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Prophetic ministry in Poland. Spiritual encounters among Charismatics

Abstract. *The growth of prophetic ministry, which started in the 1980s, has resulted in numerous testimonies of great faith and hope. The emphasis put on signs and wonders, eagerly promoted by John Wimber and his adherents, has contributed to the rapid spread of new forms of worship. For decades, spiritual encounters — a desirable product in the religious marketplace, have also served as an easily recognizable trademark of both Pentecostals and Charismatics. The principal objective of the study is to investigate the nature of the prophecies shared among the selected Polish religious communities. For this particular reason, the main features of the Charismatic ritual language will be discussed, with special attention given to the question of God-Human intimacy. Furthermore, a reference will be made to the rise of the prophetic office within contemporary denominational and non-denominational churches. Finally, the content of the chosen prophecies will be thoroughly analyzed.*

Keywords: *prophecy, word of knowledge, word of wisdom, gifts of the Holy Spirit, Pentecostals, Charismatics, ritual language*

Introduction

The evolution of Charismatic Christianity, also referred to as Spirit-filled Christianity, started in the 1960s and resulted from an enthusiastic response of mainline churches to the Pentecostal influence in their ranks. Margaret Poloma¹ distinguishes

¹ M. Poloma, *Main Street mystics*, Altamira Press 2003, pp. 20–21.

between the so-called *Second Wave* of the Pentecostal movement and its updated version, namely the *Third Wave* (known in the literature as *Neo-Pentecostalism*). The former applies to the phenomenon which revolutionized, for instance, Catholicism, whereas the latter has been associated with independent ministries that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. According to Poloma,² it is difficult to specify the unique features of each of these movements since *Second-Wavers* as *Third-Wavers* promote a distinct spirituality rather than a particular religion. In this paper, the term *Charismatic Christians* will be used in relation to the selected communities, bearing in mind Poloma's observations. The author claims that "Charismatics are those who identify with the *second wave* and possibly the *third wave*."³ It seems crucial to concentrate on the common denominator to understand the strong spiritual bond between those who represent the mainline church and those who participate in worship services conducted by independent ministers. Rita and Dennis Bennett⁴ specify that common denominator by referring to the gifts of the Holy Spirit, and therefore, they put emphasis on two interrelated categories, namely, *charisma* (plural, *charismata*, Eng. charisms) and *phanerosis* (manifestation). Precisely speaking, the gifts of the Holy Spirit, the charisms, are believed to be the core of Charismatic Christianity, regardless of its advocates' affiliation. Bennett and Bennett⁵ argue that "the simple word gift is a good word, as it serves to remind us that these blessings cannot be earned but that they are freely given by God to His children [...]. The word *manifestation* means a showing forth, a making visible, or making known. This word shows the gifts of the Spirit to be the ministry of Jesus shown through His people today." Andrzej Kobyliński⁶ introduces the term *pentecostalization* to comment on the dynamic growth in the number of Pentecostal communities and the "gradual transformation of many other Christian churches and congregations into a single, universal type of charismatic Christianity around the globe." Kobyliński⁷ points out that the global *charismatization* of Christianity poses new challenges, and the most significant one is the relationship of historic churches as well as communities to the Charismatic, Pentecostal, or Evangelical environment.

This paper focuses on the aforementioned gifts of the Holy Spirit. However, only two of them will be discussed thoroughly, and these are the *gift of prophecy* and the *word of knowledge*. It should be made clear that they belong to two different categories mentioned by Bennett and Bennett.⁸ The gift of prophecy belongs

² Ibidem.

³ Ibidem, p. 21.

⁴ R. Bennett, D. Bennett, *The Holy Spirit and you. A study-guide to the Spirit-filled life*, Bridge Publishing Inc. 1971, p. 73.

⁵ Ibidem, p. 73.

⁶ A. Kobyliński, *The global pentecostalization of Christianity and its ethical consequences*, "Chicago Studies" 2016, no. 55(2), pp. 100–101.

⁷ Ibidem, p. 103.

⁸ R. Bennett, D. Bennett, *The Holy Spirit and you...*, pp. 74–78.

to the so-called *Inspirational or Fellowship Gifts*, whereas the *word of knowledge* represents the so-called *Gifts of Revelation*. The reason why they will be analyzed together is that the ability to speak the will of God (gift of prophecy) may contain the facts (*word of knowledge*) which could not have been learned in natural ways by the gifted. The principal objective of this study is to investigate the nature of the prophecies shared among Polish Charismatics. The research will also provide an in-depth insight into the Charismatic ritual language, with special attention given to the question of God-Human intimacy. Moreover, the rise and growth of the prophetic office within contemporary denominational and non-denominational churches will be carefully addressed. Finally, the content of the selected prophecies will be studied in detail, mostly in terms of their possible transformative effects.

1. Spiritual encounters

As mentioned above, Charismatic Christianity rests on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Bennett and Bennett⁹ explain that charisms are neither permanent nor manifested all in one individual. In other words, the gifted should not act as official healers or speakers in tongues since the Holy Spirit inspires the faithful at His own discretion. Moreover, according to the authors, it is not possible for one person who claims to have been baptized in the Holy Spirit to have the whole package of charisms at one time. However, Bennett and Bennett¹⁰ acknowledge that “[...] as Christians mature, certain gifts may be expressed more frequently and effectively through them. It is then said that they have a *ministry* in those gifts.” As discussed by the authors,¹¹ charisms have been classified into three groups depending on their nature, and therefore, the following division has been proposed: (1) *Inspirational or Fellowship Gifts* (The Gift of Tongues, The Gift of Interpretation, The Gift of Prophecy), (2) *Gifts of Power* (Gifts of Healings, The Working of Miracles, The Gift of Faith), and (3) *Gifts of Revelation* (Discerning of Spirits, The “Word of Knowledge,” The “Word of Wisdom”). Bennett and Bennett¹² advise against the tendency to follow signs because even though an individual manifests the gifts, it does not mean that he or she is a committed Christian.

As stated above, this paper highlights the gift of prophecy, which usually goes along with the *word of knowledge*. According to Bennett and Bennett,¹³ the gift of prophecy means speaking the mind of God, and the prophetic utterance itself cannot be the result of one’s own thoughts but is believed to be inspired by the Holy Spirit. Furthermore, prophecies for either one person or more people should be evaluated

⁹ Ibidem.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 74.

¹¹ Ibidem, pp. 77–78.

¹² Ibidem.

¹³ Ibidem, p. 93.

by a group of believers, and that is why they are not considered private gifts. It should also be borne in mind that prophecies perform well-defined functions which involve edification, exhortation, and comfort. Precisely speaking, a valid prophecy is expected to counsel the recipient instead of condemning him or her.

Thomas J. Csordas observes that “the content of a prophecy may be standard and repetitive or innovative and unique and may be directive or nondirective in its implicit consequences for action. Acceptable or authentic prophecy may also be communicated in several modes: (1) a prophetic vision may be narrated in ordinary language; (2) a prophecy may in special cases be written down and read aloud later [...]; (3) oral prophecy may be sung or spoken, either in the vernacular or in glossolalia.”¹⁴

Rodney Stark¹⁵ elaborates on the stages of spiritual encounters, which are part of an unforgettable religious experience. The author emphasizes the question of God-Human intimacy by calling the participants of such an encounter, namely the divinity and the individual, a pair of actors. Stark¹⁶ presents a scheme of the meeting which seems to be based on the degree of closeness between the involved. The following stages have been identified: (1) the human actor senses the presence of the divine actor, (2) the human actor believes the deity notes him or her; mutual presence is acknowledged, (3) an affective relationship, similar to friendship or love is established, and finally (4) the human actor becomes aware of his or her privilege to serve as a confidant. The highest degree of trust the human actor wins could be compared to telling somebody a secret with the hope that it will be kept. When it comes to the first stage termed by Stark,¹⁷ the *confirming experience*, it has been further divided into two sub-categories, that is, a *generalized sense of sacredness* and *specific awareness of the presence of divinity*. The former applies to particular sacramental acts such as baptism, whereas the latter relates to one’s conviction of the divine presence, which manifests itself in a special way. As for the second stage, that is, the *responsive experience*, Stark¹⁸ distinguishes between the *salvational*, *miraculous*, and *sanctioning* sub-types. The *salvational* one refers to a sense of being chosen by the deity and, at the same time — offered an eternal reward. The *miraculous* sub-type implies the feeling of being noticed by the divine during a period of crisis. To be more specific, an individual believes that the divine wants to intervene in worldly affairs such as one’s illness. However, the divine may be sensed to interfere in the material world to punish an individual by imposing sanctions. The third stage of a spiritual encounter, identified as the

¹⁴ T. Csordas, *Language, charisma, and creativity. The ritual life of a religious movement*. University of California Press 1997, p. 170.

¹⁵ R. Stark, *A taxonomy of religious experience*, “Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion” 1965, no. 5(1), pp. 97–116.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 99.

¹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 100.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 102.

ecstatic experience, comes with the impression that a strong spiritual bond with the supernatural has just been formed. Intense ecstatic experiences accompanied by physical sensations were typical of some Catholic mystics of the Middle Ages. As discussed by Stark,¹⁹ during the last and most intimate stage of the Human-God meeting, termed by him *the revelational experience*, “the recipient is given a message concerning divine wishes or intentions. Upon occasion, the divine may give such messages through signs and symbols, and some men have even claimed the divinity sent them written messages, but typically revelations are spoken.” This category seems crucial for the purposes of the current study. Stark²⁰ also notes that visions and voices are believed to be important features of these phenomena, and their content most frequently refers to confidential information about the future. According to Bennett and Bennett,²¹ prophecy may be either conditional or unconditional. The former takes the form of a warning, whereas the latter serves as guideposts. Moreover, the authors explain that prophesying has nothing to do with foretelling, inspired preaching, and witnessing. However, a true prophecy has a lot in common and should be associated with forthtelling. In practical terms, a genuine prophet does not try to gain knowledge about future events on purpose. Conversely, his or her deep intimacy with the divine results in an easy and natural flow of information.

As discussed by Poloma,²² in renewal-type ritual, prophesying goes together with bodily actions, including jerking, animal sounds, or violent shaking. However, the authoress also observes that in most cases, prophetic words tend to be delivered calmly and are part of the prayer ministry offered at the end of the ritual. Mike Bickle²³ offers a four-level prophetic hierarchy that highlights significant differences between the prophetically gifted people. The first level, that is, *simple prophecy*, occurs when any believer reveals the message received from God. Bickle explains that “these include words of knowledge (i.e., specific information regarding the physical, spiritual, or emotional status of someone). Occasionally, this includes receiving *visions* (mental pictures) or dreams [...]. These words are given in a small group setting or in the ministry line [...].”²⁴ The second level, termed *prophetic gifting*, applies to individuals who receive various types of revelation on a regular basis, and the divine messages can also be symbolic, delivered as parables and riddles. The third level, called *prophetic ministry*, relates to believers who experience angelic visitations, are guided through an audible voice, receive detailed information about future events, and occasionally operate other charisms as well.

¹⁹ Ibidem, p. 107.

²⁰ Ibidem, p. 99.

²¹ R. Bennett, D. Bennett, *The Holy Spirit and you...*, p. 95.

²² M. Poloma, *Main Street...*, p. 123.

²³ M. Bickle, *Growing in the prophetic*, Charisma House 2008, pp. 39–42.

²⁴ Ibidem, p. 40.

Such individuals are trusted by community members, and therefore, they commit to regular service in their local church. It is worth mentioning that their prophecies still carry a symbolic element; however, they offer the possibility to interpret their content. The fourth level, namely, *prophetic office*, addresses “believers whose ministry is somewhat like the prophets of the Old Testament [...]. They give correction, direction, and bring new emphasis in the church body [...]. They often minister in signs and wonders and are known to regularly speak very accurate words from God [...] They have a regular flow of divine revelation, including open visions and prediction of natural events [...]. Their words may be confirmed through natural signs (i.e., earthquakes, storms, droughts).”²⁵ Furthermore, the established prophets must have a proven ministry, marked by *gifts, fruit, and wisdom*.

When it comes to the aforementioned *word of knowledge*, Bennett and Bennett²⁶ emphasize that it is frequently accompanied by the “word of wisdom.” The recipient becomes equipped with both the supernaturally revealed information (someone in this room suffers from chronic headaches) and practical guidance on its application (someone’s head must be commanded to be healed). According to Jeff Jansen,²⁷ the *word of knowledge* refers to the present or the past, whereas prophecy concerns future events. The author also specifies the ways an individual can receive the *word of knowledge*, and these are the following: (1) *external impression*, (2) *internal impression*, (3) *speaking*, (4) *the seer realm*, and (5) *miscellaneous*. As for *external impression*, it is a sharp, dull, or throbbing sensation in part of one’s physical body. This sensation can range from mild to highly intense. Jansen²⁸ explains that if an individual is not sure about the source, they should ask God directly. Emotions involving anxiety, fear, or panic may suggest demonic oppression. When it comes to *internal impression*, this category refers to “[...] a simple thought, sense, or prompting. It could be explained as simple intuition: you know that you know that you know, but you’re not sure how you know. These promptings bubble up from your spirit-man (where the Holy Spirit dwells), and once they enter your mind, you become aware of them to process.”²⁹ The third way, namely, *speaking*, may occur while praying, talking, or prophesying, and it concerns the uninterrupted flow of words out of one’s mouth. The divine message may reveal some information about participants’ physical condition. The fourth category, the *seer realm*, has been sub-divided into a *mental picture*, *dream or vision*, *reading a word*, and a *revelatory experience*. The question of an image will be discussed in a subsequent paragraph. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that, for instance,

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 41.

²⁶ R. Bennett, D. Bennett, *The Holy Spirit and you...*, p. 145.

²⁷ J. Jansen, *The believers’ guide to miracles, healing, impartation & activation*, Global Fire Publishing 2013, p. 154.

²⁸ Ibidem, p. 159.

²⁹ Ibidem, pp. 159–160.

a revelatory experience bears resemblance to a dream which an individual participates in. These kinds of spiritual encounters are typical of trance-like states. The last way to receive the *word of knowledge* has been termed *miscellaneous*, and it encompasses: “(1) still small voice, (2) inner audible, (3) audible, (4) circumstance, (5) road sign, (6) nature, (7) numbers, and (8) any other way God wants to speak to you.”³⁰ Interestingly enough, the *word of knowledge* can be prayed about instead of being given to the gathered.

Csordas³¹ elaborates on the nature of Charismatic imagery and observes that it is closely linked to the inspiration of prophetic utterance. Precisely speaking, prophecy can be received in an image and such an approach has already been mentioned in this paper. The author draws attention to the apparent interplay between the visual image, and spontaneous verbalization where the words describe the visual image or they themselves may be delivered as visual images, written in the visual imagination and willing to be read as a divine message. Csordas³² claims that imagery may have either revelatory or therapeutic features. The former relates to the aforementioned *word of knowledge* and concerns the gifted, for example, healers, whereas the latter occurs to the gathered and results from their openness to the divine inspiration. He also juxtaposes ordinary imagination with religious imagination, bearing in mind “the nature of imagination’s autonomy as a mode of consciousness.”³³ Conscious imagining does not rely on the context, and this rule applies to both the environment in which the imaginer operates and the imaginative setting in which the image emerges. Furthermore, it is connected with imaginative freedom of mind, which in practical terms means that a human being is able, with the aid of the mind alone, to run a particular project proposed by the psyche to itself. Religious imagination, in turn, is characterized by its existential care and “interinvolvement.” In addition, according to Csordas³⁴, it tends to be stimulated by pressing human concerns, which usually influence imaginative autonomy. The author notes that

Charismatics indigenously describe their imaginative experiences under the explicit category of imagination, an ordinary capacity rendered religious. Moreover, they readily distinguish their everyday experience of divinely inspired *images* from less frequent but still possible *visions* and *apparitions*, and further distinguish all of these from either hallucination or ordinary perception.³⁵

It should also be mentioned that during the practice of resting in the Spirit, the imagery becomes part of an altered state of consciousness.

³⁰ Ibidem, p. 161.

³¹ T. Csordas, *The sacred self. A cultural phenomenology of charismatic healing*, University of California Press 1994, p. 74.

³² Ibidem, p. 75.

³³ Ibidem, p. 81.

³⁴ Ibidem, p. 83.

³⁵ Ibidem, p. 84.

2. Religious product

Richard Flory and Brad Christerson³⁶ introduce the term *Independent Network Charismatic (INC) Christianity* to refer to the fast-growing network of religious entrepreneurs (Charismatic leaders) who have been trying to create the realm without poverty, diseases, and other misfortunes. According to the researchers, the product sold by INC entrepreneurs has three attractive components which undoubtedly contribute to its rapid growth. These are (1) experiences of the miraculous, (2) opportunities for individuals' direct participation in these miraculous occurrences, and (3) the promise of social transformation.³⁷ This study focuses on the first two aspects of the contemporary religious marketplace.

As far as experiences of the miraculous are concerned, Flory and Christerson³⁸ emphasize, for instance, the practice of divine healing, prophesying, and casting out demonic spirits. The authors observe that the INC product attracts primarily the individuals who are desperate for a divine touch that, in their view, has the potential to change their lives for the better. The needy search for real power, signs and wonders, and the possibility to encounter God. Flory and Christerson³⁹ note that the supernatural Charismatic culture seems more convincing to the young generation than a traditional church setting where miracles play a minor role. A "prophecy booth" started by a group of individuals connected with *Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry* (Redding, California) offers meaningful words from God to all interested. It serves as a classic example of how religious entrepreneurs operate in the public sphere. Flory and Christerson explain that

[...] people are drawn to INC groups because of the opportunities to directly participate in miraculous phenomena, generate their own ideas, and lead their own ministries [...]. This desire, particularly among young people, *to go out and do stuff* rather than simply listen to preaching or watch others lead worship or perform miracles is a primary attraction to experimental and loosely structured INC groups.⁴⁰

Kobyliński⁴¹ makes reference to the INC product as well and claims that the Pentecostal social ethic rests on the liberating power of the Holy Spirit. The researcher concentrates on the side-effects of the so-called *Prosperity Gospel*, also known as

³⁶ R. Flory, B. Christerson, *The rise of network Christianity. How independent leaders are changing the religious landscape*, Oxford University Press 2017, p. 2.

³⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 84.

³⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 85.

³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 86.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 89–90.

⁴¹ A. Kobyliński, *Ethical aspects of the Prosperity Gospel in the light of the arguments presented by Antonio Spadaro and Marcelo Figueroa*, "Religions" 2021, no. 12(11), 996, pp. 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12110996> [accessed: 15.02.2022].

the *Health and Wealth Gospel*, which aims to meet people's spiritual needs using innovative approaches. Precisely speaking, the advocates of the Prosperity Gospel highlight God's generosity towards the faithful who pray earnestly for a fulfilled life. In this particular case, the religious product relates to tangible evidence such as financial success. Kobyliński⁴² observes that "in this context, poverty, suffering, and disease become signs of spiritual impotence, because God supposedly wants all people to be happy, rich, and healthy, fulfilling their desires already here on earth."

Poloma⁴³ draws attention to the current shape of the religious marketplace whose foundations were laid in the 1990s and which has been promoting the idea of the fivefold ministries (evangelists, pastors, teachers, prophets, and apostles) ever since. The rise in the number of prophets and prophetic ministries results from leaders' willingness to advertise the INC product on a large scale.

Although Charismatic entrepreneurs have been responding to the increasing demand for supernatural phenomena effectively, cases of false prophets also happen within Christian communities. According to Bennett and Bennett,⁴⁴ real prophets do not have to announce to the gathered that they perform such a role since they tend to be recognized by their ministry, or in other words, by their fruits. Moreover, the authors also claim that the genuine speakers of God's mind and will are mature Christians who have the potential to draw individuals to God and whose manner of life does not raise any objections. As discussed by Bennett and Bennett,⁴⁵ believers interested in the variety of religious products should also focus on the ways they have been implemented among the participants. For instance, personal directive prophecies delivered outside the ministry are strongly discouraged. In Poland, non-denominational Christian communities offer a wide range of activities based on a common denominator: direct interaction with the supernatural. *Filadelfia*, a typically Neo-Pentecostal Church from Wodzisław Śląski, regularly organizes an event called *Atmosfera Nieba — Wieczór Proroczy* (*The Atmosphere of Heaven — a Prophetic Evening*; my own translation) during which all participants get the chance to practice the so-called *soaking prayer* during which individuals become open to the divine presence. *Winnica* (Vineyard), the Christian center from Rybnik, holds a *Powerbank* conference several times a year. As stated on its website, this particular event aims at experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit. *Mocni w Duchu*, a Catholic group from Łódź, runs monthly meetings which have been referred to as *Szkoła Charyzmatów* (*The Charism School*; my own translation). Participants engage in practical workshops on spiritual discernment. Equally noteworthy is the fact that launching a religious product into the religious marketplace requires effective management. Charismatic communities pursue a strategy that is characteristic

⁴² Ibidem, p. 16.

⁴³ M. Poloma, *Main Street...*, p. 129.

⁴⁴ R. Bennett, D. Bennett, *The Holy Spirit and you...*, p. 98.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, p. 100.

of the corporate environment. For example, *Nations on Fire Church* from Warsaw employs an event director, an assistant, a project manager, a social media director, and a media director who are listed on the Church's official website.

For the purposes of this research, attempts should be made to answer the key question about the reasons for one's continuous involvement in the aforementioned Charismatic activities. Eiling Yee et al.⁴⁶ explain that semantic memory is a component of the long-term memory system, and it stores general information about the world. Precisely speaking, the human brain has the ability to recognize particular phenomena based on the episodes of experiencing them previously. For instance, an individual who regularly takes part in a *Prophetic Evening* abstracts a representation of the concept of *soaking prayer*, and therefore, he or she knows that the moment when the gathered raise their hands and utter some words intently is the time of a spiritual encounter. According to Kenneth M. Heilman and Russel S. Donda,⁴⁷ the process of forming unforgettable sensory memories starts with highly specialized sensory receptors, which then convert a specific type of stimulus into electrochemical signals. Afterwards, these stimuli are taken to the so-called *association area* of the human brain, where eventually a mental representation of a given phenomenon is generated. Concluding this section, it can be assumed that the association cortex bears responsibility for the perception of a religious product which in turn provides the brain with strong visual, auditory, and tactile stimuli. In consequence, a believer attracted by the concept of soaking prayer continues with the offer available in the religious marketplace.

3. Ritual language

According to Csordas,⁴⁸ verbal manifestations of the sacred, which can be witnessed during the aforementioned meetings, should be considered in the context of the Charismatic ritual language whose major genres include prophecy, teaching, prayer, and sharing. The author distinguishes between vernacular prophecy and the glossolalic one, clarifying at the same time that glossolalic prophecies must first be interpreted to the gathered into the vernacular.

As discussed by Csordas, "prophecies are typically uttered in a strong, clear voice and a tone that can be declamatory, authoritative, imperative, or stern [...]. Prophecies are usually prefaced by an opening formula [...]. There is a characteristic intonation pattern within each line of prophecy, such that the voice rises

⁴⁶ E. Yee, K. McRae, M.N. Jones, *Semantic memory*, in: *Stevens' handbook of experimental psychology and cognitive neuroscience*, vol. 3, eds J.T. Wixted, S.L. Thompson-Schill, Wiley 2018, pp. 319–356.

⁴⁷ K.M. Heilman, R.S. Donda, *Duchowe życie mózgu* (transl. M. Guzowska), Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, Warszawa 2019, pp. 33–48 (original work published in 2014).

⁴⁸ T. Csordas, *Language, charisma, and creativity...*, p. 170.

in the middle and falls again at the end of the line, producing a kind of singsong effect [...]. Prophecy is usually recited in couplets [...].⁴⁹ Moreover, the researcher also notes that a prophet should adjust the setting the divine message will be delivered in — to its participants, and in cases when the content of the message appears inappropriate for an entire group of participants, it should not be uttered publicly. Csordas⁵⁰ observes that Charismatic ritual language perfectly reflects the relationship between the performer and audience, which occurs in the form of either dialogic intimacy (reciprocity) or monologic authority (hierarchy). As far as prophecy is concerned, it represents the hierarchical mode of divine communication to human beings where God is the authoritative figure and the gathered — the submissive participants open to guidance. What seems significant is the fact that a message from God must not be disputed since the prophetic utterance is believed to manifest the divine power the gathered crave for.

Csordas⁵¹ refers to the performative effects of ritual acts understood as part of the rhetorical apparatus by means of which individuals develop their religious identity. Besides, the author also focuses on the so-called *vocabulary of motives* that constitutes a crucial component of the Charismatic system of ritual performance. In his view, “the relationship between act and motive is reciprocal: motive orients act, and act articulates motive.”⁵² Precisely speaking, motives function as names for consequential situations and tend to replace the actions that lead to them. They are a self-referencing system of terms facilitating the orientational process and shaping the scope of observation in a cognitive sense. Furthermore, they derive from and relate directly to the Bible. Csordas⁵³ identifies the Charismatic vocabulary of motives in terms of how it affects the ways participants operate, and therefore, he groups these motives into the following categories: (1) *forms of relationship among individuals or between individuals and God*, (2) *forms of collectivity or collective identity*, (3) *qualities or properties of individuals or relationships*, (4) *activities or forms of action essential to life within the movement*, and (5) *negativities or countermotives that refer to threats to the ideal constituted by the totality of positive motives*. When it comes to the first category, namely, the forms of relation, it includes, for instance, concepts such as *authority*, *gift*, and *promise*. The second group, referred to as forms of collectivity, encompasses, for example, *community*, *army*, and *Kingdom*. The third type comprises the motives which apply to qualities, and these are *power*, *God’s plan*, and *freedom*. The fourth category mentions particular activities such as *service*, *spiritual warfare*, and *obedience*, whereas the fifth one highlights the negative content represented by *darkness*, *Devil*, and *flesh*.

⁴⁹ Ibidem, pp. 171–172.

⁵⁰ Ibidem, pp. 179–180.

⁵¹ Ibidem, p. 192.

⁵² Ibidem.

⁵³ Ibidem, p. 194.

Csordas⁵⁴ notes that motives are frequently used in prophecies, serve as themes for a prayer meeting, or inspire sermons. In the case of prophecies, they are proclaimed, whereas in prayers — invoked. However, what seems most significant is that the Charismatic intra-community reality rests largely on motives that shape the potential modes of interaction.

According to Csordas,⁵⁵ Charismatic prophecies contain guides for action. The author also claims that

[...] the best place to begin to understand the performance of prophecy as a rhetorical self process in a semiotic/linguistic sense is with pronouns. Pronouns are simultaneously rhetorical and indexical, asserting both a claim about relationships and demonstrating those relationships in speech [...]. Charismatic prophecy must be considered both in its pragmatic relation to the person who utters the prophecy (an I–I relation) and in its discourse-internal relation to the audience addressed by the prophecy (an I–you relation).⁵⁶

The I–I relation is characterized by the authoritativeness of the utterance and the control the speaker has over that speech. However, in certain cases, maintaining control of what is spoken out seems impossible. This is true for trance. It is worth mentioning that Charismatic prophecies are not reported speech which tends to be associated with quoting. Conversely, prophesying refers, in principle, to the moment when the deity speaks directly through the prophet. Interestingly enough, in some settings, the divine speaker employs an introductory formula that functions as a paraphrase, for instance, “The Lord just told me there is someone here who has back pain.”⁵⁷ The author suggests that addressing the audience should rather take the form of a question, for example, “Is there anyone here with back pain?”⁵⁸ Although different modes of speaking the mind and will of God exist, terms of direct address, such as “my children” or “my people,” are most common.

Last but not least, as discussed by Csordas,⁵⁹ bearing in mind the uniqueness of a Charismatic discourse, the question which should be considered carefully is the transformation of motive into metaphor. The researcher argues that prophecies serve as principal channels for articulating motives. There are numerous examples of this process, and one of them relates to the usage of *the spiritual warfare* motive. Precisely speaking, when a prophet delivers the word of knowledge whose content reads: “The Lord has just told me that there is someone here who used to practice the occult and now this person experiences spiritual problems,” the leader may draw participants’ attention to the necessity to initiate deliverance ministry and to protect the Church from demonic interference. Based on what has already

⁵⁴ Ibidem, p. 197.

⁵⁵ Ibidem, p. 206.

⁵⁶ Ibidem, p. 130.

⁵⁷ J. Jansen, *The believers’ guide...*, p. 162.

⁵⁸ Ibidem.

⁵⁹ T. Csordas, *Language, charisma, and creativity...*, p. 218.

been said, it can be assumed that prophecy, which belongs to the category of major genres of the Charismatic ritual language, not only conveys the divine message but also affects the intracommunity reality, shaping at the same time participants' Charismatic identity.

4. Results of the study

This research was carried out among Polish Charismatic Christians belonging to both denominational (D) and non-denominational (ND) communities. Denominational groups were those representing Catholicism and Neo-Pentecostalism, whereas non-denominational ones — those referred to as independent churches which rest largely on the Neo-Pentecostal teaching. Data were collected on-site and off-site. When it comes to the former, the implemented method involved an overt participant observation, used especially during Sunday worship services and theme events, for instance, *The Atmosphere of Heaven — a Prophetic Evening*. The latter was based on a thorough analysis of the audiovisual and textual materials which had previously been published on a particular group's official websites, Facebook profiles, and YouTube channels. Due to the fact that this study investigates the nature of Charismatic prophecies, several hypotheses have been formulated. These are as follows: (H1) divine communication among Polish Charismatics manifests itself through prophetic visions and hearing the voice of God, (H2) prophecies and the word of knowledge contain guides for action, (H3) the gifted speak the mind and will of God using either the first-person pronoun or the introductory formula, (H4) personal prophecies and the word of knowledge are delivered to the public, (H5) interaction between the prophet and the audience is based on motives. The findings of this research will be discussed below. Firstly, denominational communities will be taken into account. This category includes the following groups: (1) Kościół "Filadelfia" (the Neo-Pentecostal Church "Filadelfia"; my own translation), Wodzisław Śląski, (2) Wspólnota Przymierza Miłości Bożej (God's Love Covenant; my own translation), represented by several Catholic prophets from different parts of Poland, (3) Wspólnota "Boży Pokój" ("God's Peace" Community; my own translation), Wołomin, (4) Szkoła Nowej Ewangelizacji Jezusa Zmartwychwstałego (The Risen Christ School of the New Evangelization; my own translation), Gliwice, and (5) Wspólnota Miłość i Miłosierdzie Jezusa (Love and Grace of Jesus Community; my own translation), Czatachowa. Secondly, the non-denominational groups will be addressed, and these are: (6) Kościół Mocy (Church of Power; official translation), Warsaw, (7) Centrum Chrześcijańskie "Winnica" ("Vineyard" Christian Centre; my own translation), Rybnik, (8) Misja Modlitewna (Prayer Mission; my own translation), Tczew, (9) Szkoła Ducha Świętego, Liliana Cydejko (The School of the Holy Spirit, Liliana Cydejko, my own translation), Gdańsk/Warszawa, and

(10) Służba Apostolska “Ogień Przebudzenia” (“The Fire of Renewal” Apostolic Service; my own translation), Gdańsk. Divine messages delivered by the gifted were as follows:

[“Filadelfia,” D, Neo-Pentecostal, *The Atmosphere of Heaven – a Prophetic Evening*, January 2022, my own notes, my own translation].⁶⁰ Speaker 1: “I have the impression that God is showing me a family which went bowling some time ago. The husband and wife expect God to help them to make an important decision on buying a property [...]. I have the feeling I should tell you that it is not the right time to make investments. God is also showing me [...] a man who is cleaning the aquarium. It is his hobby. A new female colleague has joined his team at work recently and he cannot stop thinking about her. You have a family. You are walking on thin ice. God in His love says *Hold on, it is not too late.*” Speaker 2: “What is your name? [...]. I could see your soul, and there were plenty of wooden blocks, like the ones children play with. These were some areas without emotions because you had previously had unpleasant experiences [...]. Some events in the past made you robust, however, it changed for the worse. God wants to tell you today that your heart will recover soon, it will be reconstructed, it will become muscular and filled with love [...]. God wants to make you stronger but at the same time — sensitive and affectionate.”

[God’s Love Covenant, D, Catholic, *Messages from Heaven*, December 2021, my own translation].⁶¹ “I am the Almighty Father, the Creator of the world, and I am calling you to pray without ceasing for the Anointed the He may lead the Polish people in the power of the Holy Spirit. Although this man is carrying the Cross for the entire nation, and He is also responsible for this nation, only a handful of people keep praying for Him.”

[“God’s Peace” Community, D, Catholic, *Testimonies*, August 2021, my own translation].⁶² “I started praying in tongues [...] and suddenly I heard a word from God [...]. At the first moment, I was not sure whether it came from me or from the Lord, but I had never had such thoughts before [...]. The Holy Spirit was pushing me, my heart was pounding [...]. I kept praying and God spoke to me again. He told me the names of people and the names of diseases those people had probably been suffering from [...]. I had the feeling that God was healing them at that moment [...]. I could hear the voice saying *Go and speak out! Go and speak out!* [...]. Eventually, I went there because I had figured those people needed to hear that [...].”

⁶⁰ [Filadelfia Kościół] (2022, February 6), *Wieczór Proroczy Atmosfera Nieba* (my own notes).

⁶¹ [Przymierze Miłości Bożej], *Orędzie z Nieba. Ważne ogłoszenie od Boga Ojca*, 5/12/2021, <https://www.przymierzemilosci.pl/oredia> [accessed: 15.02.2022].

⁶² [Boży Pokój], *Świadcstwa Bożej Mocy*, „Idź i to powiedz, idź i to powiedz!” – Serce waliło mi jak oszalała i trzęsły mi się nogi...Świadcstwo Agaty (26 sierpnia 2021), <https://www.bozypokoj.pl/swiadcstwa-bozej-mocy/> [accessed: 15.02.2022].

[The Risen Christ School of the New Evangelization, D, Catholic, *God's Touch, Michał Świdorski Ministry*, January 2020, my own translation].⁶³ “God is touching children now. Lay on your hands on children. Pray for children. God is taking neurosis away from a child. Neurosis which manifests itself by jaw clenching, that is the impression I get, fist clenching as well. God is taking it away from the child somebody is praying here for together with us. Let the name of the Lord be praised [...]. God is touching a lot of people who have digestive problems, people with constipation. These gastric problems are of psychogenic origin [...]. God wants to lay new foundations in your life [...], the foundation of security and peace [...]. God says that He is your rock [...] and as soon as you understand that the supernatural is more powerful than the natural [...] your body system will respond with proper functioning.”

[Love and Grace of Jesus Community, D, Catholic, *Prayer for Healing and Deliverance - an Open Meeting*, August 2020, my own translation].⁶⁴ “The Lord is coming and says *My child, do not be afraid. I am so close to you and always will be [...].* The Lord is talking to you now and He says *Proclaim my glory [...]. I am touching your shoulder now [...]. I am touching your eyes now. Then — your children whom I bless lovingly [...].* The Lord is anointing and healing your head now.”

[Church of Power, ND, *The Prophetic Perspective — Dawid Mencel*, November 2021, my own translation].⁶⁵ “I had a dream not so long ago. In that dream a fight was going on between demonic forces and a small group of heroes. The fight was about a burin which eventually came into the hands of the righteous. Hell needed that burin for conquering and destroying the Kingdom [...]. The heroes of the Kingdom were using the burin wisely, especially for its development.”

[“Vineyard” Christian Centre, ND, *The Kiss of Heaven*, pp. 33–63, November/December 2018, my own translation].⁶⁶ “[...] the Holy Spirit spoke to me and said *Wojtek, maybe you were joking but I was not. Today. If you collect twenty-four thousand zloty, I will take care of the rest.* When I was still announcing it, one person approached me and gave me six hundred zloty. Then, another person came closer and brought two hundred zloty [...]. And then I heard the Holy Spirit say *The things you will experience during these days are the kiss of heaven [...].* After singing two songs the Holy Spirit said He wanted us to be quiet for a while [...]

⁶³ [Dotyk Boga, Szkoła Nowej Ewangelizacji Jezusa Zmartwychwstałego w Gliwicach], Michał Świdorski live — Nadprzyrodzona rzeczywistość cz. 1 + modlimy się w Waszych intencjach, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zKiNb6owK3M> [accessed: 15.02.2022].

⁶⁴ [Wspólnota MiMJ], Modlitwa o uwolnienie i uzdrowienie – Spotkanie otwarte MiMJ, 15.08.2020 (10), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPn9uY7xlp4&t=1272s> [accessed: 15.02.2022].

⁶⁵ [Church of Power], *The Prophetic Perspective* – Dawid Mencel, 18.11.2021, <https://www.facebook.com/Perspektywa-prorocza-Dawid-Mencel-104192408419198> [accessed: 15.02.2022].

⁶⁶ W. Walaszczyk, *Pocałunek Nieba. Rozbudź w sobie głód Boga*, Wydawnictwo Szaron, Ustroń 2019, pp. 33–63.

and then He spoke and said *What can you see inside of you? What are you going to do with what you see? [...] What are you going to do with the pain, hurt, anger, jealousy, and unforgiveness? [...] Come to me, calm down, and get some rest [...]. Wojtek, you do not have to worry about the future. I know what I am doing.*"

[Prayer Mission, ND, *The Prophetic Ministry — a Collection of Prophetic Messages*, February 2019/published September 2021, my own translation].⁶⁷ "I can see you. It seems to me that you are in the fog [...]. I believe the Lord is talking to you and says *Your drought will come to an end. You will flourish in the desert. As the fog clears, you will see more. The only thing you need is rain from heaven, it will come [...]. Go through the healing gate. The praise and glory will come out of your mouth [...]. Worship me despite the difficulties you are experiencing [...]. Stop complaining [...]. Your life will change as soon as you forget about your weaknesses and start glorifying me.*"

[Christian leader Liliana Cydejko, ND, March 2012, my own translation].⁶⁸ "At some stage, I felt the presence of the Holy Spirit [...]. I knew I was not alone in the kitchen [...]. When I sat down in the room, suddenly I received a vision [...]. I felt as if I were in the liquid [...]. I had a strong heartache. I could see with my physical and spiritual eyes a serious crisis in the United States [...]. I could see banks and companies going bankrupt [...]. I could feel in my heart that God was talking to me and said *I am showing you this situation because it is of great importance for your country, for Poland [...]. I am giving you time of grace [...]. I want you to fix your finances. I am holding you accountable for the results. You, as a Church. And then I saw an inscription five years.*"

["The Fire of Renewal" Apostolic Service, ND, glossolalic prophecy, October 2021, my own translation].⁶⁹ "My song comes to you through my heart. May each of you open the door of your heart and let me in. Happiness turns into tears and tears turn into happiness. What I am telling you today is for all of you. You know me less or more, but you have always known you can rely on me regardless of the circumstances. Come to me without being embarrassed."

The results prove that what is believed by Polish Charismatics to be divine communication manifests itself through prophetic visions and hearing the voice of the deity (H1). In the above-mentioned examples, there are phrases that suggest effective cooperation between God and the gifted, such as "God was talking to

⁶⁷ [PROROCZA SŁUŻBA — zbiór przesłań proroczych], SŁOWO PROROCZE, Krystyna Czyż, 22 lutego 2019, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/874729596517109> [accessed: 16.02.2022].

⁶⁸ [Kazania Chrześcijańskie], Słowo Prorocze do Kościoła w Polsce na temat uporządkowania finansów – Liliana Cydejko, cz. 1, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=86_eERbynqw [accessed: 16.02.2022].

⁶⁹ [Apostoł Tomasz Dorocha], Natychmiastowe tłumaczenie języków Ducha! Słowo prorocze do wspólnoty Potęga Nieba Gdańska, 10.10.21, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4wfQeGQoYNQ> [accessed: 16.02.2022].

me.” Furthermore, it should be mentioned that the messages delivered by particular ministers contained vivid imagery instead of words. It can therefore be assumed that God uses a visual language to communicate His will and mind, whereas the gifted are expected to use the human language to give a meaning to what has just been depicted. Moreover, in accordance with what has already been discussed, God’s messages may also be conveyed while speaking in tongues (glossolalic prophecies); however, in such cases, they require an immediate translation. In addition, noteworthy is the fact that the analyzed prophecies and words of knowledge contained clear guides for action (H2), for instance, “it is not the right time to make investments” or “I want you to fix your finances.” Interestingly enough, the description provided by Liliana Cydejko supports Stark’s⁷⁰ theory of spiritual encounters. Cydejko refers to the feeling of the divine presence that she claims to have had prior to receiving the prophecy. To be more precise, she gradually established a relationship with the deity. A further significant point is the question of how the gifted address the audience. Based on what has been investigated, it can be observed that those who speak out the will and mind of God use either the first-person pronoun or the introductory formula (H3). The message conveyed by a God’s Love Covenant prophet was in the first person singular: “I am the Almighty Father, the Creator of the world, and I am calling you [...]” whereas the one uttered by a “Filadelfia” minister includes a short introduction: “I have the feeling I should tell you [...]” When it comes to the question of personal prophecies and the word of knowledge delivered to the public (H4), the “Filadelfia” case appears to be the best example since its pastor, who claimed to have been affected by the deity, approached one woman during the event he had organized and said: “God wants to tell you today that your heart will recover soon.” All the participants gathered in the room heard that prophecy which undoubtedly was personal in its nature. Finally, the issue concerning the interaction between the prophet and the audience. The results prove the hypothesis that the intra-community reality is shaped with the aid of motives which frequently appear in prophetic utterances (H5). In other words, the message delivered by the prophet to the audience contains unique codes whose principal objective is to provoke an immediate reaction that corresponds with the category it relates to. The examples provided above present the following motives: *comfort, support, promise, warning, trust, healing, reward, spiritual warfare, and protection*. When it comes to the warning, for instance, it applied to the unknown participant who had expressed his interest in another woman despite the fact that he was married. The message delivered to an anonymous individual was meaningful to the whole community since it provoked a particular thought, namely — “be faithful to your spouse.”

⁷⁰ R. Stark, *A taxonomy...*, pp. 97–116.

Conclusions

To summarize, the study has attempted to investigate the nature of divine communication which characterizes the Charismatic realm. Both denominational and non-denominational communities were taken into consideration, bearing in mind an enormous influence of the Neo-Pentecostal teaching. The research was carried out on-site and off-site. The former implemented an overt participant observation, whereas the latter — a thorough analysis of the audiovisual and textual materials, published on websites as well as in books. The results of the study support all the formulated hypotheses.

Firstly, the study has shown that charisms may serve as religious products, highly demanded in the religious marketplace. The emergence of supernatural phenomena attracts people, especially the needy, who continuously crave for signs and wonders. The rapid growth of the INC Christianity has greatly facilitated the global spread of the Charismatic offer. Interestingly enough, the product referred in this study to as spiritual encounters rests on various levels of advancement, ranging from simple prophecies to a prophetic office. Moreover, as far as the organizational structure is concerned, Charismatic communities seem to bear a remarkable resemblance to the one that is typical of the corporate environment.

Secondly, the findings of the research suggest that the Polish Charismatic ritual language has been enriched with a lot of motives whose existence considerably influences intra-community cooperation. These motives appear in both prophecies, which relate to the future, and the word of knowledge, which defines the past and present. Furthermore, the results imply that the God-Human intimacy may be expressed with the use of the first-person pronoun or through an introductory formula. Besides, it can also be manifested via glossolalic utterances. In such cases, the God-Human relationship requires the involvement of an interpreter, namely, someone with the gift of interpretation of heavenly tongues.

Thirdly, the outcomes prove that not only words but also mental pictures serve as means of divine communication. The gifted claimed to have experienced prophetic visions whose content carried a symbolic meaning. Wooden blocks, a burin, and a fog — all of them might have applied to someone's physical or emotional condition. In addition, these visions were accompanied by various somatic symptoms, for example, a heartache. It can therefore be assumed that a given prophet's commitment to the supernatural realm was strong and genuine.

Finally, this paper may contribute towards a better understanding of the Polish Charismatic environment. However, the questions raised by this study require further investigation, which should be conducted with the assistance of qualified specialists representing different fields, for instance, psychologists, neuroscientists, and cognitive scientists.

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