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‘HOLY SPIRIT WEEKEND’ –CHARISMATIC EXPERIENCE OF POLISH CATHOLICS IN UK

INTRODUCTION

Generally acknowledged adaptive functions of religion in migration context and religion’s ability to adapt to new socio-cultural contexts placed together with the notion of ‘global’ charismatic Christianity (Koning, Dahles, 2009; Coleman, 2000), pose a question about the relationship between migration and charismatic forms of religious expressions. As some scholars argue, the processes concerning religion in post modernity are to a large extent directed by the preoccupation with these-worldly issues which in context of religion most often means that the traditional religions give way to those more congruent with the contemporary world. In some cases it can also entail repackaging old religions and ‘offering’ them in a more accessible and comprehensible language. The fundamentalist elements are not necessarily abandoned, but they are given a “charismatic gloss” (Hunt, 2004)¹. Charismatic movement in general, but also as considered within the boundaries of the Catholic Church comprises many groups very diverse in terms of their size, stage of development, structures and their emphasis – shaped by distinctive charismas, nevertheless the common denominator of charismatic groups is the centrality of the Holy Spirit and his ‘signs and wonders’.

The Catholic Church hierarchy position in relation to charismatic movement is ambivalent. Within the Catholic Church the newness of the charismatic

¹ These processes commonly referred to as Charismatic renewal are welcomed with some ambiguity by those representing old, established religions and guarding their timeless foundations. The scepticism expressed in writings of church representatives, is also traceable in academic work, although it comes from a different angle. For academics analysing the growth of charismatic movement in Western society commonly seen through the lens of secularisation thesis there is a very strong temptation to look at individuals engaging in this kind of religiosity as marginal and in a way deviant, or to look at their religiosity as something which is not a ‘real religion’ (Neitz, 1987). Others however argue that the growing significance of charismatic movements should not be underestimated, especially in the context of secularisation and fragmentation of big frameworks characteristic to postmodern worldviews (Miller, 1999).

movement is reflected in the lively theological debates focusing on doctrinal issues related to the charismatic renewal and its authenticity. The book titled ‘Charismatic movement – Is it Catholic?’ by Fr Karl Stehlin exemplifies the preoccupation with maintaining boundaries between what is Catholic and what is not and suspicion towards everything that goes beyond (Stehlin, 1997). Also in context of the Protestant origins of charismatic renewal, the significance of conceptual distinction between ‘Charismatic’ and ‘Pentecostal’ is drawn from the important differentiation between Catholic and Protestant (Cleary, 2007). What can be so attractive in Charismatic groups to potential new members constitutes at least a few serious problems from the Church perspective. On the one hand the ‘renewal’ is regarded as a positive trend in Church seen as being in need of ‘less organisation and more Spirit’ (Ratzinger, 1998). Many acknowledge that it can be an ‘engine for positive changes’ in Church ‘struggling with shallow religiosity focused mainly on its cultural manifestation’ (see Mariański, 2003: 197). On the other hand, historically the Roman Catholic Church was one of the last major denominations to accept charismatic renewal (Bord and Faulkner, 1983). In common perception characteristics usually associated with charismatic religious groups include speaking in tongues, healing powers, prophesy and supernatural miracles (Koning, Dahles, 2009). This kind of expression of ‘religious experience’ characteristic to Charismatic movements is criticised as being related to the widespread attraction to the dramatic, exotic, and emotional and therefore being dangerous.² In line with these critical views charismatic groups are constructed as occupying menial role in relation to the Church. As M. Hayes highlights in his introduction to the collection of essays on New Religious Movements in Catholic Church, the gifts from Holy Spirit are to be used ‘for the benefit of the whole Church’ (Hayes, 2005: 6). The discursive positioning of charismatic groups in relation to Church is further reinforced in the discussion on the descriptive terms whereby the term ‘ecclesial movement’ is preferred to the term ‘lay movement’, as the first one ‘contains’ clergy and therefore implies that the movements ‘are for the whole Church’ (Whitehead, 2005: 15). A similar message is explicit in writings of Polish Church leaders, as illustrated in the work of R. Wawrzenecki, who

² Very firm expression of mistrust towards the ‘experiential Christianity’ can be found in the article addressed to Poles in Chicago published in 2008 by Fr R. Groń, who wrote: ‘Looking at the currently alive, third wave of charismatic movement, with its focus on phenomenal and experiential forms, which are called nowadays “experiential Christianity”, it is right for Catholic Church to stay openly cautious. This is even more justly, because those forms have taken extreme manifestations in the past, in a form of theological extravagancies, new Pentecostal churches, or even non-denominational Christianity. Reservations is caused by before mentioned superficial emotionalism of people taking part in this kind of worship, expressed sometimes in animal-like howling, convulsions, and hysteria and associated usually with animistic, pagan religions.’ (Source: <http://www.katolikwchicago.com/katonline/2010/01/7.aspx>, accessed August, 2010)

identified the following dangers posed by the charismatic movement: 'rejection of Church's prayer tradition for emotional charismatic experience, unhealthy behaviour of group members, or even those responsible for the group, resistance towards Church authority, excessive focus on differences between hierarchical church and charismatic church, abundance of the main stream church and elitism.' (Wawrzeniecki, 1999, s. 155).³ As this example illustrates, in a Polish context the discussion is very much focused on the place religious movements occupy within the traditional Catholic Church structure, especially within the parish. This discursive positioning of charismatic groups as menial in relation to Church is counterbalanced by the everyday reality of charismatic group in the parish context, quite often permeated with conflict and misunderstanding, which antagonises many clergy, as many observers readily acknowledge (Whitehead, 2005).

The dialectic between change which is needed, but welcomed with apprehension and opposed to on the one hand, and the congealment in 'old ways', stagnation and intensification of conservative tendencies on the other hand observed in migrants' churches (Mol, 1971; Yang & Ebaugh, 2001) creates a very particular context for the spread of charismatic religiosity. Some observations of religious experiences of new Polish migrants in the UK, who in the vast majority have or had some connection with Catholicism, suggest that what the traditional Catholic Church has to offer is not relevant for the majority of them (Krotofil, 2010). Alienated by their mistrust and disappointment with clergy and what is perceived as harsh judgment and an uncompromising attitude of Polish priests in the UK, they do not see a place for themselves in ethnic churches run by the Polish Catholic Mission⁴. London, however with its vibrant mixture of cultures and religions provides a variety of religious and secular options. Some of the newcomers embrace the possibility to explore new religious horizons which were not available to them in their communities of origin and turn to other religions; others drift from the Catholic Church and remain on the peripheries of religious life. Among those undergoing changes in religious domain, there is also a group of Poles who in

³ Similar reservations towards more broadly defined religious movements within Catholic church (including charismatic groups) expressed J. Mariański, who wrote: 'We must beware of the danger posed by localising religious movements and associations somehow beyond parish structure, in position parallel to essential parish stream, or dividing parish members into groups of better and worse Catholics.' (Mariański, 2003, s.199)

⁴ Polish Catholic Mission (PCM) is a fairly autonomous structure established in 1894 to work and care for Polish migrants in England and Wales. As a main body responsible for ethnic chaplaincy, PCM defines its mission in relation to new Polish migrants around the concept of new migration – as undesirable and morally objectionable. In this discourse, new labour migrants are portrayed as breaking their roots with the fatherland, breaking away from protective family ties and choosing to live in a secular, de-christianised and empty society, which has been stripped from all moral values.

the course of life transition brought upon by migration become introduced to charismatic Christianity. In Poland a few different charismatic groups have been gaining popularity over the last few decades, but they attract only a small minority of the Catholic population. Charismatic Catholicism is by no means familiar to the majority of Polish Catholics who have had very little exposure to it. The growth of Polish charismatic groups in the UK is therefore stimulated mainly by people who embrace charismatic religiosity after their arrival to the UK and to a lesser extent by those who had contact with this form of religious expression in Poland. In the following sections of this paper I would firstly like to focus on the first group and take a look at the means used by charismatic groups to attract new adherents among Polish migrants. Secondly, I will analyse how the specific context of Catholic Church in Britain influences that process. I will start with the description of missionary activities of Polish Charismatic Catholics in the UK, using the example of the ‘Holy Spirit weekend’.⁵

PHILIP COURSE

This part of the paper is based on the participant observation and mostly informal conversations carried out during one edition of the introductory course to charismatic religiosity addressed to Polish migrants in the UK. I have chosen the Philip course for a few reasons. Firstly, Philip course alongside similar Alpha course is for many a ‘trigger event’, an entry point into the charismatic movement. Secondly, because of its’ highly concentrated ‘texture’, compression of delivered material and its’ emotional and experiential intensity Philip course is well suited to illustrate the ‘newness’ and ‘exoticness’ of charismatic Catholicism experienced by new adepts, and the mechanisms by which new members are attracted to the charismatic forms of religious expression.

Before proceeding to describe and analyse this event, a short methodological remark seems to be expedient. My presence at the Philip course was that of an outsider, an emphatic observer, but not a member of the group sharing experiences with others. My situation in a large group of unknown people was ambiguous; minimal participation in most of the course activities enabled me to observe and carry out informal conversations with course participants, but the process of collecting data blurred my status and motives in the eyes of others. This misperception was a source of some personal discomfort related to me being a ‘stranger’ and to my loneliness. In this process I have also experienced a strong

⁵ ‘Holy Spirit Weekend is the term used by S. Hunt in relation to the part of Alpha Course emphasising the ‘charismatic core’ of Alpha. It is concentrated round teaching about and ‘experiencing’ Holy Spirit (Hunt, 2004: 233). I use this expression in relation to Philip course to highlight similarities between the later and the ‘weekend away’ part of Alpha course.

sense of loss and disempowerment in the confrontation with gifts offered to me (e.g. individual healing prayer), which were intended to help me overcome the 'reluctance' of my participation.

Philip course described in this article takes place periodically in a small town outside London, in Chertsey (Surrey). It is hosted and run by a charismatic community Cor et Lumen Christi (The Heart and Light of Christ). Damian Stayne founded the group in October 1990. The community identifies three different ways to fulfil its mission 'to become the Heart and Light of Christ through Divine Communion': 'building praying communities around the Holy Eucharist which are a prophetic sign of the kingdom of God', 'reaching out to others especially Catholics, to empower, encourage and equip them to live an intimate Divine Communion with God and realise their full baptismal inheritance through life in the Spirit' and 'identifying with, ministering to and sharing with the poor and needy'.⁶ Among other activities of Cor et Lumen Christi, initiatives addressed directly and almost exclusively⁷ to Polish Catholics has crystallised as a distinguished area of activity called 'Mission for Poles'. The later comprises of four evangelical courses: Philip course, Andrzej course, Barnaba course and Jan course leading participants through successive levels of charismatic initiation. The courses are hosted by the covenanted community based in Highfield House and run by one Polish family belonging to that community, in cooperation with Polish speaking 'Companions of the Heart' - members of the community who live out the rules and values of Cor et Lumen Christi but in the non-residential expression. The Philip course described below, is the most basic introduction to charismatic Catholicism. It is addressed to those who want to 'experience the Lord in a more powerful and personal way'⁸, currently it is run exclusively in the Polish language; each edition attracts around 50- 80 participants. According to the website, the programme is composed of a 'series of spiritual exercises and inspiring lectures, Holy Mass and Adoration, practical workshops, praise and worship, food, fun and fellowship'.⁹ Throughout the three days of the course participants remain in constant company of others; meal times and leisure time (suggested to be spent on group sport activities) are incorporated into the missionary endeavour as they create important space for

⁶ Source: http://www.coretlumenchristi.org/Site_stream/charism_statement.htm (Accessed: August, 2010)

⁷ The main language of these events is Polish, however organisers state that there is a possibility of simultaneous translation

⁸ Source: http://www.coretlumenchristi.org/Site_stream/philip_course.htm (Accessed: August, 2010)

⁹ Source: http://www.coretlumenchristi.org/Site_stream/philip_course.htm (Accessed: August, 2010)

the formation of social bonds between course participants, and enable them to recognise themselves as a group.

The praise and worship part of the course that are intertwined with teaching and spiritual exercises are dominated by very particular ways of musical expression. Texts of songs are short and easy to remember (they are projected on a screen so that hands are free from song books and can be used in physical expression of emotions) and repeated many times over. The style is oriented towards cultural currency and contemporary musical forms. This kind of charismatic music does not resemble in any way traditional hymns sang in the accompaniment of organ music. Analysing the use of music during charismatic meetings, Miller refers to Jamesian notion of religion as a distinctive province of meaning with its own ‘sub-universe’ of consciousness and suggests that these kinds of songs ‘trigger entry into the level of consciousness in which everyday defensiveness is abandoned’ (Miller, 1999: 86).

The lectures and spiritual exercises are delivered in a form of thematic blocks focusing on eight basic messages: ‘God loves me’, ‘I am a sinner’, ‘I am saved’, ‘Holy Spirit descended upon me’, ‘I need to convert’, ‘I need to give control over my life to God who is the King’, ‘I need to trust God’ ‘With baptism in Holy Spirit I receive his gifts’. The content of ‘lectures’ is very basic and lacking theological complexity and density, which is in line with the strategy embraced by the majority of courses organised within the charismatic movement and which is also promoted in Alpha course where ‘experiences lead to explanation’ (Gumbel, 1994: 17). The renewal in relation to specific Christian teachings favoured by charismatic groups, including leaders of Philip Course means the return to ‘biblical Christianity’. The impact on listeners is magnified by the use of multi-sensory teaching, in each lecture video, music, and even food, are intertwined into the narrative together with the incorporation of ritual elements described as spiritual exercises. The concept of “Christianity in entertainment business” can be useful here. It implies that the Christian message is promoted in a way which uses state-of-art technologies, where “image is more important than substance” (Hunt, 2004: 24).

The opposition between thought and action has been heavily criticised as a basis on which the concept of ritual is constructed (see Bell, 1992). Therefore it would be hard to argue that in the context of the Philip course the acts of participants express truths, which they learn and can be simply defined as enacting of these ideas. The processes of conceptual learning and enacting should rather be seen as bounded and mutually reinforcing. In the analysis of the role of ritual in this context, dramaturgical metaphor, despite of its limitations, can be helpful. Coleman when recounting characteristics of charismatic Christianity writes about ‘dramatisation’ describing the way in which ‘biblical exegesis is achieved through acting out of the text’, which is complemented by ‘textuality’. (Coleman,

2000: 125). This interconnectedness of dramatisation and narrative emplacement is clearly visible in the structure and content of the Philip course. All sessions of the Philip course start with a ‘talk’ on a chosen subject which comprise of a ‘story’ (allegory) and its interpretation, these are culminated by the ‘enacting’ of particular roles introduced to participants in the preceding talk given by one of the leaders. The ‘staged’ situation implies a scene and control of that scene, which defines and reproduces boundaries; boundaries between performers and observers. In the Catholic Church the use of elements defining situation: requisites, clothing, bodies, progression and duration have established meaning. What can be observed during charismatic rituals is reproduction and negotiation of that meaning. This process is rooted in the symbols which are public, and for the majority of participants have acquired specific religious meaning in the past, but symbols are used in a way which not only affirms and expresses the pre-defined meanings, but also produces alteration, something new. Ritualised prescribed acts undertaken during spiritual exercises draw on familiar symbols and requisites, but also incorporate new ones. The subsequent lectures on sin and salvation are culminated respectively by immersion of hands in mud and dirt, and by ‘nailing of sins’ onto a wooden cross. The first exercise is initiated by the person running the lecture who brings out a wrapped up box meant to imitate an ‘attractive present’ and makes a confession to the audience that at some point he came across something which initially seemed very attractive and pleasant. Subsequently he has been drawn to that ‘pleasure’; started devoting more and more attention to the activity and that with time was becoming more and more disruptive. At the end he could not free himself from it as it became clear that he has been ‘enslaved by sin’. Towards the end of that narrative, the speaker puts his hands into the box and takes them out after a while covered by wet mud, symbolising sin. He finishes this ‘performance’ by touching his white t-shirt and other people near him and stating that the sin made ‘dirty’ his entire self and other people close to him. The members of the audience are encouraged to follow his example; to come to the front part of the room, immerse their hands in the mud and therefore admit to God and to others that they have sinned. After a short break, the role of the death of Christ on the cross in salvation is elaborated in a short lecture. At the closure of this part of the programme, a big wooden cross is brought on the stage. Members of the audience are instructed to write down their ‘worst sin’ on a piece of paper, come to the stage and nail that paper to the cross. In both cases those who initially occupy the audience position during the Philip sessions are invited to step on the stage and to act. The formalised boundary between the ‘performing’ priest and the much more passive congregation inscribed in division of ritual space into stage (where the altar is) and the audience (where the pews are), experienced and reproduced during traditional mass is partly abolished. Through ritual symbols

transcend the religious reality and affect other realities (Neitz, 1987). Participants of the Philip course are exposed to familiar ritual symbols, which for many, through the process of religious socialisation have been taken for granted. The re-organised use of these symbols and the commentary disrupt the automation of the performance. Participants are encouraged to immerse themselves in doing, but they are drawn into the figured word where at least some positional aspects of identity are consciously realised.

The renegotiation of ritually constituted norms and prescriptions described above concerns also a mass celebrated each day during the Philip course. An unusual space (one of the rooms in the house converted into a chapel) as well as the incorporation of elements rarely seen during traditional mass celebrated in church, such as Holy Communion received in two forms of bread and wine, placing children's drawings on the altar during the ceremonial placing on of bread and wine; brings 'newness' and 'freshness' into the ritual known by participants in the majority of cases from their childhood and considered by some as 'stale' and 'old-fashioned'.

Apart from lecture sessions, spiritual exercises and singing, some course participants can also be subjected to special attention from Course leaders and offered healing, for example. This however is done on the side of the official programme, individually and in more intimate circumstances.

The culmination of the program is the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and the reception of charismata – the gifts of Holy Spirit. The moment of the baptism is preceded by careful preparation of course attendants. During a lecture, given shortly before the Baptism, attendants are told what should happen, what kind of experiences they should expect, and how to avoid disappointments. They are given a detailed description of 'usual' emotional and physical manifestations, which occur during the Baptism in Holy Spirit and in the receipt of his gifts, such as crying, falling over, speaking in tongues, speechlessness and experiencing overwhelming affection. The detailed instruction on how to behave during the coming of the Holy Spirit indicates a 'mechanistic approach to the Holy Spirit' (see Hunt, 2004: 242), similar to the one adopted in other charismatic introductory courses. More specifically, what S. Hunt writes in relation to Alpha course, can also be applied to the Philip course:

[...] in preparing the 'divine appointment' – the conditions in which the Holy Spirit works in a human environment – there are various aspects of suggestibility to be considered. This suggestibility is largely observed through the lyrics of songs and choruses (and their mantra-type form), group conformity, and the influence of charismatic leaders which all create atmosphere which precipitates alleged ecstatic and esoteric manifestations' (Hunt, 2004: 242)

During the culmination moment – infilling of the Spirit - the leaders exercise nearly absolute control over the situation, by overlooking the reactions of individuals who have been persuaded to open to new experiences and to submit themselves to the unknown trusting in God. This leads to a very high level of conformity manifested in the occurrence of 'usual' and 'expected' reactions which are experienced as supernatural phenomena and classified as 'signs and wonders' – manifestations of a 'true' presence of the Holy Spirit, confirmation of leaders' credibility and legitimisation of their authority.

The whole program is designed to foster 'personal receptivity to the person, presence and power of the Holy Spirit, and the reception and use of spiritual gifts (charismata)' (Hayes, 2005: 6). It functions as 'an entry ritual into a charismatic worldview' (Walting, 2005: 93). The 'rational' teaching is over-dominated by the creation of emotional experiences, which encourage the notion of charismatic Catholicism as emotionally relevant to individuals participating in the course. Individuals embodying this particular worldview are thought to be empowered by entering into a special relationship with God – a personal guiding agent and experiencing God's power. I would like to argue that this spiritual 'empowerment' is achieved through means of disempowerment. The blurring of the boundaries between ritual leaders and the 'audience' is counterbalanced by the disempowerment of course participants achieved in various ways. One of the most striking exertions in this respect is the concealment of the details of the course programme; participants do not know what kind of activities have been planned for them, and do not know what to expect at any given point in time. Those who have participated in the course on previous occasions are explicitly asked 'not to betray' to others what the upcoming activities are. Participants are yet again reminded in this way to place their trust, emotionally, and spiritually in God, rather than to try to control the situation and submit it to rational scrutiny. Inductive strategies are used here to encourage the embodying and 'living out' of the biblical texts (Coleman, 2000: 118). The intensity and novelty of the experiences evoked during each session has been expressed by many participants during informal conversations:

'What has happened here today...I have proofs now. I don't think I will tell my friends about what has happen, this could be received badly.' (L.)

'During my first Philip course something happened to me. I went for many more Philip courses, I wanted to keep my head and see what kind of techniques they use.' (A.)

'I was wondering if this is all arranged, if this is some sort of sect. They cram stuff into your head, but leave no time for reflection.' (L.)

The above fragments touch on the issue of common perception of unusual religious experiences, which by many are welcomed with some reservations and resistance. This remark sheds more light on the importance of careful sequencing of material in the teaching process. In order to be assimilated the 'truths' conveyed by the leaders have to be in the 'zone of proximal development' (Wygotski, 1989). This means that they cannot be entirely foreign to new adepts, but should have some connection to the skills and ideas which they already have. This condition is realised in the process of 'scaffolding' (Valsiner, 2006: 197-206; Holland, Skinner, Lachicotte and Cain, 2003: 82). Scaffolding occurs in situations when course participants are encouraged to work with biblical stories and symbols which they are familiar with and add new elements to them, re-negotiate their meaning, and see them as more personally relevant.

The effectiveness of the missionary techniques described above is at least partly demonstrated by the striking uniformity of symbols, metaphors and means of expression adopted and displayed by course participants in situations when they are given space to express what they have learned and experienced. During the Philip course there are three occasions given to participants to publically express their views and emotions and to talk in public about their personal experiences: the first two arise during the presentation of the work carried out in small groups (posters, pantomime, poems), and the third one comprises a separate part of the programme, when participants are encouraged to give individual testimonies. Testimonies, ('witnessing' or 'sharing') are considered by some authors of particular importance in the commitment mechanism in the charismatic groups (McGuire, 1977), they are also very effective as tools of evangelisation making the complex issues discussed during the lectures personally relevant (Walting, 2005: 98). What seems very significant in context of Philip course is the fact that course participants are prepared for the 'spontaneous' witnessing (which occurs as one of the last sections of the programme), by the preceding formal testimonies given by the leaders at the beginning of the course, and therefore given templates for this activity. The general pattern can be discerned in all testimonies given by the course leaders and later by course participants (Walting, 2005: 98), the narrative structure of testimonies is as follows: the individuals have been brought up in a Catholic family, drifted away from Church and from God in later life, did not know much about God and did not understand God, at some point in their life had a traumatic experience (a loss of a close person, family disruption caused by alcoholism), after arrival and settling in the UK experienced some kind of 'emptiness', or 'incompleteness', discovered God again in their life, experienced

his forgiveness, entrusted their lives in God, received the gifts of Holy Spirit and in that way found peace and harmony in life. As McGuire notes, although witnessing appears to be 'spontaneous' and an individualised expression, it is in fact bounded by 'careful norms' (McGuire, 1977: 167). The norms set by course leaders were learned and reproduced in testimonies given by course participants at the end of the event, as the following examples illustrate:

'... in general I used to be a scoundrel...and I lived like that, cheating God and myself and all life. I used to have many friends, I was surrounded by beautiful women, beautiful cars, but I always felt some kind of shortage...And then England, my first honest job, first honest money, and my new passion: just discovered love to God! It became the biggest passion of my life.' (M. M.)

'I got to know God's love, I understood that God loves me the way I am. I understood that God forgives my sins, I understood why Jesus died on the cross for me.'

'I noticed an inner transformation. Since my childhood I have been going to church, I heard about Jesus, but only here I truly understood who Jesus is. Here I received Jesus into my heart and he is inspiring me inside, and the whole me' (D. J.)

Telling personal stories in this way is an important tool in the process of self-understanding and belonging. It carries the message that the speaker has entered the charismatic milieu deep enough to be able to carry the message. Here the process of identity renegotiation can be seen as 'giving life to words' (Coleman, 2000: 119), where religious language becomes integrated into a particular, and personal life story. I would argue that ritualised acts such as testimonies and spiritual exercises described above play a central role in the process of the transformation of new members' sense of social reality. They introduce a religious frame of reference and expand it beyond religious context, this enables individuals to organise their experience in a way that is in line with religious 'definitions' of reality.

REPACKAGED CATHOLICISM

Koning and Dahles (2009) in their work on Chinese charismatic Christians point out several characteristics of the charismatic movement, which make it very attractive to new potential members all over the world. First, it easily adapts to local circumstances including specific socio-political contexts and offers solutions to individual and collective problems. It gives a sense of purpose that is beyond

self-actualisation; as there is the charity aspect (tithe) of it. The theology of practice is directly applicable (caring, repairing, but also, personal goals). Finally, there is a sense of identity, being the “born again” people of God – this is the unifying factor. Charismatic groups and initiatives operating among Polish migrants share these characteristics with the wider charismatic movement. Charismatic spirituality addressed to Poles in the UK has been adapted and tailored specifically for this group, ‘packaged’ in a way that makes it attractive and acceptable to Poles with their specific cultural and religious background. In practice this adjustment means an incorporation of a ‘repackaged’ Catholic tradition. Although the theological content of the introductory course as illustrated on the example of the Philip course is so basic and general that it could be seen as very ecumenical, and nondenominational; the indispensability of the Eucharist, and other sacraments during the course and at later stages of formation reintroduces Catholic theology and reinforces a very traditional and dominant role of the clergy. Philip course organised in Highfield House for Polish migrants is just one element of a growing network of charismatic groups and initiatives among Polish migrants in the UK. At the very end of the three-day course the importance of membership in a prayer group is emphasised. People who want to follow ‘the path of conversion’ form prayer groups, which constitute the basic units of charismatic communities. Their members meet on a regular basis ‘to pray together’ and ‘to care for each other’. One of the course leaders highlighted the importance of membership in a group by describing charismatic community as, ‘a mater of spiritual life and death’. This emphasis on the prayer groups brings together the missionary endeavour and postulate of evangelism with elitism. On the one hand it has been repeated many times during the course that everybody is invited and everybody can belong, on the other hand there is a boundary between those who have been initiated by the baptism in Holy Spirit, are in receipt of his gift and conversion, and those who still have not met God this way. Only those who have undergone initiation can understand each other, and support each other in their ‘journey’. So constructed membership in charismatic groups means intensive engagement, which goes ‘beyond mere affiliation, group membership now forms a central aspect of their life and indeed of their identity.’ (Cleary, 2007: 154).

The centrality of the group creates a tension between individual and institutional religiosity, which brings back the question of the place of the charismatic movement within the structure of Catholic Church, and more specifically its place in the space divided between the Polish Catholic Mission and local Catholic Church structures. It is beyond the scope of this paper to explain fully the relationship between Polish Catholic Mission and local Catholic Church in England and Wales. Relatively strong position of the mission can be traced back to the post

II World War period when Polish pastoral centres, separate from local church structure, have been established to cater for religious needs of Polish soldiers who came to Britain with the Polish armed forces and their families, and decided to remain there after the war (Marzec, 1989). The emphasis on the uniqueness of Polish Catholicism and link between national and religious identity prevalent in so called 'Polish churches' and maintained to this day has been reflected in a very traditional interpretation of faith expressed in liturgical forms by means of music (e.g. traditional, solemn hymns with numerous patriotic references), prayers, and use of particular objects and symbols (e.g. national emblems incorporated in church interior decoration). The most relevant to our discussion is the lively dispute between Polish and English hierarchy on the provision of ethnically specific forms of religious expression for new Polish migrant communities. Confronted with the recent influx of new migrants and revitalisation of 'Polish churches', Polish clergy advocates strongly for the continuation of traditional forms of pastoral care, and focuses on perseverance of ethnically bounded religion among new migrants. The clergymen see themselves as solitary fighters striving to protect national and religious identity of new migrants 'endangered' by their contact with secularised British society.

The disappointment with traditional forms of religious expression and with the Catholic Church widespread among new Polish migrants has been reflected in the dramatic decrease of church attendance observed among that group, as compared to church attendance in Poland (Krotofil, 2010). Many of those migrants who loosened their connection with the Catholic Church identify their departure from religion as a direct or indirect effect of migration and often experience the urge to find deeper meaning of their new life circumstances. The potential of charismatic missionary activities, such as the Philip course, to congregate and mobilise believers, can be magnified by migration context.

The developing network of prayer groups and people meeting regularly on all-night retreats is to some extent reinforced by personal links among clergy involved in the charismatic movement. The pastoral care of the Philip course is shared by three Polish priests working in parishes in North-East London, Harlow, Greys and the neighbouring areas forming London commuters' belt. Their activity in parishes is focused on promotion of new forms of pastoral care adjusted to new migrants and on supporting different forms of charismatically oriented activities such as regular weekly meetings of prayer groups, larger all-night prayer meetings organised a few times a year (e.g. night prayer meeting in Walthamstow, 'Haven Harlow'), or organisation and delivery of Alpha course in Polish (hosted by parish in Stanford Hill, London). Charismatic groups operating in these parishes are the 'destination' of some of the Philip course adepts who became their permanent

members, and at the same time are recruitment sites for new course attendants.¹⁰ All three priest work in parishes belonging to a local structure of the Catholic Church in England and in Wales, and being independent from the Polish Catholic Mission (a structure officially responsible for pastoral care of Polish migrants in England and Wales) they see their work as better suited to young people, as the following fragment of interview illustrates:

'One of the problems with Polish Catholic Mission is, that it is very difficult for them to notice the very obvious fact that the age profile of people they are meant to be looking after has changed drastically. [...] The majority of people who come here are young people with different needs and different problems.' (Polish Priest).

The response to what is seen as 'different needs' is based on the dialectical opposition between old and new. 'Old' churches working in the areas with long established Polish presence under Polish Catholic Mission are focused on the religious needs of the older generation of migrants and adapt too slowly to the influx of new migrants who have different needs.¹¹ The contestation of the discourse focused around national identity and the connection between being Polish and being Catholic is reinforced by the incorporation of national symbols into the religious milieu so prominent in parishes belonging to the Polish Catholic Mission (Krotofil, 2010). National identity as the main focal point and unifying factor is replaced by the identity of 'people born again' unified by the 'path of conversion' which they follow. The departure from the traditional pastoral programme is hoped to create a space for new forms of religious expressions and promote spontaneous, individually relevant grass root activities. Rather than branding the new socio-cultural environment in which migrant find themselves as dominated by privatisation, pluralism and secularisation, and seeing them as inevitably bound to destroy their religiosity, new pastoral ideas seek to counter these forces by emphasising personal relevance of repackaged Catholicism. The prerequisite of this new pastoral programme is the 'democratised access to the sacred' which is so evident in charismatic movements (Miller, 1999: 80). As

¹⁰ A significant proportion of people taking part in the Philip course has had some previous contact with some kind of charismatic groups personally or through friends and family before attending the course. On each edition of the course there is also a group of people who have participated in Philip course before (some of them may be active members of charismatic groups in their local parishes) but decided to repeat this experience.

¹¹ One parish belonging to Polish Catholic Mission and based in Ealing, London is seen as an exception here. It has been hosting regular, weekly meetings of Catholic Charismatic Renewal from 2001 and through personal ties of the clergy leader of that group with other 'charismatically oriented' Polish priests is included in the described network.

mentioned above, the significance attached to sacraments excludes the possibility of bypassing traditional religious authority. However, in the context of charismatic Catholicism, as Bord and Faulkner (1983: 15) note, there is no clear hierarchical influence on the movement, no 'single man' or a centralised structure, in contrary, the leadership is decentralised, segmented and reticulate. The charismas – gifts of the spirit believed to be given to the individual 'open up the possibility of unmediated relationship with God', which 'gives authority to the individual to the degree unprecedented in popular Catholic religion' (Neitz, 1987) and can mean the devaluation of institutional authority of the Church (Bord, Faulkner, 1983). In line with this 'Haven Harlow' is presented by the priest based in the parish hosting it, as an example of something grown out of spontaneous initiative of an initially very small group of lay Polish Catholics who wanted to meet for the whole night prayer. Currently 'Haven Harlow' is a regular event gathering over 200 people from different parts of England, who come to Harlow to experience 'renewal', and gather strength to return to local parishes and develop their initiatives there. As highlighted by the priest associated with 'Haven Harlow' 'it was never planned and should continue to be unplanned, there is no need to create a structure in Harlow'. What happens during the night prayer meetings in 'Haven Harlow' originates from individualised needs of meeting participants, and guidance of the Holy Spirit, as expressed in the testimony of one of participants:

'There is no doubt, that here [in Harlow JK], Holy Spirit is the director' (K.)¹²

In a way 'Haven Harlow' night is also a Holy Spirit weekend, its programme is a 'lighter' and shorter version of the Philip course. It comprises of adoring the God (worship expressing thankfulness, love and praise), teaching (in a form of 'lecture'), mass celebration, and some form of 'performance'. During the break, participants share a meal together and talk in a relaxed atmosphere. There is also occasion to ask for individual 'ministry' –healing prayer.

Moving towards a conclusion, it is worth noting that within the structures of the Catholic Church in the UK, there exists a space for the development of a charismatic movement among new Polish migrants. Currently it is located in the intersection of two very different visions of the Church in migration context. Missionary activities structured in a specific sequence (learn charismatic worldviews - have them confirmed -and live them out), bring effects desired by charismatic leaders. The spiritual turn observed among Polish migrants introduced to charismatic

¹² source: http://www.przystanharlow.com/print.php?type=A&item_id=3

Catholicism, positioned against the background of traditional Catholicism gives us a better understanding of the appeal of ‘repackaged Catholicism’. The grounding in Catholicism and use of familiar symbols positions those who become exposed to Charismatic teaching within the realm of religion sanctioned by tradition. The presence of clergy provides legitimisation for charismatic experiences and facilitates the formation of a new identity of ‘born again’.

Charismatic religiosity seems to be well fitted to attract adherents among new Polish migrants, however at this point in time it is hard to guess what proportion of people will turn towards charismatic forms of religious expressions in that group in the next few years and what impact will the ongoing structural changes in the Catholic Church in the UK have on the charismatic movement. The research presented in this paper is just a ‘snap-shot’ taken in a given point in time; more research is therefore needed.

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