

Identity(ies) and Transnationalization of Brazilian Evangelical Churches in Portugal: Case study of World Cathedral of Hope and Victory in Christ Churches

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The presence of evangelicals in Brazil is a social and religious phenomenon that has aroused interest of many scholars due to its rapid and significant expansion in recent decades and its projection beyond national borders. Among evangelical denominations that stand out in this scenario are Pentecostal churches, which have developed intense missionary activity in several countries, including Europe. In this article, we intend to analyze features and challenges of Brazilian evangelical churches: World Cathedral of Hope (CIME) (Catedral Mundial da Esperança—ICME) and Assembly of God Victory in Christ (ADVEC) (Assembleia de Deus Vitória em Cristo—ADVEC) that operate in Portugal, seeking to understand issues of identity and belonging of these communities, their models of transnationalization, its evangelization strategies and its adaptations to Portuguese context, in the period from 2000 to 2020.

Keywords: identity, transnationalization, secularization, Brazilian migration

Introduction

Brazilian evangelical field is featured by a high degree of diversity, both in terms of denominations and theological orientations. In recent decades, this diversity has been accompanied by a process of rapid growth, which has made Brazilian evangelical church one of the largest in the world.

This growth has been accompanied by an increasing transnationalization of Brazilian evangelical churches, which have established congregations in several countries around the world. Portugal is one of the main destinations for Brazilian migrants and, as a result, there has been a significant growth in the number of Brazilian evangelical churches in that country.

In this article, we intend to analyze features and challenges of Brazilian evangelical churches in Portugal, focusing on the cases of World Cathedral of Hope (CIME) and Assembly of God Victory in Christ (ADVEC). These two churches are among the largest and most influential Brazilian evangelical churches and have a significant presence in Portugal.

Methodology

This study is based on a qualitative approach, using a combination of methods including literature review, document analysis, and interviews with pastors and church members. Literature review provides an overview of Brazilian evangelical field and the process of transnationalization of Brazilian evangelical churches. Documentary analysis focuses on websites and social media pages of ICME and ADVEC churches in Portugal. Interviews will be carried out with pastors and members of churches in Portugal and have aimed to understand issues of identity and belonging, transnationalization, evangelization, and adaptation to Portuguese context.

Our hypothesis is that these Brazilian evangelical churches are part of an “inverted mission” movement (Freston, 2010), which consists of attempting to re-Christianize Europe towards a Pentecostal perspective, in face of secularization process that affected historic and reformed evangelical churches in European continent.

Modernity and Secularization

The process of secularization, thought by many people, that would lead to the disappearance of religion in modern era, did not take place. Pessimistic predictions of Feuerbach, Marx, or Nietzsche have turned out to be wrong, as they were based on a conception of religion as a “non-rational popular illusion”. Today, we can understand these criticisms as a way of questioning some aspects of modernity, or as an attempt to overcome it completely, using concepts of postmodernity (Lyotard, 1989).

One of the questions facing religious scholars today is how to understand the role of religious beliefs and practices in a context of pluralism, diversity, and social change. Sociology of religions, as a specific branch of sociological knowledge, has been dedicated to analyzing forms of expression, organization, and transformation of religion in modern and contemporary societies. In this sense, it differs from approaches that have seen religion as a phenomenon in decline or as an obstacle to scientific and social progress. On the contrary, sociology of religions recognizes the complexity and relevance of religion as a factor of identity, mobilization, conflict, and social integration. Furthermore, it seeks to understand relationships between religion and other dimensions of social life, such as politics, economics, culture, and communication. In this text, we will present some of main theoretical and methodological contributions from sociology of religions to the study of religion in liquid modernity, with an emphasis on Brazilian case. In particular, we will discuss how sociology of religions can help us understand the phenomenon of evangelical growth in Brazil, its causes, consequences, and challenges.

Many sociologists and theologians recognize that religion faced challenges of revolutions in Modern Era. However, the truth is that modernity, in a strict sense, had already begun a century and a half before French Revolution, bringing a new faith in human reason (which had already been manifested since the 12th century), which has become criterion of all questions of truth. With this process, all traditional authorities—be it Aristotle, scholasticism, or the Pope—suffer a crisis: a crisis of legitimacy.

As Mondin (1997) states, religion has been target of criticism in all periods of history and in all civilizations. But since the beginning of modern era, in most cases, criticisms were not directed to religion itself, but at certain distortions and excesses: they were polytheistic, anthropomorphic, and superstitious criticisms.

Criticism which directly attacks religion itself and examines its nature, its functions, and its value, according to Mondin, only appears in modern era; it is a typical expression of modernity.

But the more modernity advances, the more its own relativity also reveals itself. If a lot of negative things have happened in name of God, a lot of negative things also have happened in name of Reason, Progress, and Nation.

According to Martelli (1995), modernity has failed to solve the problem of the need for transcendence, which religion meets and which arises from three fundamental features of human existence: contingency, impotence, and penury (and, consequently, suffering, frustration, and deprivation that arise when experiencing such situations).

One way to summarize what K üng (2004) points out as ambivalence of modernity is the following:

- Modernity has brought more freedom and well-being to many people, but it has also left behind moral and ethical questions that still need to be resolved.
- Modernity has created a global financial and economic system, but it also has generated inequalities and injustices that affect the most vulnerable and excluded ones from globalization.
- Modernity has developed efficient and innovative technologies, but it has also caused challenges and risks that require more control and humanization than rationalization.
- Modernity has spread democracy as a universal value, but it also faces conflicts and threats that impede peace and world order. Thus, modernity builds ever higher towers, but cannot find heaven on earth.

According to Martelli (1995), religion has a fundamental role and it is justified not only from a perspective of minimalism, that is, in clear limits and failures, which welfare state, technology, and politics face, when trying to achieve their purposes; but also from a qualitative perspective, that is, in relation to devaluation that any social solution suffers, in face of growing and inexhaustible social issues. This is a paradoxical circularity between the fulfillment of human needs and the appearance of needs at a higher level, which confirms, on an empirical level, an anthropological thesis that human needs have no end, that is, human being has the capacity to transcend any goal that is achieved and any limit that is perceived.

One of the features of liquid or advanced modernity is loss of solid and stable references that guide human life. In this context, religion is seen as a source of meaning and identity, but also as an expression of diversity and pluralism. Christian faith, in turn, is understood as a divine gift that transcends historical and cultural contingencies, but also manifests itself in different forms and traditions. Sociology of religion deals with analyzing religious phenomena in their social, political, economic, and cultural dimensions, as well as in their relationships with other spheres of social life. In this work, we intend to present some of main theoretical approaches that have contributed to the study of religion in liquid modernity, with emphasis on the authors: Jean-Francois Lyotard, Anthony Giddens, Fredric Jameson, and Jean Baudrillard. We also intend to discuss the role of religion in the construction of individual and collective identity, especially in the case of evangelical Pentecostal churches, which have expanded in Latin America, Europe, and Portugal.

Peter Berger (1985) is one of the most relevant names in sociology of religion today. He has begun his career analyzing the phenomenon of secularization, that is, the loss of influence of religion in modern societies, especially in Europe. Afterwards, he has shifted his focus to desecularization, that is, the resurgence of religion in new forms and contexts, especially in America. He realized that “church religion”, based on accession to an institution and a set of dogmas, was in crisis, while “market religion”, based on individual choice and diversity of offers, was on the rise (Berger, 2018).

In this work, we will explore three concepts that seem fundamental to understanding the relationship between religion and liquid modernity: (a) metanarrative; (b) subjectivity, and (c) virtual reality. To do this, I am

going to support myself on Giddens' (1991) and Bauman's (2001) theories, which describe liquid modernity as a cultural condition, marked by instability, fragmentation, and fluidity. I do not intend to give a definitive answer on this complex topic, but rather rise some questions and reflections.

Liquid modernity introduces challenges and opportunities for religious discourse. On the one hand, it calls into questioning the claim to absolute and universal truth of traditional religions, which are based on metanarratives that explain the meaning of life and history. On the other hand, it opens up space for a more subjective, sensitive, and creative religious expression, which adapts to changes and needs of individuals. Furthermore, liquid modernity creates new forms of communication and interaction through virtual reality, which can expand or reduce scope and depth of religious experience.

According to Baudrillard (1991), simulacrum is the way modern society operates, creating images and signs that replace reality and original references. In this context, religious concepts such as God and the Last Judgment lose their meaning and their ability to guide people about good and evil, or true and false.

With the process of secularization, religious sphere no longer occupies its place as an instance of legitimation and explanation of events. Thus, religion is led to redeem its place in contemporary social order, as stated by Aquino (1999). The question which faces religion today is occupying a relevant place in social life.

For Beyer (1994, p. 400): "Like science, economy or healthcare system, religion must provide a service that not only supports and strengthens religious faith's adherents, but can also assert itself by having far-reaching implications outside strictly religious scope."

According to Beyer (1994, p. 400), religion should be seen as a service that attends spiritual and social needs from its believers, but also as a factor which influences other spheres of human life, such as politics, culture, or ethics. Giddens (1991), in turn, contrasts religion with abstract systems which feature modern societies, arguing that, these latter factors generate trust based on rationality and efficiency, but not on proximity and affectivity. In this sense, traditional religions differ from abstract systems, once they present personalized figures that enable a more direct and reciprocal relationship of trust among individuals.

Hans Küng (1991) argues that interreligious dialogue is fundamental for construction of a global ethic which guides relations between several social actors (political, scientific, economic) in today's world. According to him, conditions for this dialogue are: (a) recognition of human dignity and human rights as universal values; (b) respect for cultural and religious diversity as a source of mutual enrichment; (c) search for justice and peace as common goals in religions.

Some authors claim that modernity is featured by loss of sense of sacred, disbelief in transcendence, and predominance of instrumental reason over spiritual values. In this context, new religious movements emerge offering answers to people's desires and anxieties in face of uncertainties and transformations in society.

Peter Berger (1985) is one of the main sociologists of religion today, who has analyzed changes in religious field in recent decades. In his works, he approaches both, process of secularization, which implies loss of influence from religion in official sphere, and process of desecularization, which implies a reaffirmation of religion as a source of identity and meaning for individuals and social groups.

The issue of secularization and its influence on religion is approached by several authors. According to Giddens (2005), secularization affects religion in three dimensions: (1) level of accession from believers; (2) degree of social, economic, and political influence of churches and other religious organizations; (3) beliefs and values from individuals—religiosity.

Secularization, according to Sociology Dictionary (Boudon, 1990), is a process through which religion loses its relevance in different spheres of social life. This loss is reflected both in the decrease of number of members and their religious practices, and in reduction of prestige from churches and religious organizations, which have less influence on society, culture, wealth, and values associated to religion. Many individuals declare themselves to be believers, but they do not actively participate in religious services, nor guide their actions and values by religion they claim to profess, nor even follow rules established by religious institutions which protect these beliefs and values. Religious pluralism has contributed, in part, to the phenomenon of secularization, because once attached to it, it affects individual religious socialization, making each individual construct their own religious identity, thus, becoming it distant from religious institutions and principles which they enunciate. A critical and chosen religion by catalogue—and no longer inherited—provokes itself an advance in process of secularization and is at the origin of “crisis” of churches as institutions, representing and defining a relationship in religious process.

A possible approach to analyzing the phenomenon of secularization in religion is to consider social, cultural, and political transformations which have occurred in modern societies since the 19th century. These transformations have involved processes of rationalization, individualization, pluralization, and diversification of forms from religious expression, which affected both, traditional religious institutions and believers. In this context, religion has ceased to be a central and unifying element of social life, and has become a personal and subjective option, which can coexist with other forms of thought and action. Thus, secularization does not necessarily mean disappearance or irrelevance of religion, but rather its reconfiguration and adaptation to new conditions of modernity. Sociology of religion, therefore, must seek to understand how different religious manifestations relate themselves to social changes, and what their meanings and functions are for individuals and society.

Vilaça (2006) states that pluralism is a feature of modernity and an important aspect of secularization, which involves several social processes. Sociology of religions, since the 20th century until nowadays, has treated pluralism as a central theme or as a context or critic. However, secularization is not a recent phenomenon, but it has a long history which influences its meaning and theoretical use.

According to Vilaça (2006), the concept of secularization was not born in sociology, but it has had several meanings and applications before being used by social science to analyze religion in modern societies. The word “secular”, which is opposed to spiritual and refers to the world, had already been used by Church for centuries, long before the word secularization has appeared.

As Vilaça (2006) states in his study *From the Tower of Babel to Promised Lands—Religious Pluralism in Portugal*, about documentary record of the term secularization:

[...] (it) appears to be concerned to negotiations in Treaty of Westphalia, in 1648. It was introduced by the French negotiator Duke of Longueville, with purpose of facilitating a commitment on the delicate issue from territories which belonged to Church... The negotiators from Treaty, as mentioned, needed a neutral term to refer to “secularization of certain ecclesiastical properties that were being added to Brandenburg” ... The goal was to convey to Church a certain idea of compensation for its territorial losses. Through the expression “secularization” this loss was simultaneously denied and admitted because it contained a sense of transience, of transformation, in use of spiritual properties. (Vilaça, 2006, pp. 63-64)

Secularization is a complex and controversial concept which has been used to describe social and cultural transformations concerned to religion. There are different interpretations about meaning, origin, and

consequences of secularization, as well as its relationship to modernity. Some authors, such as Peter Berger, argue that secularization is a historical process which begins with monotheism and intensifies itself with Protestantism, leading to a separation between sacred and profane, between religion and society. Other authors, such as Vilaça, question this linear and evolutionary view of secularization, and point to ambiguities, contradictions, and diversities which mark religious experiences in contemporary times. In this text, I intend to analyze Berger and Vilaça's main theses on secularization, highlighting their convergences and divergences, and discussing theoretical and practical implications from this debate for sociology of religion.

According to Berger (2017), science is often cited as the main factor in secularization. According to him:

Scientific comprehension of reality supposedly marginalizes religion and ends up making it inconceivable. I've never been terribly impressed by this interpretation. Most modern people are crucially affected by technological revolution which modern science has brought about, but scientific reasoning does not dominate the way they think in ordinary life. I thought that some of basic processes of modernity—industrialization, urbanization, migration, education—have driven religion out from much of institutional order. I have also thought that pluralism [...] has also supplied secularization—it has deprived religion from taken-for-granted quality. This was a correct comprehension. However, I have made a big mistake: pluralism weakens religious certainty and opens up a plenitude of cognitive and normative choices. In much of the world, however, many of these choices are religious. I will connect this comprehension with the discussion on pluralism. In modern world, pluralism has become ubiquitous. Modernity does not necessarily lead to secularization; where it occurs, this evolution cannot be assumed, but must before be explained. Modernity necessarily leads to pluralism. It actually introduces faith as a significant challenge, but this is different from the challenge of secularization. (Berger, 2017, pp. 52-53)

However, Berger (2017) continues to state that:

All of this exists in the context of the aforementioned "Protestant ethic". This is, of course, a modernizing force itself, but I would emphasize another point which has connection with evangelical background from which, most of Pentecostalism has arisen: evangelical Protestantism is one of the main religious traditions in which a personal act of an individual's decision is at the center of faith. One cannot be born Christian, one must be born again, having decided (in evangelical language) "accepting Jesus as a personal Lord and Savior." Nothing could be more modern than this principle of individual performance.

It is time to return to focus on pluralism. How is the previous overview of contemporary religious panorama concerned to pluralism? The answer is simple: religious pluralism has become a global phenomenon.

A simple way to describe globalization is to say that, increasingly, everyone talks to all. It is not only that large contingents of people travel all over the planet, whether temporarily as travelers or permanently as migrants; There is also a huge increase in 'virtual' conversation, while press and electronic media spread knowledge of different cultures, different from their own. Religion is not an exception to this planetary interaction. (Berger, 2017, p. 65).

A way to continue Berger's (2017) argument is to analyze how secularism, pluralism, and individual consciousness manifest themselves in contemporary society. For example, secularism can be seen as a way of guaranteeing religious freedom and its separation from state and religion, thus avoiding an imposition of a single worldview. Pluralism, in turn, can be understood as a social reality which recognizes and valorizes a diversity of beliefs, values, and religious practices, promoting dialogue and mutual respect. Individual conscience, finally, can be defined as each person's ability to choose and express their own faith, according to their reason and experience, without submitting themselves to coercion or violence. In this sense, Berger (2017) suggests that, in face of pluralism, religion becomes more a matter of opinion than of a certainty, and it can be modified or abandoned depending on new arguments or experiences.

Regarding the issue of pluralism, Berger (2017) postulates that:

Pluralism changes "how" more than "what" from an individual's belief. This becomes very clear when looking at an individual who has decided to affirm a very conservative version from a certain religion—that is to say, an individual in his

twenties or thirties, with a Catholic background with which he has never been strongly identified, and now asserts such faith in a very conservative way. Perhaps he has become a lay affiliate from an organization like Opus Dei... Let's imagine both lists are completely identical, that is, the "what" from his faith has not changed at all. However, the "how" has changed radically. What was previously a destiny, taken for granted, has now become a deliberate choice. The implications from this change are immense. (Berger, 2017, p. 74)

Then, Berger (2017) reflects on relationship between pluralism and religious institutions, about which he states:

...pluralism changes relationship between clergy and laity. An uncoerced laity inevitably gains power in opposition to religious authorities and clergy. Lay people must be convinced to become and/or remain members of a church which is in fact, if not theologically, a voluntary association. They must be summoned up to provide services, accomplish many functions which were theirs traditionally, and last but not least, supply financial support, especially if Church itself has not accumulated wealth or does not receive State ongoing support. Naturally, this laity's role is taken for granted in churches traditionally "free", such as those derived from British Dissent, but it also becomes a social reality in churches that, theologically, still have difficulty with this, as it is the case of Catholic Roman Church and any other ancient State Church.

Thus the two great pluralism effects walk together—faith—more based in individual choice than in destiny or by chance of birth, and faith as institution in form of voluntary association. Both have a deep affinity with modernity, an affinity that weakens the taken-for-granted from all institutions, not only religious ones. In fact, a concise description of modernization is that it constitutes an enormous shift from destiny to choice in human condition. It should not surprise that religion has been greatly affected by this change. (Berger, 2017, pp. 104-105)

One way to understand relationship between religion and modernity is from Berger's (2017) perspective, who argues that modern societies are featured by a technological and organizational structure which is based on a secular discourse. This discourse, in turn, occupies a privileged place in public sphere, even in a limited way (as in the United States of America) by strong legal protections from religious freedom.

However, it does not mean that religion has lost its relevance or influence, on the contrary, as Berger (2018, p. 23) states: "in much of world there has been a true explosion of religious belief". Western Europe and cultural and intellectual elites, globally active, can be seen as examples of religion decrease in importance. However, they may be exceptions in a fervently religious world. Berger points to the rise of Islam and the growth of a dynamic "evangelicalism" (especially in its Pentecostal version) as the most striking evidence of what he calls a religious explosion. His abandonment of theory of secularization was motivated, mainly, by these religious phenomena.

One way to understand relationship between faith and secularism is to resort to concept of "religious pluralism" proposed by Berger (2017). According to him, religious pluralism not only means the coexistence of different religious traditions, but also the possibility for individuals to choose between different religious or secular options to give meaning to their lives. In this sense, religious pluralism is a modern phenomenon that challenges the idea that modernity leads to secularization. Berger (2017) argues that the world is not becoming more secular, but rather more pluralistic, and this has implications for role of religion in public sphere. He highlights that religious movements which most grow up in current world are those that keep a supernaturalist view from reality and resist to an adaptation to modern values. These movements, such as Pentecostalism and Islam, represent a form of "desecularization" of world, which contrasts with expectation that religion would become irrelevant or private in modern era.

One way of understanding "identity" is to think on it as a social and cultural construction, which depends on relationship with "difference". Identity is not something fixed, natural, or essential, but something dynamic, historic, and contextual. Identity is defined not only by what someone is, but also by what it is not: "I'm not a

foreigner”, “I’m not white”, “I’m not a woman”, etc. Identity, therefore, is a negativity (“what I am not”), a relational feature, a contingent “fact”. From this perspective, identity has the other as reference: it is open and incomplete. In the same way as identity, difference is, in this perspective, conceived as relational, as something which refers to the other. Difference, like identity, is constructed. Identity and difference are, therefore, interrelated.

For theorists, besides being interrelated, identity and difference share an important feature: they are result of linguistic creation acts. Identity and difference have to be actively produced. They are not creatures of natural or transcendental world, but from cultural and social world. We are the ones who make them, in context of cultural and social relations. In short, identity and difference are social and cultural creations.

Transnationalization and Growth of Evangelical Churches in Portugal

The expansion and growth of evangelical churches in Portugal are concerned to influence of Brazilian evangelical church, which has stood out for its vitality and diversity. Brazil is a country of large size and cultural plurality, which shelters different expressions of historic and Pentecostal Protestantism. Brazilian evangelical churches have developed a contextualized theology, which dialogues with social, political, and cultural issues from their people, searching being faithful to Jesus Christ’s gospel. This theology has been transmitted through an integral mission, which combines word preaching, service to others, and transformation of society.

The transnationalization of Brazilian evangelical churches is a phenomenon that has gained emphasis in recent decades. According to Oro, Brazilian evangelical churches have carried out an “inverted mission” to Europe, aiming at “re-Christianizing” the continent.

The process of religious transnationalization is complex and involves different models, dynamics, and practices from Brazilian churches to overcome cultural differences and accommodate themselves to European cultures. Furthermore, Brazilian evangelical transnationalization to Europe has been marked by tensions and adaptations, which reflect social, political, and religious dynamics from involved countries.

Transnationalization of Brazilian evangelical churches is a process that has been occurring since the beginning of the 21st century. This process refers to expansion of Brazilian evangelical churches to other countries, whether through missionaries, affiliated churches, or religious institutions.

There are several factors which contribute to transnationalization of Brazilian evangelical churches, including:

- Growth in the number of evangelicals in Brazil: Brazil is the country with the largest number of evangelicals in the world, with around 40% of population declaring themselves evangelical. This growth has led to an increase in number of Brazilian missionaries traveling to other countries to preach gospel.
- Globalization: Globalization has facilitated communication and transportation, which has made it easier for Brazilian evangelical churches to expand to other countries.
- Economic crisis: Economic crisis in Brazil has led many Brazilians to emigrate to other countries, which has contributed to growth of Brazilian evangelical churches in these countries.

Transnationalization of Brazilian evangelical churches has several impacts, including:

- Spread of Christianity: Brazilian evangelical churches have contributed to spread of Christianity in other countries.
- Influence of Brazilian culture: Brazilian evangelical churches have also influenced culture of other countries, through their music, art, and liturgy.

- Increased religious diversity: Transnationalization of Brazilian evangelical churches has contributed to increase religious diversity in other countries.

Transnationalization of Brazilian evangelical churches is a complex phenomenon that has been object of debate and controversy. Some scholars argue that transnationalization of Brazilian evangelical churches is a form of cultural imperialism, while others argue that it is a form of evangelism and social service.

Here are some examples of Brazilian evangelical churches that operate internationally:

- Universal Church of Kingdom of God (Igreja Universal do Reino de Deus): Universal Church of Kingdom of God is the largest evangelical church in Brazil and also has a relative presence in other countries, such as the United States, Africa, and Europe.

- Lagoinha Baptist Church (Igreja Batista da Lagoinha): Lagoinha Baptist Church is an evangelical pentecostal church which has a relative presence in other countries, such as the United States, Europe, and Africa

- Reborn in Christ's Church (Igreja Renascer em Cristo): Reborn in Christ's Church is an evangelical Pentecostal church which has a relative presence in other countries, such as the United States, Europe, and Africa

- World Cathedral of Hope (Catedral Mundial da Esperança)—ICME is an evangelical Pentecostal church that has a relative presence in other countries, Portugal, Spain, France, and England

- Assembly of God Victory in Christ—ADVEC (Assembleia de Deus Vitória em Cristo—ADVEC): Assembly of God Victory in Christ—ADVEC is an evangelical Pentecostal church that has a relative presence in other countries, Portugal, Spain, France, and England

In short, transnationalization of Brazilian evangelical churches is a phenomenon in constant evolution. This process is likely to continue to grow in coming years as Brazilian evangelical churches search reaching new audiences and expand their global impact.

Brazilian religious presence abroad has been object of studies in several areas of knowledge, such as sociology, anthropology, history, and theology.

The relatively recent phenomenon of transnationalization has attracted attention of Brazilian and foreign researchers (Portuguese, Dutch, French, etc.). They report flows and movements of religious phenomena which cross borders, in and among different regions in the world: among Brazil, Portugal, and different parts of Europe.

According to Oro (2012), researches focus on how such flows, movements, and displacements of religious phenomena across national borders, (in) forming religious institutions and subjects, determining their modes of relationship with surrounding society(ies). Whether through pilgrimages and missions, or permanent or seasonal migrations, the movement and crossing of borders from Nation-State have become a determining factor in formation of these religions.

The concept of transnationalization used by researchers is based on some theoretical premises shared by authors. According to Mary, Capone, and Argyriadis (2007):

Transnationalization implies a double movement, of deterritorialization and “indigenization”, which questions opposition between loyalty to a territory (local or “national”), associated to demand for a “pure” culture, and unilateral movement of homogenization which leads to cosmopolitanism of hybrid or creolized cultures. The production of these transnational imaginaries from States reinvents religious “nations” able to provide matrices of universality. (Mary, Capone, & Argyriadis, 2007, p. 8)

The concept of territory is central to understanding social and cultural dynamics which involve actors who relate to space. Territory is not just a physical or geographic dimension, but also a symbolic and identity construction that expresses the way how subjects appropriate, experience, and represent space. In this sense,

territory can be affected by processes of deterritorialization, which imply loss or transformation of territorial links, due to circulation of people, goods, ideas, and images. Deterritorialization is an outstanding feature of contemporary times, which challenges traditional notions of national territory and cultural borders. However, deterritorialization does not necessarily imply homogenization or a cultural mix, but it can generate new forms of reterritorialization, which involves reaffirmation or reinvention of territorial identities in different contexts and scales (Appadurai, 2001; Clifford, 1997; Friedman, 1994; 2000; Hannez, 1996; 1997).

Reterritorialization is the phenomenon by which ideas, values, images, and beliefs that circulate globally are appropriated and reinterpreted by local groups, according to their own cultural and identity logics. This dynamics enables the emergence of alternative ways of being and living, as well as formation of transnational networks of individuals who share a cause, a movement of ideas, or religious values (Mary et al., 2007).

Transnational religious networks are forms of social organization that go beyond national borders and articulate actors, institutions, and religious movements in different contexts. These networks are based on shared values, beliefs, and practices, which express a common religious identity and a global worldview. Internet is a privileged environment for communication, mobilization, and expansion of these networks, once it allows access to information, contact to other believers, and participation in events and religious initiatives remotely. However, internet is not the only factor which explains the emergence and strengthening of transnational religious networks. It is also necessary to consider political, economic, cultural, and migratory transformations which feature modernity and affect ways of living and expressing religion in contemporary world. Transnational religious networks are, therefore, complex and dynamic phenomena, which involve multiple dimensions and challenges for studying religion in a globalized society (Capone, 1999; Saltamacchia & Tickner, 2007).

In this complex connection network, actors influence and social prestige vary according to their position, establishing unequal relationships among them, although featured by a notable flexibility. In ideal terms, we will highlight three levels of influence and prestige in context of transnational personalized networks (Oro, 2009). Firstly, at the highest level of prestige and influence, are the “nodal” actors (Colonomos, 1995; Mitchell, 1974), whose personal charisma makes them references to a large number of other actors who integrate this network. Secondly, there are “axis” actors, who are religious agents of certain renown who keep close and privileged relationships to “nodal” actors. In third place are the “secondary” actors, usually leaders of small congregations or local ministries. Normally, “secondary” actors keep affinity relationships with “axis” ones and, more indirectly, with “nodal” ones (Argyriadis & Rodríguez, 2010).

From the 90's, Brazilian evangelical churches have begun sending missionaries to Europe, especially to Portugal, where they have found a fertile field for evangelization. Portugal is a country with a Catholic tradition, but has been experiencing a process of secularization and a crisis of values. Many people have felt themselves empty and hopeless, and have sought a more lively and dynamic spirituality. Brazilian evangelical churches have offered a faith alternative, based on personal experience with God, fraternal communion, and social participation. These churches have attracted mainly Brazilian immigrants, but also native Portuguese, who identify themselves to their way of worshiping and witnessing. Thus, evangelical churches in Portugal have grown up in number and relevance, contributing to a renewal of Christianity in the country.

From this perspective, missionary organizations and boards, as well as some denominations of Pentecostal origin, realized that it was a historic opportunity to support European evangelical churches which have suffered effects of secularization and the advance of theological liberalism, with its consequent spiritual decline and cooling.

According to Oro (2019), the “inverted mission” to Europe consists of a practice carried out by several Brazilian evangelical churches which, for this purpose, are based on the idea that Europe has lost its Christian spiritual strength, needing, therefore, to be re-Christianized. It is this role that some Brazilian churches attribute to themselves, transnationalizing, especially to Portugal.

For Oro (2019), there are four types of transnationalization models: (1) Autonomy and exclusivism; (2) Initial partnership, rupture, and institutional implementation; (3) Initial partnership and double break; and (4) Lasting alliance and partnership. As the aforementioned author states, “I observe that, despite different transnational developments carried out by Brazilian churches in Europe, they coincide in their concern to an adaptation to local cultures, thus contributing to confirming and expanding” (Oro, 2019, p. 6) the “importance of Brazil in the new global religious map” (Rocha & Vázquez, 2016, p. 7).

Brazilian evangelical churches in Portugal are a recent phenomenon, but one which has aroused interest of scholars of religion and society. They are part of a context of migration, globalization, and religious pluralism, which challenges traditional ways of living and expressing Christian faith. In this article, I intend to analyze how these churches relate to Portuguese culture, which has a strong Catholic heritage, and how they build their identity and sense of belonging in a diverse and complex environment. To do this, I will use the concepts of “inverted mission”, “evangelization in reverse”, and “returning evangelization”, which refer to an evangelization movement that starts from countries in global South to countries in global North, inverting a historical logic of religious colonialism. Based on an ethnographic research carried out in two Brazilian evangelical churches in Portugal—World Cathedral of Hope (CIME) (Catedral Mundial da Esperança) and Assembly of God Victory in Christ (ADVEC) (Igreja Evangélica Vitória em Cristo)—I will seek to understand how they adapt, differentiate, and communicate themselves with Portuguese society, and what are challenges and opportunities they face in their mission.

Berger argues that Third World presents a greater resistance to secularization because of its strong religious tradition and its greater proximity to sacred. He states that supernatural is still a living reality present in people’s everyday lives, who call upon to it in order to explain and face problems and challenges from modern world. In this sense, he suggests that Third World can offer an alternative to secularized and rationalized view of Western, which tends to deny or marginalize a transcendent dimension of human existence.

In Brazil, this resistance to secularization is manifested in the diversity and vitality of religious expressions, especially evangelical churches, which have attracted millions of believers in recent decades. These churches are featured by a strong emphasis on personal experience with God, on Bible preaching as God’s word, on music and rites valorization as forms of faith expression, in an active participation of members in community life and in a search for social transformation from a Christian perspective. Brazilian evangelical churches are also distinguished by their ability to adapt and innovate, incorporating elements of popular and regional culture, dialoguing with other religious traditions and creating new forms of organization and communication.

Brazilian evangelical churches in Portugal are a recent phenomenon, but one that has attracted attention of scholars and researchers. They arise in a context of migration and religious crisis in Europe, where many historic churches are in decline or in conflict with modernity. In this scenario, Brazilian evangelical churches offer a faith and community alternative, based on charismatic experience, appreciation of Brazilian culture, and mission of bringing gospel to Portuguese congregation. In this work, I intend to analyze features, challenges, and contributions from two of these churches: Evangelical Church Victory in Christ (Igreja Evangélica Vitória em Cristo) and World Cathedral of Hope (CIME) (Catedral Mundial da Esperança—ICME). Both are Pentecostal

denominations which have expanded rapidly in Portugal in the last twenty years, attracting believers from different origins and contexts. From a sociological and theological approach, I will seek to understand how these churches are inserted into Portuguese society, how they relate to other religious expressions, and how they build their identity and sense of belonging.

Conclusion

In short, the results we intend to carry out are an analysis of ICME and ADVEC churches in Portugal, revealing that they are featured by a complex and multifaceted identity. On the one hand, they are Brazilian churches, with a strong connection to Brazilian evangelical field. On the other hand, they are also Portuguese churches, with a commitment of serving Portuguese community.

This double identity is reflected in the transnationalization strategies of churches. ICME and ADVEC churches are part of international networks and receive financial and logistical support from these networks. However, they also have a significant degree of autonomy and are responsible for their own activities in Portugal.

The evangelization strategies from ICME and ADVEC churches in Portugal are focused on reaching Brazilian and Portuguese migrants. Churches use a variety of methods to reach their target audiences, including traditional methods such as preaching and worship services, as well as more innovative methods such as social media and outreach programs.

ICME and ADVEC churches in Portugal have faced a series of challenges, including secularization of Portuguese society, competition from other religious groups, and cultural barrier. However, churches also made significant progress and has become a major force in Portuguese evangelical field.

ICME and ADVEC churches in Portugal are a valuable case study for understanding challenges and opportunities that Brazilian evangelical churches face in transnational context. The preliminary experience shows that churches display is possible to keep a Brazilian identity and at the same time adapt it to Portuguese context. The success of the churches also suggests that Brazilian evangelical churches have potential to play a significant role in the growth of Christianity in Europe.

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