68).

Pierucci also cites Clifford Geertz, in a passage in which the British anthropologist criticises Durkheim's concept of religion, saying that his local support community is replaced, nowadays¹²², by Simmel's concept of a web: diffuse and without a centre (Pierucci, 2006: 126). Common to both critics, the point cited by Pierucci is that locale – national and tribal, as Aron observed – is diminishing in the religious movement nowadays. However, it seems to me that this is not exactly the case, since Durkheim's

¹²¹ In Pierucci's translation to Portuguese, *exclusivamente religioso*. In English, it means exclusively religious.

¹²² Actually, from 2006.

concept of church regards something broader than what is observed by Aron and Pierucci:

In history we do not find religion without Church. Sometimes the church is narrowly national; sometimes it extends beyond frontiers; sometimes it encompasses an entire people (Rome, Athens, the Hebrews); sometimes it encompasses only a fraction (Christian denominations since the coming of Protestantism); sometimes it is led by a body of priests; sometimes it is more or less without any official directing body. (...) Even so-called private cults, like the domestic cult or a corporate cult, satisfy this condition: They are always celebrated by a group, the family or the corporation. And, furthermore, even these private religions often are merely special forms of a broader religion that embraces the totality of life. These small Churches are in reality only chapels in a larger Church and, because of this very scope, deserve all the more to be called by that name. (...) A Church is not simply a priestly brotherhood; it is a moral community made up of all the faithful, both laity and priests. (Durkheim, 1995: 41-42).

Durkheim's understanding of the concept of church is broader, it seems, in the passage cited than that of any of his three critics (Pierucci, Aron and Geertz) would acknowledge. Durkheim observed both the possibility of a religion without borders and one with more diffused control than Pierucci's paper indicates. However, the understanding of leadership highlights the differences between Weber and Durkheim's perspectives. Weber (1978: 241-243) proposes a charismatic authority with a focus on the individual, and which cannot be achieved by ordinary people, as opposed to the regularity of the bureaucracy. Durkheim (1995: 212), in this instance, understands the leader as a mirror of the community, and which is only possible because of the forces coming from the group, as Charles Lindholm observed:

Sometimes, by happenstance, a person becomes a sacred symbol. Such an individual's personal qualities are irrelevant, since he or she exists solely as a sign no different from a churinga or any other sacred totem. For Durkheim, then, a venerated leader is less a person than the "group incarnated and personified" (Lindholm, 2002: 37).

Considering all this, I try here to uncover the materialisation of the community. First, however, I discuss a similar debate between two other authors to gain an understanding of some of the questions that have arisen for scholars studying Nigerian Pentecostalism, which is both different from and connected with the UCKG worldwide (and in Madrid).

However, to be fair to Pierucci's view of religion as a solvent, most of this thesis deals precisely with the UCKG's solvent characteristics: demonising others and selves, new theological guidelines for how to sacrifice money and how to achieve wealth and new moral codes and behaviours in relation to the world. The UCKG has to dissolve its members' pasts and present (if not converted yet) by denying them as misguided and demonic, and by re-interpreting them. The first step for individual members is to change. However, as I will try to now indicate, this is just the first step towards the re-creation of communitarian bonds.

10.3 A community or not? A debate between Ruth Marshall and Nimi Wariboko

As I indicated in the previous chapter, obedience to the word of God produces a blessing, while curses come from disobedience (Macedo, 2012: 84). Therefore, obedience to institutional guidelines is directly responsible for material and spiritual goods, and also produces individual empowerment within the institution, since transforming one's life, along with testimonials, are the most important things to the church.

This discussion also implicates the concept of sovereignty, as used in relation to Nigerian Pentecostalism by authors such as Marshall and Wariboko. Since I am not trying to repeat their arguments in this research, I will make further considerations and apply the concept of sovereignty to the UCKG's guidelines.

In her analysis of Nigeria, Ruth Marshall observed the politics of this religious movement:

Pentecostalism expresses a negative political theology, whether one understands this term in its sense of a theology of sovereignty or as a theology of community. With its emphasis on individual salvation, interiority, and affectivity, coupled with its incipient messianism, it has great difficulty in either founding an authority that commands obedience and may embody divine will, or creating the foundations of a political community. (...) On the one hand, there is a growing bid for pastoral monopoly over spiritual authority with increasingly theocratic tendencies. On the other, there is an engagement with the demonic that, rather than resolving the problem of radical insecurity and founding a new politics of living together, gives rise to a politics of settling scores and vengeance. (Marshall, 2009: 165).

Marshall also compares the miracles in Pentecostalism with violence and the state of exception in law. While the former manifests and guarantees the presence of divine powers, the latter does the same, manifesting and guaranteeing the law. Ultimately, both function not as means to achieve a goal, but as pure manifestation and violence (Ibid.:

213). The author also understands Pentecostalism and re-birth as a form of sovereignty that makes people believe in a logic of self-empowerment connected with the Holy Spirit (similar to Plato's beliefs that innate ideas about the self are capable of reaching truths by their own efforts and reasoning. To sum up, this tradition, since Plato, would see sovereignty and freedom as identical (Ibid.: 233). Furthermore, she also observes that Pentecostalism provides answers for the post-colonial state of insecurity in Nigeria, but nonetheless brings other forms of insecurity and subjection (Ibid.: 236). Thus, Pentecostalism brings new experiences, but dialoguing with tradition.

Marshall also highlights two characteristics of Nigerian Pentecostalism:

(...) on the one hand, an attempt to develop authoritarian forms of pastoral power, which are constantly undermined, and thus, in turn, contribute to the ongoing fragmentation of the community. (...) On the other hand, there is a process of *conviction*, in its double sense – identifying the demonic within the unconverted other and overcoming it through conversion. This process both inhibits the stabilisation from the inside, of a coherent community, or *ekklesia*, within which trust may be established yet also encourages the creation of a precarious collective identity, impelled from the outside through the clash with a formidable religious other (Marshall, 2010: 216-217).

Throughout the aforementioned article, Marshall observes, again, that Pentecostalism in Nigeria does not create a community or an identity, and that this is the reason why a theocratic political power would be undermined by internal fractures, since it fails to institutionalise connections between power and religious law (Ibid.: 201). The movement in Nigeria does not bind its members consistently: 'the reciprocal exploitation of religious and political office, where political elites recuperate Pentecostal discourse, and pastors use political patronage to shore up their authority is a strategy that has not met with popular mobilisation or assent' (Ibid.: 217).

In an institutional sense, founding a new church 'and doing God's work' became a means of access not only to a new form of personal accumulation, but also to a world of transnational connections, images and imaginaries. In a marked departure from mainstream Protestant and older Pentecostal churches, the model of church organisation came increasingly to resemble that of small (or large) private enterprises, and of an internal economy which developed based on a shared faith and new networks (Marshall, 2009: 181-182).

Nimi Wariboko is a Nigerian pastor and academic who responds very emphatically to Marshall's assumptions. His critique of Marshall contains important themes that arise

precisely because he is an insider. He disagrees with Marshall on a few points, observing that Pentecostalism rejects the idea of its leaders acting in politics or mediating between heaven and the believer. Wariboko also asserts that Marshall believes in the necessity of an essence or a project for a community and circumscribes the religious movement within the Aristotelian term of community and other terms – such as sovereignty – that do not belong to Pentecostalism (Wariboko, 2014: 169-172). Wariboko's main point, as I observed in the previous chapter, is the creative element in Pentecostal theology, or the theology of play, and in a direct critique of Marshall, the capacity of this religious movement to create a social body via the Holy Spirit, which distinguishes the Nigerian author from the pastors and leaders who assume a more individualistic concentration of power.

The identity of the Pentecostal spirit is fluid (...) not because of what is expressed, that the limits are blurred, disorderly, or flow together as a stream. It is so only because every form that emerges quickly vanishes, with a new form springing up and also disappearing immediately. Identity is virtual. Identity is the generic potentiality of subjectivity (Wariboko, 2012: 142).

The UCKG in Madrid can be interpreted, in my opinion, through a combination of the views of Marshall and Wariboko. There is an internal institutional struggle for the personal accumulation of power, as in the example of the assistant I., who had previously worked in Portugal and was in Europe only because of the church, whose missionary objective was spreading the message of God throughout the Iberian countries. This applies not just to I., but also to most of the people who attend church services: they want to achieve spiritual empowerment that will also bring social capital and financial prosperity. Thus, Marshall's notion of an internal economy based on faith is correct. We saw this in the previous chapter, with regard to the rituals internalised by church campaigns such as the Daniel Fast, which enable a member to accumulate more internal social capital by showing greater commitment. The operational guidelines of the UCKG in Madrid – and all around the world – also acknowledge the possibility of schisms by giving too much power in a given community to a pastor or a bishop. This is the reason why I had to ask three times, in the course of my fieldwork, for permission to participate in the services. Constantly changing leaders is a way to avoid the accumulation of too much power by local leaders, making it difficult for them to orchestrate any sort of schism. Pierre Bourdieu (2005: 58) observed this characteristic in churches that wish to avoid more or less rigorously the entry of new salvation enterprises into the religious market, thus perpetuating their monopoly.

However, this last observation also indicates that a charismatic figure full of symbolic, God-given power is not necessary, as Wariboko observes. Bishops and pastors are rather an identifiable institutional class, which has accumulated enough spiritual power to be able to teach others. Nevertheless, the process of learning that a person can meditate on his or her own reading of the Bible is an institutional premise. The UCKG needs the mediation of pastors, but there is less need for particular personae¹²³ and more for the symbolic representation of the social, as in Durkheim's concept of leadership.

I also agree with Marshall when she observes that Pentecostalism does not see miracles as an exceptional state (as in Carl Schmitt's perspective), or as an extraordinary supernatural event (as in Thomas Hobbes' perspective) (Marshall, 2010: 213). Nevertheless, she seems to contradict her observations about the non-creation of a community. The trivialisation of miracles corresponds to the specific *habitus* of a specific group. If her understanding of community lies in the absence of internal contradictions and disputes among members who possess a sense of sovereignty that is unquestionable, then I would have to agree with Marshall. However, it seems illogical to think of the UCKG itself – a church with a history of schisms from the beginning –, Pentecostalism as a whole, or even other religions, such as the Catholic Church, in that way. The Catholic Church, for example, even with the centrality of command emanating from the Vatican, has its specific characteristics in each place. The UCKG in Madrid, as I have observed in other chapters, is similarly differentiated. The church is inclusive of Muslims, has an almost complete absence of religious anthropophagism in relation to Afro-Brazilian religions, and in Madrid even draws less on the works of Macedo than in Brazil. The logic of dispute inside the Pentecostal movement, as Wariboko observed, makes way for the plurality of churches and interpretations of the scriptures. However, at least in Brazil, the sense of belonging to Pentecostalism becomes more conscious, even with the fluidity observed by Wariboko. As Ricardo Bitun observed in the Brazilian case:

We have verified that this transit occurs intensely among Neo-Pentecostal churches. Religious transit occurs, basically, in two steps: interreligious and intrarreligious. In Brazil, the research done by CERIS (Center for Religious Statistics and Social Research) on religious transit in that country shows that the vast majority of transit is first manifest from one church to another, in other words, from Catholicism, Spiritism or Afro-Brazilian religions to

¹²³ I am not excluding the talent of any particular leader(s) here. However, it seems more important to observe, with the numerous changes in pastors and even bishops in the UCKG in Madrid, that the most important characteristic that a leader should have is to be able to represent the symbolism – performances and theological content – of the church.

Pentecostalism. Once in the Pentecostal field, the individual moves to the Neo-Pentecostal churches (...) (Bitun, 2007: 7)¹²⁴.

The case of the UCKG member, D., who made this religious transit between many religions, followed a similar logic to that described by Ricardo Bitun. The Assemblies of God were the last step before joining the UCKG in Madrid. Most of the ethics of Pentecostalism were probably already incorporated by him before he switched to the UCKG: the real difference, as highlighted by him, was the interpretation of achieving a blessed financial life, which was less emphatic in his former religious affiliation.

The Brazilian Pentecostal identity, with many nuances of course, lies exactly in this characteristic of transit among many institutions. The church studied by Ricardo Bitun (2007; 2009), The World Church of the Power of God, was founded by Valdemiro Santiago as the result of a schism with the UCKG. The differences in theological interpretations and beliefs of the two institutions are very small, so the transit occurs much more easily. However, the controversies of the UCKG in Spain, as observed in the third chapter, show that the church has a history of non-recognition among other religious groups in the country. I do not have the data to discuss schisms in the church in Madrid, but as Bitun says, there are indications that a Neo-Pentecostal convert may transit through churches of similar characteristics. It is institutional deception that makes them leave a denomination, not the entire worldview of Neo-Pentecostalism.

Anti-theological principles bring a sense of destruction of former affiliations. Marshall's perspective, and I am well aware of the plurality of concepts and the rigour of her study and conceptualisation, may be aligned with Pierucci's 'solvent'. Pentecostalism is an anti-theology of rupture that does not create a sense of communitarian bonds. Wariboko, for instance, understands re-creation as the identity of Pentecostalism, perhaps because of his concern with Tillich's theology and his method of correlation. Western society and its symbols of late capitalism are reconstructed at all time. The liquid society is part of a wider societal trait. Pentecostalism thus offers the possibility of theological explanation for the people who need new symbolic understandings of the world. In the case of the UCKG in Madrid, these people are mostly in despair, in the shadow of failure, in a state of bad health or bankruptcy and Latin American immigrants who are looking for money and a better life in a new part of the world. It seems plausible that a theology which preaches prosperity and re-signifies people's understanding of the way to earn money, and of who

¹²⁴ Free translation.

exactly is preventing them from living a prosperous and healthier life (the Devil), would fit reasonably well among them.

10.4 A local and transnational identity: the Temple of Solomon as social binder of the UCKG in Madrid

I do not believe straightforwardly, however, in the solvent-only hypothesis proposed by Pierucci, even taking into account my rejection of his understanding of Durkheim as having a static concept of religion. It seems important to observe that the solvent and cement perspectives are not mutually exclusive. The UCKG's demonisation of both former religious practices and secular traditions is an example of a solvent, even though the past returns in exorcisms and testimonials. However, the adaptations made by the church are an ambivalent mixture of the modern and anti-modern (Comaroff: 2012), or a bridge between the past and the present (David Martin, 2002: 124¹²⁵). It is not only changing, but it is also in fact adapting to a new environment for deterritorialised people, both as immigrants, and symbolically, as people with existential, financial and health problems. Thus, the UCKG would also have a role of cementing communitarian bonds in a new environment.

The best example of the transnational symbolism of the church, which is far from being the only example, is the Temple of Solomon. The construction of the temple took almost four years, from 8 August 2010 until June 2014. During the construction, the church installed cameras for the members to follow the development of their new holy place, brick by brick. The building has a capacity of 10 thousand people and is fifty-five meters high (180 feet). It is located in the region of Brás in the city of São Paulo. The Temple has a space for visitors, where guides tell biblical stories, with the help of objects similar to biblical ones. The symbolism of a Brazilian temple illustrates another singularity of Pentecostalism, as observed by Paul Gifford (2001: 74): Christian Zionism. There is a particular obsession with Hebrew culture and preaching the Torah in a few Pentecostal churches, but Bishop Macedo took this to a whole other level. In his preaching at the Temple of Solomon, he has worn since day one the kippah and the tallit, and he has had a long beard, very similar to an orthodox Jew, which is also worn by other famous church bishops who preach at the temple, such as Bishop Clodomir. Macedo also imported masonry stones from the city of Hebron in Israel. Since the stones were objects of worship, and had religious meaning for church members, they were immune from taxes

¹²⁵ According to the author, alongside the Catholic Charismatic Renewal.

imposed by the Brazilian government.¹²⁶ The Brazilian Jewish community reacted with a mixture of outrage and flattery¹²⁷. The primitivism of the Christianity preached by the UCKG is not new, and at least since the 1990s there have been regular expeditions of the highest bishops to Mount Sinai to pray for the members in a place full of symbolism, a practice which recovers the oldest parts of the Bible.

The Temple of Solomon was chosen because of the characteristics of Solomon himself, who was the wealthiest person in the Bible and thus represents one of the main symbols for the church and its prosperity theology. Nevertheless, with a specific temple to be visited by every member, the church now has its Vatican: a centre where every member feels they belong. The creation of this temple as the main church building does not only attest to its magnificence, insofar as the church propaganda surrounding it is enormous. When I did my fieldwork, the headquarters of the church in Spain had a huge wall poster of the Temple of Solomon, no less than 6 meters high. Other temples in Europe, in countries such as the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Russia, Romania, Ukraine, Sweden, Latvia, Estonia Malta and Moldavia, also have the same figure at the altar ¹²⁸. Engaging the members in services by displaying the Temple of Solomon as a holy venue on a daily basis, or at least on the days that they actually attend a service, gives them a sense of belonging to a sacred place, even if they are on another continent, such as Europe.

Thus, the creation of the newest building gives a sense of historical belonging to a community. Roberto DaMatta (1997: 29) observed that every generation serves itself with a limited number of facts from a broader array of things that constitute a tradition, to construct its own vision of history. The UCKG's not only materialises the theology of the church, but also provides a sense of belonging to a historical community provided by the Bible. The choice for this symbolic building blends the past and present, inasmuch as a temple blessed by God in the time of the Old Testament becomes the proof of prosperity for members of the church today. The magnificence of the temple is also linked to the struggle for public space. Oro and Tadvald (2015) have analysed how the church changed its strategy from renting old cinemas and theatres in Brazil to building mega-temples. This obsession with mega-spaces is not new. The UCKG's struggles for public space are famous even in the United Kingdom, where the church has bought the Rainbow Theatre

¹²⁶ In: <https://noticias.gospelprime.com.br/pedras-templo-de-salomao-iurd-isencao/>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

¹²⁷ In: <http://ultimosegundo.ig.com.br/brasil/2014-09-08/rabinos-criticam-uso-de-simbolos-judaicos-no-templo-de-salomao.html>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

¹²⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1budWDvx4Ho&t=1124s>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

in London. However, this was not before it had tried to buy the Brixton Academy, which was blocked by the local council (Miller and Anderson, 2003: 181).

A former church pastor and one of the first 're-colonizers' of Europe, Mario Justino, tells of Macedo's obsession with competition, and how he has wanted to build an immense temple in Rome since at least the 1990s, to compete on more equal terms with the pope (Justino, 1995: 100). However, in Madrid, there is currently no spatial struggle like that in Brazil, since the church is only in its second phase of struggle in the former – and in Europe in general –, inasmuch as it still rents unused buildings and turns them into temples. In Brazil, on the other hand, especially in the big cities, the preference is now for building its own temples (Oro and Tadvall, 2015: 99). The visibility of the church in Madrid is good, but it is far from the mega-temples of Brazil. The Temple of Solomon and the symbolism surrounding it fills this void in the constitution of the members' community.

Sermons by pastors and bishops also help in the construction of this new holy place. Unfortunately, I only have data from the temple where I carried out my study, in Madrid. I would guess that similar sermons occur everywhere in Europe, at least wherever the church uses the temple poster, at the altar, to help newcomers understand what that image means and represents. Services contain sermons about the figure of Solomon in the Bible (20/06/2016), to help people understand his symbolical meaning better. Tithes are also a target of church campaigns, with payments and the images of contributors to be taken to the Temple of Solomon (21/06/2016). Excursions are organised to take the members who participate most fully, as well as those who have the money to pay for the trip, to Brazil for a visit. In addition, many videos with testimonials made by people in the Temple are distributed to all the UCKGs around the world. The church media contains publicity to attract visitors to the temple from other parts of the world, such as the Peruvian and Swiss groups of March 2016, according to the UCKG's Brazilian newspaper *Folha Universal* from that month. In almost every edition, the church newspaper in Brazil reserves a section for the church's activities outside the country. The UCKG also makes documentaries with the aim of publicising its incursions into other countries and of telling the history of the institution's transnationalism. The same occurs on the official church website, on which news from all around the world – in addition to news regarding the UCKG's global missions – is published.

Nevertheless, if the main point of the church is to create a holy place acknowledged by all the members, as I suspect, there must be proper preaching to elevate the spiritual status of its new building. I discuss two main strategies here, but with the strategic changes that the church always invents to renew itself, they will not be the only ones in

the near future. The first, very commonly used by the pastors and bishops, is online prayers at times without regular members. On 29 July 2016, for example, the pastors connected themselves, via the internet, with pastors and bishops in the Temple of Solomon. The pastors of Familia Unida in Madrid had to wake up early in the morning, because the prayer occurred at 5:00. This was heavily publicised during the services leading up to it, and it was a way to show the leaders' commitment, and especially their spiritual enrichment. The second strategy involves actually preaching about the spiritual power of the temple. During one service (27/10/2016), Pastor Esteban preached about the relationships of members, showing a video of a woman who broke up with her boyfriend and went to the Temple of Solomon to cure her sadness and depression. After the testimonial video, he said that the Temple of Solomon was built to help people like her by transforming their lives. He went on to say that the church in Madrid has the same powers as the temple in Brazil, and when he asked whether people agreed with him, the crowd responded with a loud 'yes'. Pastor Alberto (24/06/2016) also emphasised the importance of paying tithes, since they would be consecrated in the Temple of Solomon. Implicitly, this practice of taking the names of the tithers to a holier place would make them more spiritually powerful than those who do not contribute financially. Both strategies increase the sense of belonging, on the part of the members in Madrid, to a community with a building on the other side of the ocean, based on a transnational interpretation of a transnational institution.

On 18 July 2015, an event occurred that involved the whole UCKG worldwide. In the Temple of Solomon, ten thousand pastors gathered before Bishop Macedo to pray for everyone who wanted to change their lives, who were also known as the regular members of the church. The Familia Unida website presented the event in the following way¹²⁹:

Y consigue esta fuerza adicional, uniéndote a nosotros, ¡en un clamor sin precedentes! Participa con nosotros durante esta semana y el Sábado participa junto con los pastores, que estarán en espíritu de oración con el Obispo Gilberto Santana, el Obispo Macedo y todos los Obispos de los continentes y países, que estarán presentes en el Templo del Dios Vivo, representando así, el trabajo de Familia Unida en los 184 países donde estamos presentes. (Free translation: And get this additional force, uniting with us, in a clamour without precedent! Participate with us during this week and on Saturday participate with the pastors, which will be in a spirit of prayer with Bishop Gilberto Santana, Bishop Macedo and all the other bishops of all

¹²⁹ In: <http://familiaunida.es/evento/todos-juntos-en-el-mismo-altar-y-a-la-misma-hora/>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

the continents and countries that will be present in the Temple of the Living God, thus representing the work of Familia Unida in the 184 countries where we are).

The Temple of the Living God is the Temple of Solomon. This part of the article on the church website indicates the importance of the temple as the main building of the church, of the possibility of being spiritually empowered by it. The gathering at the temple, with bishops and pastors from all over the world, also gives a sense of the church leadership (pastors) as described by Eduardo Dullo (2015: 38), who understands them as the political representatives of the members and the ones who fight for their salvation. However, the message of the article and of the UCKG sermons in general is especially concerned with benefits in the material realm, since they say that the bishops and pastors will intervene for health, relationships and family in addition to economic and spiritual life.

A similar meeting took place in São Paulo in 2017. The bishop in charge of the church in Madrid during that year, Paulo Guimarães, posted on his public Facebook page a video recorded on 23/07/2017, inside the Temple of Solomon, which showed him taking water in a plastic bottle from a fountain outside the building. He mentioned that the water symbolises the Holy Spirit, which is responsible for giving life. With the help of an assistant, he consecrated the water, saying that the people who drank the water would receive cures, spiritual and physical liberation, and the presence of the Holy Spirit in their families, which would all transform the lives of the members. The bishop also announced that the people in Spain would receive the blessings if they do show up at the UCKG, and gave the address of the headquarters in Madrid. The bishop was in Brazil for the annual reunion of bishops and pastors of the church worldwide, on 22/07/2017¹³⁰. Bishop Macedo led this special service with the theological aim of preaching about the servants of God.

The internalisation of the Temple of Solomon as a holy place goes beyond the leadership. In our first meeting (23/10/2015), the assistant I. spoke to me about many subjects including politics, her financial life – she asked a lot about mine as well – and the Temple of Solomon. As a missionary assistant and a member for almost 35 years, she was able to go to the inauguration of the temple. I. told me that the temple was incredible and that people from the church in Madrid had already been there, too, but only those able to pay for the excursion. In addition, she observed how important people were there with her, like the former president Dilma Rousseff and the governor of the state of São Paulo, Geraldo Alckmin, in addition to many other authorities. All her years of missionary work –

¹³⁰ In: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BvHqc7Twlmg>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

I. had been in Portugal before arriving in Spain – were materialised by her presence in this very important moment of the church, which explains her pride while telling me about the visit.

The Temple of Solomon helps to show that the church has, contrary to Pierucci, a symbol to unite members. The process of individualisation in Pentecostalism, as Pierucci proposed, is not the only characteristic of people who search for the church. The opposite is also the case: the church gives a sense of belonging for members, not just to a community in Madrid, but to a group of people worldwide. Empowerment, as in the example of the assistant, I., comes also via the sense of belonging to the more important parts of society. Sharing the same space as important people was only possible because of the temple, which held out the promise of some bigger and holy accomplishment.

Church strategies for creating a sense of a community without borders for its members are numerous, and date from a time before the construction of the Temple of Solomon. Most of UCKG campaigns are global. They include the Daniel Fast, the Holy Fire of Israel, the excursion to Mount Sinai and many other campaigns and trips to holy places, where the pastors and bishops vicariously represent the members who cannot go. At the Spanish headquarters, I saw an example of this during July 2016. In many services during that month, a small transnational campaign was announced with the collaboration of the UCKG in other parts of the globe. The videos played in the services showed images from Miami, Portugal and Cape Verde. First, the pastor consecrated the oil, second, the wine (must) and third, the water. These elements have a symbolic use in the Bible and were used by members in Madrid after being transported a great distance to reach them. The sense of belonging everywhere in the world, with a transnational identity, was empowering for those who helped in the campaign and for those who received the holy products, in addition to giving a sense of familiarity to travellers or immigrants, who have a familiar place to go if they want to change their place of residence.

The sense of an international community is rooted in the routinisation of charisma. It is not Bishop Macedo, however, who has the charisma to dominate members everywhere in the world. Although he is still the most important figure in the church, since he mostly has a monopoly on the 'final word' regarding important subjects (Campos, 1999b: 98), local pastors' charisma and the hard work with their assistants are the main reasons for the spread of the UCKG all around the world; the charisma is institutional. A break with Macedo, or even his death, would not leave the church without a command or clear strategies to maintain its growth. The transnational community of the UCKG has a leader, but the church itself has become bigger, with micro-leaderships and campaigns (such as

the one involving Miami, Cape Verde, Portugal and Madrid) that can be coordinated without Macedo. The symbolism of the Temple of Solomon, which gathers members from different countries, as a holy place to visit, or just as a sacred image on the church altar, is the best example of this today. Personal charisma (for example, from the re-location of pastors in Madrid) becomes secondary to the charisma of a symbolic place, which can last for generations to come.

The Familia Unida website also provides information about the church's activities in other countries, including Mexico¹³¹, Russia¹³² and Ukraine¹³³, and about the cost of the construction of temples inside and outside Spain. For people in a liquid society, in which living in different countries is not a strange hypothesis, the church is able to create a cultural apparatus for the members. J. was a member from Brazil who had moved to Madrid just a few weeks before I met him in the church. He was a member of the church in his home country and got in touch with a Brazilian member of the church in Madrid so that he could join it. He had only his wife living with him in the new country, but looked forward to bringing his grown children, who were doing their undergraduate studies in Brazil. He used the church as a new community in this new environment.

This resembles the concept of tribes as proposed by Michel Maffesoli, in which the individualisation of people in post-modern times is making room for new group configurations. A homogenised mass society makes room for tribal – not in the original sense of the word – groups that are the result of a search for people that 'feel and think as we do' (Maffesoli, 1996: 13). Nevertheless, what kind of people are searching for the UCKG? Are they people only in despair, making the church a quasi-magical religiosity for those in need? I do not think so. The search for the miracles of wealth and health are only a part of the process. Otherwise, nobody would stay after receiving such benefits.

As Maffesoli (Ibid.: 41) observed: 'It is precisely this proximity that gives much of its meaning to what we call the "social divine"'. This is the reason why the UCKG in Madrid serves the Latin American immigrants and people of Spain so well. Its dialogue between the magical substrata of a society and many believers in the religious sphere, aligned with the possibility of providing a message and an ethic that interprets material and financial blessings as the work of God, is, most of the time, exactly what they need. However, as the case of J. indicates, members are sometimes looking for more than material benefits, from a utilitarian perspective. They also are looking for new networks of sociability. The

¹³¹ In: <http://centrodeayudauniversal.es/la-universal-inaugura-un-nuevo-templo/>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

¹³² In: <http://centrodeayudauniversal.es/la-universal-inaugura-un-nuevo-templo-en-rusia/>. Accessed: 27/12/2017.

¹³³ In: <http://centrodeayudauniversal.es/quienes-somos/obras/>. 27/12/2017.

church's dialogue with transnationalism and the way it creates bonds, making close connections with people from all around the world by sharing testimonials of faith and visible changes, bring what is distant closer. Proximity becomes less about geography and more about shared identity.

The church spreads itself via an institutional charisma that creates symbols, like the Temple of Solomon, with a meaning that goes beyond that of a local community. It enhances the borderless society by group affiliation. In a manner similar to Pierucci's solvent proposition or the anti-theological, non-communitarian perspective of Marshall, the UCKG in Madrid dissolves and re-signifies the cultural backgrounds of demonised others as a main tool for establishing itself elsewhere. It serves those in need of symbolical meaning through rituals such as the Daniel Fast. Its solvent and anti-theological natures are both means for the construction of a community without a straightforward project of Pentecostalism in a broader sense, but with a collective desire to conquer the binary world where God and the Devil fight for human souls. To destroy old affiliations and worldviews, the church demonises them, granting space for people to expose and discuss them as well, but in a condescending and sometimes resentful manner. The solvent characteristic of religion is present. However, religion, at least in the UCKG in Madrid, is a way for people in need of a communitarian development to converge, and even if this does concern individualistic interpretations of the world, it is still socially constructed in a standardised manner so that everyone is able to interpret theologically. The church dissolves, but it also cements. Transformation and integration are non-exclusive, and in a liquid modernity in which religious marketing has as many different worldviews as possible, more closed tribes, to use Maffesoli's concept, have to distinguish themselves from others, as did the chosen people of Israel when they became the only ones who had a covenant with God. Perhaps this exclusivity is another reason why the UCKG has a strong inclination towards the Old Testament. Its worldwide tribe has the best symbolic goods for salvation and prosperity, restoring what was once promised by God to humankind.

Conclusion: A church without borders.

I began the research project for this thesis at the end of 2013. Although I did not have a clear idea yet of what I would like to research, I was already familiar with some of the bibliography about Brazilian Pentecostalism and especially about the UCKG. However, the church did have many different studies about it, and mostly in different places. One of the objectives in the literature review chapter was to observe the plurality of these studies about the UCKG, and to determine which seemed most relevant to my research. I was able to include only a fraction of these studies, namely those that seemed more relevant to my research in Madrid. I tried to cover all the aspects that I wanted to explore later in the thesis: gender, economic aspects of the UCKG, group formation, the UCKG's transnationalism, Pentecostalism in politics and in the public sphere, race and the theological aspects of the church. Another important thing that I reviewed in the literature chapter was the division of Brazilian Pentecostalism into three different periods, which is commonly accepted by most researchers of this religious movement. Thus, the UCKG is placed in the third wave of Brazilian Pentecostalism, distinguishing itself from the first and second wave institutions by its openness towards money and the less ascetic characteristic of its theology.

The main exponents of the first wave of Brazilian Pentecostalism were the Assemblies of God and the Christian Congregation. The former is the biggest church in Brazil, while the latter became more of an ethnic church for descendants of Italians immigrants, who did not grow in numbers like the former. The gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as speaking in tongues, the anti-Catholic worldview and asceticism in relation to what was considered to be mundane practices were the main characteristics of this period, which began in the second decade of the twentieth century. This first wave began with the foundation of these churches by immigrants, and although most of the members were Brazilian, even those who were Italian descendants, the movement came from abroad, from Swedish (Assemblies of God) and Italian (Christian Congregation) immigrants.

The second wave of Brazilian Pentecostalism began in the 1950s with American leaders who founded the Church of Foursquare Gospel. Although the movement still had a lot of foreign influence – the New Life church from which the founding fathers of the UCKG came belonged to the Canadian Robert McAlister –, the first genuine Brazilian churches (founded by locals) appeared. The main one was the God is Love Church, established by David Miranda. In this second phase of Brazilian Pentecostalism, there was spiritual healing and the diffusion of church messages by radio. However, the roots of what would become the third wave of Brazilian Pentecostalism were also present: the beginning of

the struggle against Afro-Brazilian religions and the participation in politics, although these were not the highlighted characteristics of the churches at the time. It is always worth remembering that, in every period of Brazilian Pentecostalism, there are differences among institutions with regard to their main guidelines. For example, the Brazil for Christ church and its leader Manoel de Mello had close relations with politics, while David Miranda – from God is Love – had an approach similar to older Brazilian Pentecostal denominations, which forbade its members from participating in politics.

The UCKG belongs to the third wave of Brazilian Pentecostalism, or to what is called Brazilian Neo-Pentecostalism. Unlike older Pentecostal affiliations such as the God is Love church, which forbade their members to watch television for most of its history, the UCKG uses every available method, especially television, radio and the internet, to propagate its message. It also seems to have a less communitarian bond between its members (Wyk, 2014: 237) than the older institutions. This occurs firstly because of more openness on the part of the church in relation to the outside world than most of its predecessors, which have even more restrictive rules than the UCKG. The internationalisation of the church also contributes to differences in the church's characteristics in each location. Catholicism may be understood from a similar perspective, since there are many different kinds of Catholicism, which become recognizable by their local characteristics. Thus, my concern while analysing the UCKG was to observe the hermetic characteristics of a highly controlled institution with a need for fluidity to adapt itself to a different environment. I tried to dialogue with the Brazilian sociologist Antonio Flávio Pierucci with respect to his ideas of religion as a solvent – in his analyses about Max Weber – and as a social cement – from Durkheim's perspective. The former would give religion the characteristic of social change, and in my opinion, this is the reason why Weber would consider a prophet to be a revolutionary and ascribe to the Protestant ethic the role of changing the mentality of its members with its understanding of profit, accumulation and investment. The latter is the classical Durkheimian interpretation of religion as a form of social gathering which provides a shared meaning and worldview to its participants. Pierucci's differentiation of these two branches in the sociology of religion may be seen as a reductionism of both authors' views, since Durkheim (2005: 320) indicated the anomic characteristic of Protestantism due to its high suicide numbers as a result of the social detachment between members and Weber (1978: 227) observed the characteristic of traditionalism in religion. However, I took Pierucci's views of solvent and cement regarding religion in order to understand what the role of the UCKG in a foreign country was. My hypothesis was that its characteristics as both a solvent and a cement were not mutually exclusive. Sometimes

the church could work as one or the other, and even as both. This thought about the distinctness of the role of religion, sociologically speaking, permeated my analysis of the church throughout most of the research, especially while I was doing the fieldwork.

I tried to indicate, in the third chapter, what kind of methodological approach I used while doing the research. Since the time is limited for PhD research, my choice to do it only in Madrid seems, now, a bit obvious. The UCKG has a good amount of members and temples – according to its own account – in the city, and my knowledge of Spanish and similar cultural background, since Catholicism is the main religion both in Spain and Brazil, were the reasons for my final choice. I started my fieldwork in the city at the end of 2015, and I returned two more times, spending around six months in total researching the church. I had a little more than fifty transcriptions of services and a good number of interviews within these transcriptions. I was even able to get a full interview with a church pastor, which is something difficult since the church has many struggles in the public sphere in Spain. Furthermore, the UCKG was already an object of study in different countries in Europe, such as Portugal and France. Even in the book about the church's transnationalism, *Igreja Universal: os novos conquistadores da fé* (Oro et al., 2003), there is not a single chapter about the activities of the church in Madrid.

Aside from the fieldwork, I used discourse analysis in a broader sense to grasp all the information possible about the church in order to understand how the official discourse spreads through its members. Hence, I gathered information from church websites, especially that of the *Familia Unida*, which is the official one of the UCKG in Madrid. I also read the *Familia Unida* magazine and, with the services that I attended, I was able to observe how testimonials present in the magazine had similar characteristics. I also accessed the *radio positiva* regularly to listen to the sermons of church leaders. Beyond the Spanish context, I read books written by Bishop Edir Macedo – all of them are in the bibliography – and by famous members of the church. I also regularly visited the official website of the church in Brazil to hear the messages of other leaders. The UCKG in Spain does not control a media channel with the size of Rede Record. Hence, although there is always an objective to recruit new members by radio, magazines and the internet, most of the use of media is for the members. Thus, the media in Madrid has a characteristic of controlling the members more than recruiting new ones, although both are objectives.

In the fourth chapter, I began the analysis of the UCKG's institutional transnationalism. I was able to observe, with the literature on the church and with the material that I gathered (especially on websites), the strategies of the church's international mission. The UCKG, especially in the beginning, often chose countries with a cultural background similar to

that of Brazil, with a similar language – Portuguese and Spanish – or with a high number of Brazilian immigrants, such as the United States and Western European countries. The Lusophone countries are usually the ones in which the church has more success with its transnationalism. Portugal, for example, is the European country with the most number of church temples and most likely the biggest number of members as well. In African countries, there is a similar pattern, inasmuch as Portuguese-speaking countries such as Angola, Mozambique and Cape Verde are the ones where the church is most successful, although South Africa, which is not a Lusophone country, has a significant number of members as well. The success of the church in South Africa has already produced relevant literature in the field of sociology (Freston, 2005; Wyk, 2014).

Another aspect that should be highlighted and must be observed in the church's transnationalism is the adaptation of its discourse. The case of Brazil and the dispute between the UCKG and the Catholic Church, which culminated in the episode of the kicking of the saint, is one of many changes of direction in Macedo's church on its path of expansion. The church had to change its warfare against Catholicism and focus even more on less powerful enemies, at least with regard to the number of members, such as the Afro-Brazilian religions. In Uruguay, the church also discovered that an open struggle against the Catholic Church would not be the best option for recruiting members. The UCKG's religious discourse must be adaptable to each place where the church installs itself.

Also in Chapter Four, I indicated another church strategy in its transnationalism: the usage of media vehicles. The media works for the UCKG in two main ways. The first, and more obvious one, is as a tool of recruiting new members. Hence, church propaganda in the form of member testimonials or promises of wealth and health must reach outsiders. The internet, television, radio, newspapers and magazines are used with the aim of bringing new people to the church, which differentiates it from American televangelists who usually want people to buy their products. The UCKG media is a tool for bringing people inside the temples. The other aspect of UCKG media is the control of its members' practices outside the church. Hence, guidelines for what to do in relation to many aspects of an individual's life, and even the possibility of interacting with pastors via the *pastoronline* platform on the official website, are two examples of the media as an extension of the church's premises outside its physical doors.

In addition, I began to observe the church's first steps in Madrid with a focus on the struggles. The controversies with newspapers, especially *El País*, and with the Federation of Evangelical Religious Entities of Spain (FEREDE), which did not recognise the UCKG

as a Protestant church, were highly visible. *El País* and smaller newspapers, in addition to blogs, accused the UCKG of things that were similar to what had happened since its foundation in Brazil. Allegations that it was a moneymaking enterprise that exploits the faith of its members to enrich its leaders are perhaps the most common one. However, even with the church's strategies to avoid more controversies, such as changing its name to Familia Unida after beginning its activities in Spain as *Pare de Sufrir*¹³⁴, as well as the association with Bishop Macedo becoming less explicit than in other countries, it seems that controversies still surround the UCKG in Spain. Nonetheless, the controversies following the church are not necessarily something bad, since it adds more spotlight to its activities. Furthermore, the bad reputation of the church with outsiders also helps in the construction of a discourse of persecution, which is fundamental for the understanding of the processes of othering and self-othering in the seventh and eighth chapters. Controversies are not as welcome as they once were, but they can be instrumentalised for a theological purpose, especially with a persecution discourse that creates the classical group clash between 'them' and 'us'.

After analysing the controversies of the church in Madrid, I began the fifth and most ethnographic chapter of the thesis thus far, with a description of the UCKG's main temple in Spain – and in Madrid – from the inside. I could observe the regular usages of magical elements inside the church, from roses to batteries, from water from the Jordan River to lentils. The most common element used by the members of the church is oil, mostly because of its biblical meaning of cure (James, 5:14), which is related to spiritual healing. All those magical elements are used by everyone in the church, such as pastors, workers, members and even visitors like myself, giving them a spiritual empowerment in their daily struggle against evil. Nevertheless, the UCKG's dialogue with magical elements is also related to the Afro-Brazilian religions that the church so often attacks. This dialogue would resemble the accusations that the church is a spiritual Emergency Room, not only because of its magical elements, but also due to its providing a spiritual service, as Durkheim would observe in his analysis about magic.

After observing the magical aspects of the church, I then analysed regular church practices. The divisions of services are aligned with the needs of the members. Services for health, wealth, women, men, children and teenagers, social assistance, spiritual cleansing and strengthening relationships are scheduled weekly, offering a variety of theological approaches and even performances during the services. The spiritual cleansing services usually have exorcisms and strong spiritual warfare against demons,

¹³⁴ In Spain, the church is registered with the name Comunidad Cristiana del Espíritu Santo.

while the Love Therapy services – for romantic relationships – have more light and relaxed preaching. There is also militancy outside church doors, as in other Christian denominations such as the Jehovah's Witnesses, with the aim of bringing new people to the inside. Furthermore, as Pastor Alberto observed in an interview, the leaders are aware of their audience. When they have a specific service, or even one with a huge number of neophytes and/or visitors who are there for the first time, the approach and preaching towards them change. The strategy of recruiting new members has an institutional guideline and a specific service, which indicates a massive effort for further growth in the city.

While developing my initial ethnographic analysis, I could observe that the majority of members are women and Latin American immigrants, but there is a fair amount of Spanish people as well. This includes even the pastors and bishops, who are mostly from South America. As expected in a church with many traits of episcopatism, they are commanded by a local bishop, who is higher in the hierarchy than pastors are. Workers are the next ones down the chain, and then regular members, who are divided according to their commitment to the church – paying tithes regularly, as the most observable example. Hence, the continuation of magical practices has to do with the cultural background of members, who were in touch with Afro-Brazilian religions (most of the Latin American members are from Brazil), *santerías* and other forms of traditional religions with magical practices, from Durkheim's perspective. Thus, the UCKG is characterised by its blending of both a highly controlling institution, with routines and regular practices, and magical characteristics from a more emotional environment than the traditional Protestant churches. The distinction between magic and religion becomes blurry in the UCKG. There is a control of the magic and the services provided for regular and non-regular members who are familiar with these practices. The high degree of control of the theological preaching and of the usages of these magical elements indicates a blending between magic and religion. Furthermore, the division of services into different aspects gives the church a characteristic similar to that of a business enterprise, inasmuch as it offers different religious goods in a symbolic division of services for each need. However, the most crowded day is still Sunday morning, when the service is similar to that of traditional Christian churches, blending all the main themes of the services and bringing families together.

In the sixth chapter, I tried to analyse what seemed theologically relevant for the church. I followed Max Weber's perspective in his analysis of the development of capitalism and its connection with a specific Puritanical Protestant theology while writing this chapter. I

do believe in a need to observe the religious discourse of the members, including the leaders, to better understand their practices on a daily basis. Hence, as a starting point, I tried to observe their interpretation of the Trinitarian God. The church believes in God as a father (creator), God as the Holy Spirit (which is the action of God on Earth) and God as a son, Jesus (saviour). The UCKG also preaches a materialism blended with the action of the Holy Spirit. Thus, God's actions in the members' lives have visible blessings, not only materially, but also with regard to the restoration of family health.

After analysing the church's understanding of God, I began to discuss the importance for the UCKG of the restoration of the pact with God. The official church theology understands that the fall of humankind, with Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit, was due to an act of disobedience to God. However, the act of disobeying God did not require an eternal damnation for humankind on Earth. Anyone can restore the pact with God through conversion and by following with total commitment the rules preached by the UCKG. This full commitment resembles the theological understanding of faith by the church. There must be a supernatural faith, which believes fully in God's capacity to do anything. God is a living being, not in the sense of a life with a beginning and end, but as an active entity in the world. However, for the restoration of the pact with God and a divine action through the Holy Spirit, one must please Him in the right way.

Finally, I arrived at what I believe is the most important aspect for understanding the prosperity theology of the UCKG: their interpretation regarding sacrifice. Since Cain and Abel, God has received sacrifices, but the Almighty has His preferences in relation to the kinds of sacrifice. Church leaders preach about the struggle between the two biblical brothers to observe the discrepancy between what pleases God and what does not. Furthermore, the act of sacrificing in the right way, with full devotion, giving everything one has like the widow with the two coins (Mark, 12: 41-44), is what the church understands as a real sacrifice. Unlike older Protestant churches, as analysed by Max Weber, the church preaches tithing before accumulation. The 'earn all you can, give all you can, save all you can', as John Wesley would preach, allows for a logic of giving first to gain afterwards. God will only act if the individual sacrifices first. The campaign using the *superacción* word, which means both overcoming and 'super action', exemplifies the need for a super action of sacrifice, aligned with the theological guidelines of the church, to overcome a bad situation. In addition, the free will idea also plays a role in this logic of sacrificing money, since one must search for God, via the UCKG, so that one can receive monetary blessings. The main sacrifice for the church is, of course, money, which is the blood of the UCKG, so the leaders encourage the donation of money at all services,

sometimes more than once in each service.

I do believe that an understanding of these theological guidelines, as the main source of members' social action with regard to money, is the most important thing for a comprehension of members' practices and even of the accusations from outsiders that the UCKG sells the word of God. I also believe that the huge focus of money and the church's interpretation of sacrifice before gaining anything in return are adaptable to neoliberal characteristics of speculative capitalism and entrepreneurship. Since the UCKG in Spain has a high number of people who want – or wanted before arriving at the church – to change their monetary status, especially immigrants trying to socially ascend in a foreign country, the discourse makes total sense. In a dialectical manner, this prosperity theology is not only for people who want this kind of worldview, but is also internalised by those who come to the church looking for another symbolic good. In summary, I believe that the church not only gives to members who want it an ethic that is adapted to the contemporary world, but also teaches it to those who have not already internalised it yet.

The main example of the sacrifice characteristic is the most famous campaign of the church, the Holy Fire of Israel. In this campaign, which usually occurs once or twice a year, the members are invited to give a larger amount of money and even to sell properties (a car or apartment are the most common) in order to donate the amount obtained to the church. I was able to observe numerous testimonials of people from all social classes who donated money during the Holy Fire of Israel. A few of them said that they were completely bankrupt when they made the donation, and as far as I could see, the minimum amount donated was one thousand euros. The testimonials contained the characteristics of a 'super action' – donating a huge amount of money only with faith – and overcoming, since the most visible characteristic of these testimonials was the monetary blessings received after the donations. The examples of sacrifice are exhibited to the members exhaustively, thus advertising the correct manner that a faithful and committed person should act when tithing.

In the seventh chapter, I finally began focusing my analysis on the other main theological aspect of the church aside from its prosperity theology, namely, the spiritual warfare against other religions. In Brazil, as I previously observed, the church usually attacks traditional religions, especially Afro-Brazilian ones such as Umbanda and Candomblé, a fact observed by many authors in the literature I used (Mariano, 1996; Mariz, 1999; Silva, 2005; Oro, 2014). Thus, looking for the enemies of the church in Spain seemed necessary while doing my fieldwork. I did not find any references to Afro-Brazilian religious entities,

aside from an exorcism that Pastor Alberto performed, in which he called the spirit possessing a girl a *pomba gira* – a female entity from Candomblé. Hence, it seemed that I had to find the specific enemies of the church in Madrid's context.

Esotericism as a whole was the first enemy of the UCKG that I found. In Spain, the blend of traditional beliefs, such as witchcraft and Eastern religions, is quite popular. Esoteric stores and the television broadcasting of tarot and other non-institutional religious services permeate the city of Madrid on a daily basis. This kind of religiosity, known as New Age, is a competitor of the UCKG since it tries to solve problems in a quick manner, as in the description of magic by Durkheim. In addition, it seems to be an enemy that is much easier to oppose in the sermons than the Catholic Church, which has an enormous influence in Spain. This kind of religiosity is seen as a trait of secularism, if we comprehend the term as Hanegraaff (2000) does, with the diminishing of Christianity as the only actor in the religious field. Therefore, the preaching against secular worldviews such as atheism, which are common in the religious services of the UCKG, is not a surprise, especially taking into consideration the high numbers of young people that consider themselves to be non-religious people in Spain¹³⁵. This characteristic of demonising atheism is also connected with a common view of Europe that Pentecostal leaders have: a decadent and secularised continent that permits promiscuous habits and unholy practices. The discourse against esotericism and other secular worldviews – if we consider the former to be one of them – relies on the global mission of the church to reconquer this decadent Europe, which must be reconverted to Christianity.

The impact of secularisation has more implications for the rituals of the UCKG in Madrid than only the preaching. The signs that demons use to show when they are acting in someone's life are always very fluid (Macedo, 1987: 35). Thus, almost anything bad can be seen as a form of demonic action. Furthermore, becoming affected by demons is very easy as well, inasmuch as a person can receive the demonic curses through family – for example, one's grandfather could make a pact with Satan and then one would be tormented because of it –, through individual action – such as making a pact with Satan on one's own – and even through only a deviation from the church's principles. I called this capacity of adaptation of evil a fluid demonology. The UCKG interprets almost everything as bad, and therefore of demonic origin.

Thus, without the symbolical meaning of Afro-Brazilian religious entities, and in an environment with higher secular traits than Brazil – although not as secular as other

¹³⁵ Page 114.

countries in Europe –, what happened to the UCKG demons in Madrid? I found that the performances of demonic possessions in the church are different from what occurs in Brazil. In the home country of the UCKG, the possessions usually have performances similar to those in Afro-Brazilian religions, with the person laughing and placing his/her hands in the form of claws, and with other specific actions from each entity, such as female screams for *pomba giras* and a guttural voice for the *exus*. In addition, the entities call themselves *exus*, *pomba giras* and even other demons from traditional Christianity, such as Baphomet and Beelzebub as well. Regularly, in Brazil, those demons say what they are causing in someone's life: depression, bankruptcy, prostitution, drug addiction and health problems, as primary examples. In Madrid, these patterns change, since there is no cultural background for most of the members – and people visiting the church – with regard to Afro-Brazilian religions. The possessed members also perform in a different manner, with less enthusiasm most of the time and without the characteristics of the Afro-Brazilian entities, not referring to themselves as the regular demons of the church in Brazil. During the exorcisms, the entities called themselves regular daily problems, such as depression, failure and unhappiness. The demons in Madrid not only cause these problems in a members' life, but also are the problems themselves.

I tried to analyse this difference through Peter Berger's perspective of secularisation as the diminishing of religious symbolic meaning. Such an analysis is only possible, in my opinion, if we understand the characteristic of the UCKG's spiritual warfare against Afro-Brazilian religions as proposed by Ronaldo Almeida (2009; 123), who observes the anthropophagic characteristic of this church when it brings the entities of competing religions to show itself as superior. Thus, the UCKG absorbs the powers of these religions and possibly its members as well. The title of this chapter refers to the 'secularisation of demons' because of both the absence of the religious struggle against Afro-Brazilian religions and the non-symbolic meaning of their entities (which are representations of the Devil) in the church in Madrid, which is one of the most important characteristics of the UCKG in Brazil.

The diminishing of this struggle against other religions, despite there still being space for othering something, such as witchery and atheists, has made the UCKG in Madrid more open to other religions. The service in which I was able to watch the congregation of Muslims and Hindus with UCKG members is a prime example of this. Nonetheless, one could understand this as a UCKG strategy to bring people from other religions and convert them or to show itself publicly as a provider of social care. However, the ecumenical preaching in the aforementioned service may indicate a diminishing of the struggle with

other religions as well, at least if we take into consideration the specific case of Madrid; the church still demonises other religions in Brazil, for example.

I wrote the eighth chapter together with the seventh. Nonetheless, it became too big for a thesis chapter, so I decided to divide it in two. In this chapter, I still focused my analysis on the spiritual warfare of the church. I began by developing the discussion about the demons' preference for women in the services. Although I am far from considering myself a specialist in feminist and gender theory, I tried to consider a few aspects of the UCKG demons' preference for women, since I observed that most possessions were of women. I could find a sexist approach with regard to women in the official church theology, which characterised them as having different attributes than men, sometimes as having just the role of assistant to men, and often as being more susceptible to the Devil's actions. The temptation of Eve and the historical construction of women as witches are present, even if implicitly, in the official discourse of the church. Although almost everyone who is not committed to the UCKG guidelines leaves the door open to the Devil's actions, women are usually the victims of the Devil because of their historical association with evil.

After I indicated the Devil's aforementioned preference for women, my focus turned to the social transformation of an individual into a member. I used Bishop Gilberto Santana's biography, collecting official material provided by the church, such as YouTube videos and sermons about his own life transformation when he became a member. To provide a theoretical approach to the bishop's conversion, I used Pierucci's conception of Brazilian Pentecostalism as a religion of individual salvation. Santana's example is very clear on this matter: he was saved once by the church from his problems, but he left the church once again and had to restore his path to salvation. Santana's individual salvation relies on the conceptualisation of other theological guidelines of the church, such as sacrifice and faith. The individual is responsible for committing to the church and thus to his or her own salvation.

The idea of individual salvation is fundamental to my effort to conceptualise the self-othering in the services of the UCKG in Madrid. I believe that the construction of an outside other by Macedo's church can be observed throughout its history, and I tried my best to analyse this phenomenon in the literature review, and to indicate a few peculiarities of this othering process in Madrid. It seems to me that demonisation goes hand in hand with the UCKG's othering process. After analysing numerous church testimonials, I began to observe the obvious more frequently: the past of the members, before a full devotional conversion, is seen not only as misguided, but also as demonic. Hence, it was clear to me after a while that I needed to follow my interpretation of othering

in order to analyse the conversion of the members. I based my argument mostly on Elias and Scotson (1994), especially because of their understanding of interdependence in the othering process. Self-othering is a process of creating a new identity through conversion, but this new identity always relies on a misguided past. The self becomes the other; there is a new self and an old self. The implications of interdependence in the UCKG's testimonials go further, since there is always a return to the older self as an example of what not to do. Self-othering and othering work in a dialectical manner, in which the church is able to provide both self-control over an inside enemy and the construction of an outside enemy. I also gave examples of testimonials in which the members discuss their bankruptcy, depression, prostitution and many other problems that disturbed their lives. Furthermore, it seems that the past always has its bad aspects highlighted, while the present is always something better.

The concept of self-othering may be applied to the entrance of new members in different churches and – to be bold – even in new social groups. I believe that a former life that provides the experience of what is considered 'bad' enhances and strengthens the authority of an individual while talking about his new identity. I compared the church with Alcoholics Anonymous on this subject, since there is a similar approach between both groups with regard to testimonials: a return to what someone did wrong in the past during every meeting, so he or she and others can provide social support for their transformation. To develop this concept and, in the future, provide a more solid basis for it, is perhaps the most important idea of this thesis, in my point of view.

I conclude the chapter by forging a dialogue between the analysis of the Nigerian theologian Nimi Wariboko and what I think better fits my conception of self-othering. Wariboko observes what he calls the Pentecostal principle in a reference to Paul Tillich's analysis of the Catholic substance and the Protestant principle. Wariboko understands the Tillichean interpretation of Catholic substance as the normative side of religion and the Protestant principle as the opposite, due to its perceived freedom from structure. The Nigerian theologian goes further, observing that the Pentecostal principle would have a creative capacity that is absent in both of Tillich's concepts. Hence, Pentecostalism would be the capacity to begin again and again, with many different possibilities of beginnings. The 'stop suffering' motto preached by the UCKG is aligned with the capacity for a new beginning. Suffering is a plural concept, in which anyone can add his or her own terms to it. Pentecostal creativity as a principle makes this religious movement adaptable to a transformation of the self, although this comes with new rules and normative tasks, as the UCKG exemplifies.

An understanding of the othering process, which includes the outside-other and the self-other, is also important for an observation of the changes that the church brings to the families of members. The demonisation of former religious practices and behaviours brings not only a change in the member's perspective, but also in his/her family. Although Pentecostal churches want the conversion of all family members, this is not always possible and can provoke a disturbance among them¹³⁶. These problems between family members also indicate a shift, at least in the Brazilian context, from the openness of Afro-Brazilian religions, which usually allow their believers to go to other religious services, to the characteristic of demonising even other religions on the part of the Brazilian UCKG. In Madrid, the small numbers of members in comparison with Brazil is perhaps the reason for more openness towards other religions, especially Islam. Nonetheless, while doing my fieldwork, I was able to see people going as a family, people going by themselves (which indicates the non-commitment of other family members) and even individuals who were clearly there just to be with their partners, not engaging in the prayers and practices of the church.

In the ninth chapter, I tried to analyse the UCKG in Madrid's forms of control. I began with the Daniel Fast, a recent UCKG campaign that started in 2011 and that occurs worldwide. In this campaign, members are invited to do a fast that lasts twenty-one days, but not from food, although some members do that as well until 18:00, especially the pastors. The church asks them to avoid engaging in conversations about non-religious subjects, and the same avoidance applies to entertainment that does not connect members with the Holy Spirit. In addition, a person should meditate on God and read the Bible. This campaign is considered to be a detoxification for the faithful, who should be detached from mundane practices. I also observed a few aspects of the church with regard to family planning. The pastors are usually encouraged not to have any children and the members are free to have abortions in case of an unwelcome child, something that distinguishes the UCKG from other denominations.

Another word used by church leaders to describe the Daniel Fast is renewal. Although this is very common in Christianity, I observed, using the Brazilian anthropologist Roberto DaMatta, the common practice of reproducing a rite of passage. The avoidance of the mundane and the non-religious can be considered the return of the conversion period as a further attempt of separation from the old self, which is still interdependent by my understanding of self-othering. The Holy Supper, another trademark practice of the church, functions in a similar manner. Nevertheless, despite the discrepancy between

¹³⁶ Example on page 102.

who can or cannot participate in the campaign, and the difference from the Daniel Fast, in which members abstain, while in the Holy Supper they indulge, the forms of control operate according to very similar characteristics. Members need to purify their minds from the mundane; they also need to be more focused and committed to the church. There are different strategies, but similar ways of controlling the members.

After the aforementioned observations about the control of members with campaigns and rituals, I tried to analyse these phenomena from a different perspective, relying on the *Civilizing Process* by Norbert Elias. My focus, thus, changed to observing regular practices, especially the kinds of church prayers. I was able to identify the regular, strong and group prayers as the most common ones. The first are the most common, in which a person connects him/herself to God, usually with open hands and closed eyes. The second are the most belligerent and usually occurs when evil is being combatted. The gestures in the strong prayers change, inasmuch as the performances usually have more enthusiasm, louder voices, sometimes screams and even strong stomps on the floor. The pastors or bishops generally ask to perform the third kind of prayer deliberately, with everybody holding their hands and praying as a chain. Although only in the group prayers does the service stop briefly for everyone to gather, the other ones are also controlled by the pastors and bishops. They are the ones who begin raising their voice when it is time for the strong prayer, for example.

The church leaders are not exempt from its strong control system. The UCKG moves pastors and bishops from place to place regularly. They have usually had the experience of living in more than one country, which makes schisms almost impossible since there is almost no time for the development of any attachment to leaders as individuals. It is the church that they represent which holds the connection with the members. In Brazil, these relocations also occur, but inside the country, as leaders are moved to different states and cities. The church also controls the family lives of the pastors, recommending that they have vasectomies in some cases, since there is a need for constant geographical change. This is even a reason for them to be higher ranked in the hierarchy.

The control of the members' behaviour goes beyond prayer. The pastors usually stop the testimonials of people who have not received blessings. The older members, such as the assistant I., usually control the behaviour and commitment of other members, especially when they have church duties, and even the bishops apply tests to see whether the assistants keep their knowledge sharp about the church's guidelines. There is even control over the tithing, since pastors, such as Maximiliano, preach about the shame of not being able to give money to God. The moment when everyone gives money to the

church near the altar – and sometimes on it – is also a moment when everyone can see who is tithing and who is not, which indicates a dispersed form of control as well, from one member to another. This last point became evident when I crossed paths with a member who seemed to be planning about gambling in a betting shop¹³⁷. Even without being a regular member, just my visibility in the church made me function as a symbol of its presence outside of it. I unintentionally defused his intentions to bet or gamble – something forbidden by the UCKG –, but this situation became an example of the power and reach of the system of control of members' behaviour beyond the church's buildings.

In the tenth and final chapter, I tried to understand the importance of the UCKG's international mission for the sociology of religion as a whole. I began by observing the understanding of Antonio Flávio Pierucci with regard to the Weberian perspective of religion, which according to the Brazilian sociologist has the characteristic of a solvent. Hence, according to Pierucci (2006), and as observed by Weber, religion has the role of social change and transformation of social structures, which is evident not only in the Protestant ethics' bringing the spirit of Capitalism, but also in the prophet as a revolutionary, according to Weber's analysis of charismatic leadership. On the other hand, Pierucci brings Durkheim's conceptualisation of religion as a social cement in order to oppose Weber. Religion would gather and strengthen communitarian bonds, usually repeating social rituals in a quasi-stationary manner. I nonetheless have some problems with his analysis with regard to Durkheim's understanding of religion, since it seems that Pierucci believes that the French sociologist was more concerned with the narrow aspects of religion. I could find in Durkheim's works conceptions of church and religion that cross national borders and have more pluralistic characteristics than the ones observed by Pierucci. Placing Weber and Durkheim into opposition in the debate on religion, in Pierucci's quasi-simplistic interpretation, made me raise the question in terms of whether the function of the UCKG for its members is that of a solvent or a cement.

I tried to include Ruth Marshall and Nimi Wariboko in this discussion. Aside from the nuances in the thinking of both authors, I believe that the former analysed Pentecostalism more as a solvent without much creation of communitarian bonds and with constant change. Wariboko, for his part, taking into consideration the particularities of Nigerian Pentecostalism, observed that Marshall tried to analyse a different context with Western concepts – such as sovereignty, for example – which do not apply. He also advocates for the creation of a community outside institutional Pentecostalism, which gathers members in a different manner, with a potential for the generation and disappearance of practices,

¹³⁷ Pages 163 and 164.

and a more fluid identity with an incessant creative power towards a new subjectivity. Taking Marshall and Wariboko's analyses into consideration, I observed in Ricardo Bitun (2009) the non-necessity of an institution for some Pentecostals, who are always switching churches, which also happened in the UCKG in Madrid with a few members that came from other Pentecostal churches. Perhaps this is the next step – already observed in countries such as Brazil and Nigeria, which have more Pentecostals than Spain – for the development of this religious movement in a given place.

In the final part of Chapter Ten, agreeing more with Wariboko's perspective, I observed how the church creates an international community through a social proximity with their new building, which is full of symbolism: the Temple of Solomon. In a world connected by media and the internet, it is easier to create a sacred symbol. The temple was not only the church's wallpaper on the altar of the Madrid temple, but also a common place to visit for members worldwide and a spiritual place to gather – even if only online – for the newest UCKG faithful. The efforts of the church to bind its members to a common place are related to the church's transnational mission. Controlling their beliefs, systematically committing them to worldly campaigns and moving pastors to different countries indicate a planned strategy to further the capacity of dialoguing with the local and the global.

The demonisation deployed by the UCKG is the main method of their control. Unlike older Pentecostal churches that feared God¹³⁸, it is the abandonment of the Almighty and the actions of Satan, along with the material and spiritual decadence, that control the members. Thus, the work of Satan becomes the main argument for controlling everything, from allowing sex only after marriage, to forbidding alcohol and gambling, and even regulating the members' clothing, their performances of prayers and exorcisms. Hence, self-othering – or demonisation of the previous identity – is the main strategy for creating a highly controlled community. Only with the complete internalisation of a discourse of a demonic past are the members of the UCKG able to obey and standardise their belligerent conception of the spiritual world.

In other words, and to be direct, I would say that the UCKG is both a solvent and a cement, despite the final chapter's clear tendency towards arguing the latter. The two work in a dialectical manner, at least in the UCKG in Madrid. A new understanding of which magic can be practiced and which cannot is a way not only of resolving older beliefs, but also of integrating them with a new system. The new, almost standardised approach towards tithing and sacrifice needs to be taught to the detriment of other ones. The self-othering

¹³⁸ In Portuguese, *temer a Deus*.

process is a manner of resolving past lives, but through performances controlled by the church, such as exorcisms, for example. Although it seems like a cement, the control of members' behaviours and prayers, like the *Civilizing Process* of Norbert Elias but with an institutional guidance and overarching control on the part of the church, also resolves the old practices by bringing new ones. Even the creation of a symbolic building such as the Temple of Solomon needs to resolve an older belief system to make it palatable for the members.

If, as Pierucci (2006: 111) proposed, '(...) the role of religion (for Durkheim) is to reconnect the individual with the society he belongs (...)', the UCKG connects and reconnects the members, both locals and immigrants, with the competitive and liquid society in which they live, by giving them, in Maffesoli's terms, a new communitarian tribe with a new interpretation of the world. To adapt to this reconnection, people first need to reinterpret (or, in Pierucci's terms, to become separated from) their origins. Both perspectives – Weber's and Durkheim's – seem connected, and both have blurry borders between them. It is a process (separation and connection) in which both operate alongside each other. That is the reason why demonisation is so important for the UCKG. It gives a sense of right and wrong, of both evil and deliverance from evil. It expels demons to give a better life. In the UCKG in Madrid, there is no reconnection or connection without separation. The examples of self-othering in the testimonials, the overcoming of a sinful life to be reborn in a new one, are aligned with Pierucci's concept of religion as a solvent. Religion, therefore, transforms the lives of the members. However, using the example of the Temple of Solomon, a significant symbol for all UCKG members in Madrid, which connects them to their faithful brothers and sisters everywhere in the world, I have tried to show that the opposite is also true, and to make a case for the existence of a transnational communitarian bond.

Illana de Wyk (2014: 237-238) observed, in her discussion of the UCKG as a church of strangers, that the relationships among members do not cover family quarrels. This would be, at least from my point of view, a solvent characteristic of the church. Nonetheless, at least in the case of Madrid, I was able to see the church's ecumenical services and sermons about helping others. For example, a member lost her house because of debts and lived in the church for a few days. The ecumenical preaching described in Chapter Seven and the large amount of single members attending the Love Therapy services, in which most of them were looking for a new relationship, are also examples. The services included testimonials of a couple that met each other during UCKG activities, not to mention individuals who brought their family members to the church. If we take into

consideration the multiple possibilities of social attachment in tribal times, as Maffesoli would observe, the UCKG can be seen as bringing the solvency of an older individualism to a new one, but cementing a new social gathering at the same time. It is, of course, a different kind of community, more related to contemporary times, in which leaving it or just attending the services as a religious practice is possible. However, if one wants to engage more substantially in the church's activities, it is possible for members to create strong communitarian bonds with each other.

The UCKG in Madrid has no borders between the people inside its doors – Latin Americans, North Americans, Africans, Europeans, poor, rich, women, men, children, and adults. There are also no borders between sacrifice and earnings, routine and charisma, material and spiritual, self-othering and new identities, reinterpretation and reinforcement, solvent and cement. The Temple of Solomon even blurred the national borders between Spain and Brazil. The international community of members begins with the dissolution or reinterpretation of the older, local affiliations. To be international, the church needs to deal with issues beyond just local ones. It also needs to be in every place possible, serving members as well as members-to-be. The goals of internationalisation and growth require it to deal with different people, needs, cultures, languages and religious backgrounds.

The church gives a sense of community to people in a mass and individualistic society, creating a common place for those without communitarian bonds in a new environment. It also gives a biblically based interpretation of wealth, answers and hope for those with health problems, food to those in need, controversies with outsiders and even blessings and prayers for a non-believing researcher. Furthermore, the most important thing, in my opinion, that the UCKG in Madrid offers the sociology of religion is an interpretation of the local and global, a dialogue between the individual and the social in a broader sense, making them interdependent, and ultimately, without borders.

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