

Gender and healing

The meaning of Pentecostalism for women in Costa Rica

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Abbreviations

- ACOE Asociación Cristiana Oasis de Esperanza
- AD Asambleas de Dios
- AE Alianza Evangélica de Costa Rica
- AIEC Asociación de Iglesias Evangélicas Centroamericanas
- CAE Comité de Acción Evangélica
- CAM Central American Mission
- CBN Christian Broadcasting Network
- CCBEDN Centro de Consejería Bíblica Emanuel “Dios Con Nosotros“
- CCCAJ Centro Carismático Católico “Amigos de Jesús“
- CCFB Centro Cristiano Fuente de Bendición
- CCSR Centro Cristiano Seguidores del Rey
- CCVN Centro Cristiano Vida Nueva
- CE Catedral del Evangelio
- CMA Centro Mundial de Adoración
- ESEPA Escuela de Estudios Pastorales
- FGBMFI Full Gospel Business Men’s Fellowship International
- ICC Iglesia Central Calvario
- IDEC Iglesia de Dios del Evangelio Completo
- INAMU Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres
- IOIB Iglesia Oasis Internacional de Bendición
- IJS Iglesia Jesucristo es el Señor
- IM Iglesia Miel
- IVA Iglesia Vida Abundante
- MANAIA Misión Apostólica Nido de Águilas Internacional Alajuela
- MAR Iglesia Manantial de Amor y Restauración
- ML Misión Latinoamericana
- MSDJ Iglesia Manos Sanadoras de Jesús
- MIB Ministerio Internacional Bendiciones
- MJV Misión Jesucristo Vive
- OA Iglesia Oasis Alajuela
- PAF Pacto de Amor y Fe
- PROLADES Programa Latinoamericano de Estudios Sociorreligiosos

- RCC Renovación Carismática Católica
- SBL Seminario Bíblico Latinoamericano
- SEAN Seminario por Extensión a las Naciones
- TF Tierra Fértil
- UCR Universidad de Costa Rica

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Part One: Pentecostalism in Costa Rica

1 Introduction

I believe that almost all the people who approach the church, come because they need help. [...] There are many more women in the church than men, [...] because more women are trying to figure out how to change their life situation, how to get by with a drug-addicted husband, how to get by with an alcohol-addicted husband. They come to church to be comforted, to be healed and to see how they and their children can survive.¹

With these words, the woman pastor of the church *Iglesia Central Calvario* (ICC) in Alajuela, Costa Rica, explained the hopes of many women who turn to Pentecostal churches. Their hopes are focused on support in dealing with addicted husbands and with their own children, on comfort, on healing, on transformation of their lives. These hopes are in turn fed by reports of other women, who tell them that they have experienced all this in Pentecostal churches. By citing women's longing for healing as a reason for the attractiveness of Pentecostal churches for women, the woman pastor summarized what many women who were interviewed for this study said. This study aims to show how women in Costa Rica experience healing based on Pentecostal beliefs and practices, and how they interpret this experience. The starting point of the study is the question of the causes of the attractiveness of Pentecostalism for women. This question has already been answered many times, however without capturing the transformative power of the healing experience, as will be shown below.

1.1 State of Research

1.1.1 Women in Latin American Pentecostalism

Latin America is one of the centers of the growth of Pentecostalism. Until the middle of the twentieth century the religious monopoly of the Catholic Church was unchallenged, but since then the religious landscape of the continent has changed profoundly. The number of Evangelical Pentecostals has been growing for decades, and among the active Catholic faithful those who belong to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal are particularly strongly represented. It is the largest and fastest growing movement within the Catholic Church in Latin America. According to the Pew Foundation in 2014, if Evangelical and Catholic Pentecostal groups were to be counted together, it would show that a good quarter of the Latin American population were part of a Pentecostal community.²

¹ Interview no. 26, 04/07/2015.

² Cf. Pew Research Center 2014.

In order to explain the growth of Latin American Pentecostalism, sociological macro theories repeatedly referred to anomies in the societies concerned that had arisen as a result of socio-economic transformation processes.³ Emilio Willems and Christian Lalive d'Épinay, whose fundamental studies on Latin American Pentecostalism were published in 1967 and 1968, explain the growth of Latin American Pentecostalism in that it offers new norms in a situation of social anomie, but arrive at contradicting interpretations of its social function. Using his own field research in Brazil and Chile, Willems examines which specific conditions led to the growth of Evangelicalism and in particular of Pentecostalism, and how this in turn became an agent of socio-cultural change. As a decisive feature of the pre-industrial social structure of Latin America, he identifies the division of society into a small number of owners of large estates and many landless people. The social structure of the *hacienda* was the model for the traditional political structure, which also shaped the states: As a result of extreme centralization, people are accustomed to passively waiting for and accepting political decisions. While the Catholic Church is just as centrally organized and has been closely connected with the rulers for centuries, Willems sees in the self-organized Evangelical churches, which grant individuals responsibility for important decisions, a counter-model to the collapsing feudal system. He observes that developments such as industrialization, urbanization and the crisis of coffee cultivation lead to increased migration and that Pentecostalism is particularly successful in areas where many migrants live, both urban and rural. Willems considers Evangelical ethics, which include norms such as honesty, diligence, thrift and abstinence from pre- and extramarital sex, alcohol, tobacco and secular pleasures such as gambling and dancing, to be a suitable means of countering the anomie caused by socio-cultural changes. The behavior of members of the lower classes, in particular men, would change considerably as a result of conversion and this would enable the emergence of a new middle class. According to Willems, other functions that make Pentecostalism attractive, above all to the socially uprooted migrants of the lower classes, are that the faithful experience community and security in their congregations, as well as recognition and respect as a result of being endowed with spiritual gifts. Regarding the impact of Pentecostalism on gender relations, Willems notes that conversion changes the traditional patriarchal family structure. Evangelical asceticism seems to him compatible with the traditional concept of correct female behavior, while double standards of sexual behavior are a relic of agricultural patriarchy that is neither compatible with industrial society nor with Evangelical values, so that extramarital sexual relations among members of Pentecostal churches hardly exist anymore. If husbands did not conform to Pentecostal morality, the

³ Cf. the overview of trends in research in Bergunder 2000.

position of the wives would be strengthened by imposing sanctions on the men by the church leaders. That men are willing to submit to external authorities in family matters implies serious changes. Family life also changes, not just sexual behavior: Pentecostal families share meals together, Pentecostal men take responsibility for raising children, and overall intimacy between family members increases. In the context of industrial revolution in Brazil and Chile, which from his perspective will inevitably lead to more egalitarian family structures, the function of Pentecostalism is to provide direction for moral change and to back it with ethical and supernatural sanctions. He concludes that Pentecostalism is fundamentally changing societies in the areas of family, politics, the economy and education, and thus actively promoting modernization.⁴

Lalivé d'Épinay also relies on field research in Chile, and he also asks about the reasons for the spread of Pentecostalism and its influence on the socio-economic development of the country. In terms of reasons he comes to similar conclusions as Willems: the sudden growth of Pentecostalism happened during the crisis of the 1950s in the transition from a traditional feudal to a secularized, democratic society. Pentecostalism compensated for the collapse of traditional social relations through spiritual, solidarity-based communities that valued the individual. However, with regard to the consequences of Pentecostalism for Chilean society, Lalivé d'Épinay arrives at results contrary to those of Willems: The Pentecostal churches filled the vacuum created by the collapse of the *hacienda* system by taking on the paternalistic role of the *patrón*. These churches therefore did not represent an alternative model of society, but took over its traditional structures. The individual church was a totalitarian community which controlled every aspect of the life of its members and strengthened their social passivity. Pentecostalism thus supports the traditional paternalistic social order and prevents the emergence of a modern society consisting of responsible individuals. Lalivé d'Épinay perceives that the living conditions of the members improve due to the ascetic and family-oriented Pentecostal ethics, but doubts that Evangelicalism in Chile generates social mobility or the emergence of a middle class, because he does not consider that the necessary conditions for it, such as a sufficient degree of industrialization and a certain currency stability exist. Like Willems, Lalivé d'Épinay notes that the family plays a prominent role in Pentecostal doctrine. However, he sees the almost exclusive concern for private life as a symptom of political

⁴ Cf. Willems 1967.

alienation and an obstacle to social transformation. Consequently, he considers the influence of Pentecostalism as not transformative but restorative.⁵

Numerous sociological explanations of Latin American Pentecostalism follow either Willems' or Lalive d'Epinay's pattern of interpretation.⁶ In 1975 for the first time, Cornelia Butler Flora explicitly investigates the effects of Pentecostalism on the status of women from a macro-theoretical perspective by comparing the life situation of Pentecostal women of the working class and lower classes in Colombia with that of Catholics of the corresponding social classes. She identifies the concept of *marianismo*, which is the counterpart to the concept of machismo and defines the role of women according to the model of the Virgin Mary, as formative for Catholic ideology regarding the role of women. These include qualities such as the ability to suffer, the willingness to subordination and to forgive, physical weakness, spiritual and moral strength, as well as a holiness that results from virginity on the one hand, and from the role of mother on the other hand. Although the Virgin Mary plays no explicit role among Pentecostal women, the Pentecostal understanding of female virtues is also influenced by *marianismo*. As in the Catholic Church, the women in Pentecostal churches also could not attain higher leadership positions, but could exercise lower offices such as evangelizing, teaching and preaching. In this way they were given new opportunities to acquire status in the same fields of activities as men. With regard to interactions in married couples, Butler Flora notes that male Pentecostals are more likely than male Catholics to fulfil their emotional and financial responsibilities to the family. The dominance of men, however, remains and is accepted by women. In politics and economics, women who belong to Pentecostal churches are not represented more frequently than Catholic women. She therefore calls the function of Pentecostalism in the political and economic context the "opium of the female masses".⁷ Although women are endowed with self-confidence and abilities which could serve to bring about structural change, Pentecostalism itself denies the legitimacy of such actions due to its dualistic doctrine. Overall, Pentecostalism in Colombia should be seen as a gain for the individual status of women, but Butler Flora doubts that it enhances the collective status of women.⁸

The outlined macro-theoretical interpretations of Latin American Pentecostalism presuppose that it is perceived as an epiphenomenon of political, economic or social processes with specific

⁵ Cf. Lalive d'Epinay 1968.

⁶ Cf. Hoffnagel 1983; Martin 1990; Stoll 1990; Bastian 1992, 1993, 1995; Mariz 1994; Hoekstra 1998.

⁷ Butler Flora 1975, 424.

⁸ Cf. Butler Flora 1975.

social functions. This assumption leads to statements about the political, economic, social, cultural, ethnic, gender-specific and religious contexts and implications of Pentecostalism, which ignore both regional and temporal differences in the way that it has spread, as well as the heterogeneity of the Latin American continent and also the individuals involved, their beliefs and interactions.⁹ Elizabeth Brusco notes that macro-theoretical interpretations take opposing perspectives, in that they either understand Pentecostalism as the driving force of a positively connotated capitalism, or as the conservative force of a negatively connotated imperialism. She criticizes that both interpretation patterns understand progress and modernization as a teleological process that will unite the cultures of the world, because both are based on normative ideas about the direction of social change. Furthermore, she also questions Butler Flora's theory that Pentecostalism puts women into sociopolitical passivity, by denying that the role of women outside the household and family is the appropriate frame of reference for assessing an improvement in their position. In the Colombian context, it is less decisive how women are strengthened by Pentecostalism to assume new roles in society, it rather matters how women become subjects of change in the traditional context. Brusco also structurally classifies her studies of Colombian Pentecostalism by noting that its growth coincided with social change from a peasant subsistence economy to modernization; this resulted in women becoming increasingly dependent on men's incomes, and in the devaluation of women's roles which were limited to household and family. She researches Pentecostal social behavior in terms of the impact of conversion on women's lives and concludes that Colombian Pentecostalism can be seen in some ways as a strategic women's movement that acts as an antidote to machismo. In contrast to Western feminism, the aim is not to give women access to the male world, but to enhance the domestic sphere for men and women. Gender roles are changed, and the status of women is improved by domesticating men, because the Pentecostal male role is opposed to that based on machismo. Instead of aggression, violence, pride, indulgence and individualism a change toward peacefulness, modesty, self-control and a collective orientation and identification with the church and the nuclear family takes place. As a result of conversion, the spheres of life, values and goals of men and women correspond. By freeing financial resources, the standard of living of women and children is increased and at the same time the position of men as heads of household is not questioned. Brusco sees machismo not only as a motive for conversion for women, but also for men who favor an ideology that frees them from the social constraints generated by machismo. She concludes that wherever the

⁹ Cf. Droogers 1998, 15; Freston 1998, 347f; Miguez 1998, especially 7 – 9. 163 -170; Bergunder 2000, 12.

male role is socially defined by machismo and this definition is challenged by conversion, Pentecostalism has the function to revolutionize the private sphere.¹⁰

Brusco has played a key role in shaping the debate on the impact of Latin American Pentecostalism on women, arguing that it should not be measured against the goals of Western feminism because its goals are not identical to those of the women it examines. While Western feminism strives for women to gain access to the world of men, to assume social roles dominated by men, and in this way to achieve socio-economic equality with men, this does not correspond to the goals of Colombian women, in whose interest it is rather to become agents of change within the traditional roles. Such a change in gender roles would be made possible by Pentecostalism through the upgrading of the domestic sphere for women and men, which would lead men to turn more to their families. In addition, Pentecostalism glorified and supported the feminine as such. By showing how women benefit from Pentecostalism's transformation of the domestic sphere, Brusco contradicts both the hypothesis that Latin American Pentecostalism is an "opium of the female masses"¹¹, and also the assumption behind it that women belonging to Pentecostal churches are victims of a patriarchal plan whose norms and practices they would instinctively reject if they were liberated from their ideological imprisonment or false consciousness. Despite crucial differences between Butler Floras and Brusco's approach however, Brusco's analysis and interpretation is also based on the assumption that there is a contradiction between the patriarchal Pentecostal doctrine and the fact that women represent it. For Brusco too, feminism for women is ultimately the only alternative to false consciousness,¹² and her concern is to show that Colombian Pentecostal women are basically feminists. Both approaches represent the normative conviction that women should have the innate desire to overcome patriarchal values without historically contextualizing this narrative, and consequently ignore possibilities of thought and action that do not correspond to the binarity of submission and subversion. As a result, Brusco retroactively declares the functions of conversion she analyzes to be the reason for the conversion of Colombian women and thus disregards the experiences and interpretations of the women themselves, who do not strategically justify their conversion with an emancipatory goal, but talking to Brusco describe emotional-spiritual experiences as motivation.¹³ Finally, Brusco's portrayal of social change is based on essentialist generalizations and gender-specific stereotypes. Thus, she tries to speak

¹⁰ Cf. Brusco 1993, 1995, 2010.

¹¹ Butler Flora 1975, 424.

¹² Cf. Brusco 1995, especially 3.

¹³ Cf. Brusco 1995, especially 8f,108-113.

for so-called Third World women by postulating that the family is so important for them that their importance cannot be ignored in any investigation of the life situation of these women, ignoring differences in female identity due to diverging characteristics such as ethnicity, social class, sexuality and age.¹⁴ Vis-à-vis this image of women, she generalizes the consumption of alcohol by Colombian men, the only empirical evidence of which comes from a study of four peasant households in 1950-51. Consequently, there is no empirical basis for her theory that Pentecostalism causes the described cultural change.¹⁵

With reference to Brusco, a tension between patriarchal doctrine and emancipatory effects, which Bernice Martin describes as a Pentecostal gender paradox, is often pointed out with regard to Latin American Pentecostalism.¹⁶ It is widely interpreted that Pentecostalism explicitly reinforces patriarchal gender roles and at the same time helps to overcome or at least transform the gender roles shaped by machismo and *marianismo*.¹⁷ There are however also critical voices stating that in Pentecostalism the discrimination of women is disguised or who reject it when feminist researchers perceive agency in structures of subordination.¹⁸ Annelin Eriksen criticizes that in recent years various anthropological studies on gender-specific implications of Pentecostalism have assumed the existence of the paradox described, which consists in the fact that the question of whether Pentecostalism is a women's movement can be answered with both "yes" and "no". She identifies this question as problematic because it is set in such a framework that the answers can only be understood as paradoxical.¹⁹ Jane Soothill's investigation of gender relations in Ghanaian Pentecostalism refrains from the paradoxical evaluation of Pentecostalism as both emancipatory and patriarchal and shows that social change in the form of the reformation of machismo in Ghana is not the key paradigm for understanding the attraction of Pentecostalism to women, but that spiritual factors are the key to it. She attributes the deviation of this result from the results of the investigations of Latin American Pentecostalism to the divergent context.²⁰ In fact, however, it is not the other socio-cultural context that is responsible for this deviation, but the fact that Soothill is moving away from a widespread binary concept of agency, which will be analyzed and criticized below.²¹

¹⁴ Cf. Brusco 1995, 3.

¹⁵ Cf. Miguez 1998, 11f; cf. Brusco 1993, 147 and 1995, 5 in relation to the reference criticised.

¹⁶ Cf. Martin 2001.

¹⁷ Cf. Drogus 1997; Mariz/das Dores Campos Machado 1997; Burdick 1998; Montecino/Obach 2001; Lorentzen/Mira 2005; English de Alminana 2016.

¹⁸ Cf. Gill 1990; Tarducci 2001; Rohr 2010.

¹⁹ Cf. Eriksen 2016.

²⁰ Cf. Soothill 2007, 223f.

²¹ Cf. Soothill 2007, 27-29.

The assumption of the existence of a Pentecostal gender paradox is based on the binarity of patriarchy and oppression versus emancipation and subversion, which not only limits the perceptual capacity of the experiences of Pentecostal women. Thus, Saba Mahmood, in her study of the Egyptian women's mosque movement, states that "women's active support for socioreligious movements that sustain principles of female subordination poses a dilemma for feminist analysts. On the one hand, women are seen to assert their presence in previously male-defined spheres while, on the other hand, the very idioms they use to enter these arenas are grounded in discourses that have historically secured their subordination to male authority."²²

As the cause for the dilemma being perceived as such, she identifies the naturalization of the subject's freedom and autonomy, which assumes that women's possibilities to react in the face of patriarchal values consist either in passive submission or in active subversion. Consequently, agency is understood exclusively as "the capacity to realize one's own interests against the weight of custom, tradition, transcendental will, or other obstacles".²³ So if feminist analysts, like Brusco, value the actions of women within patriarchal norms positively, it is because they interpret it as resistance, even if it is not the aim of those acting to question hegemonic norms. Mahmood argues that without the historical contextualization of the binarity of submission and subversion, it is not possible to perceive forms of being and acting that do not correspond to it. In order to deconstruct the concept of the rational, self-determined subject, she refers to Judith Butler; for whose analysis two insights of Michel Foucault are decisive: 1. Power is not static and cannot be possessed by sovereign agents or exercised over others, but "is to be understood as a strategic relation of force that permeates life and is productive of new forms of desires, objects, relations, and discourses."²⁴ 2. The subject does not precede power relations but is created by them. Consequently, these are the necessary conditions of its constitution. "Central to his formulation is what Foucault calls the paradox of subjectivation: the very processes and conditions that secure a subject's subordination are also the means by which she becomes a self-conscious identity and agent".²⁵ On this basis, Butler queries a concept of agency that is based on an intentionality and freedom inherent in all human beings, the possibilities of which are limited by external power relations. Instead, she "locates the possibility of agency within structures of power [...] and [...] suggests that the reiterative structure of norms serves not only to *consolidate* a particular regime of discourse/power but also provides the means for its

²² Mahmood 2012, 5f.

²³ Mahmood 2012, 8.

²⁴ Mahmood 2012, 17; cf. Foucault 1978, 1980.

²⁵ Mahmood 2006, 188; 2012, 17; cf. Butler 1993; Foucault 1980, 1983.

*destabilization.*²⁶ Agency, according to Butler, is based on the essential openness of each repetition and on the possibility that it could be used for purposes other than the consolidation of norms. Consequently, “there is no possibility of ‘undoing` social norms that is independent of the ‘doing` of norms”.²⁷ Butler conceptualizes performativity on the basis of the dualism of consolidation and resignification, fulfilment and destruction of norms, stressing “the possibilities of resistance to the regulating power of normativity”²⁸.

Following Butler, Mahmood assumes “that norms are not simply a social imposition on the subject but constitute the very substance of her [...] interiority.”²⁹ Autonomy does not exist, because structures and conditions always influence and limit actions. It is possible to resist and transform structures and conditions, but it is not possible to act outside the structures and conditions. However, Mahmood notes a tension in Butler’s argumentation: while Butler identifies all subversive acts as the product of the conditions against which they are directed, her analysis of agency often privileges the moments that “open possibilities for resignifying the terms of violation against their violating aims”³⁰. Butler thus develops her concept of agency primarily in contexts where norms are questioned or resignified.³¹ Mahmood explains this argumentative tension in Butler’s conceptualization of agency by referring to its performative dimension, insofar as it is to be understood as a political practice aimed at overcoming dominant discourses on gender and sexuality. This specific context has led Butler to emphasize the antihegemonic variants of agency, so that others have faded into the background. Mahmood’s goal now is to expand “Foucault’s notion of resistance discourses and Butler’s notion of performativity”³² by showing that norms not only are consolidated or resignified, fulfilled or destroyed, but also beyond this dualistic structure in the actualization of gradually varying possibilities for action “performed, inhabited, and experienced in a variety of ways”³³, “lived [...], aspired to, reached for, and consummated.”³⁴ Consequently, Mahmood does not see agency as a synonym for resistance against domination, but as an ability to act, made possible and created by concrete historical relationships of subordination. Agency exists insofar as people with specific intentions, plans and desires are able to act within the given structures. In relation

²⁶ Mahmood 2012, 20.

²⁷ Cf. Butler 1990, 1997.

²⁸ Mahmood 2012, 22.

²⁹ Mahmood 2012, 23.

³⁰ Butler 1993, 122.

³¹ Cf. Mahmood 2012, 21.

³² Auga 2018, 105.

³³ Mahmood 2012, 22.

³⁴ Mahmood 2012, 23.

to religion, this means that it enables agency, insofar as it opens up possibilities for action.³⁵ Using the Egyptian women's mosque movement as an example, Mahmood traces various types of agency that underlie the practices of the participants in this movement. She aims at "unsettling key assumptions at the center of liberal thought through which movements of this kind are often judged" and "to redress the profound inability within current feminist political thought to envision valuable forms of human flourishing outside the bounds of a liberal progressive imaginery."³⁶

Based on this argumentation, this study examines the resources and capacities that women receive through Pentecostal beliefs and practices to enable them to unfold within the given structures. What possibilities for action do they have? And what is the plausibility, meaning and power of the Pentecostal discourse for them?

1.1.2 Women in Costa-Rican Pentecostalism

There are only a few case studies on the gender-specific implications of Pentecostalism in Costa Rica, most of which are only available in the form of unpublished university papers. However with varying emphasis, they all come to the same conclusion that the Pentecostal discourse harms the status of women.³⁷ In their master thesis Ana Ligia Sánchez and Osmundo Ponce evaluate literature concerning the representation of women from various Pentecostal churches in Heredia and state that theological fundamentalism functions as a repressive mechanism.³⁸ In their master thesis María del Socorro Chacón and Zulena Fernández analyze the life situation of women who belong to a church belonging to the *Asociación Cristiana de las Asambleas de Dios en Costa Rica*, in short *Asambleas de Dios* (AD). Their conclusion is that in the Pentecostal discourse, women are considered the property of a masculine God, the Church, the family and society, so that they have no self-determination.³⁹ On the basis of five interviews each, in a Methodist church, a Reformed church and a church of the AD, Marleny Amaya examines the organizational structures with regard to women's roles. She postulates that in all three, but most in the church of the AD, women are discriminated against, inasmuch as they carry out exclusively subordinate activities. However, women did not notice their lack of freedom

³⁵ Cf. With regard to the debate between Mahmood and Butler on their concepts of resistance and religion Asad/Brown/Butler/Mahmood 2013.

³⁶ Mahmood 2012, 155.

³⁷ Further studies that research the Costa Rican Pentecostalism with diverging questions are Kessler 1989, 1995; Piedra Solano 1991; Secretariado Episcopal de América Central (SEDAC) 1995; Anderson 1999; Steigenga 2001; Fernández de Quevedo 2002; Alford 2003; Gómez 2014.

³⁸ Cf. Sánchez Rojas/Ponce Serreno 1989. The results are published in part in Sánchez/Ponce 1995.

³⁹ Cf. Chacón/Fernández 1997.

because they lacked feminist consciousness.⁴⁰ While these three studies are based on the assumption that subordination and discrimination of women are essential characteristics of Pentecostalism, the Ecuadorian Pentecostal Senia Pilco Tarira in her bachelor thesis, for which she interviews women from three churches of the *Iglesia de Dios del Evangelio Completo* (IDEC) in San José, finds that while church structures are determined by patriarchal norms, this is not due to Pentecostalism itself, but to the socially widespread machismo, so that it is possible to overcome the subordination of women in Pentecostalism.⁴¹

For the first time, Michelle Cordero's dissertation looks at the connection between Pentecostalism and domestic violence in Costa Rica. She examines how the Pentecostal discourse influences women's handling of domestic violence. Her result is that in Pentecostal churches a patriarchal doctrine is imparted, which emphasizes the superiority of men and aims to maintain the marriage. The strategies that women who experience violence are taught to improve their situation, are: to pray, fast, cast out demons, forgive, give a good testimony, submit to men, and go for counseling as couples. This she identifies as a conglomerate of justification mechanisms that are used to legitimize and maintain violence rather than to end it.⁴²

The sociologist Ariel Calderón joins this line of argument in his dissertation.⁴³ He combines macro- and micro-theoretical interpretation and identifies unequal economic power relations, which have been reinforced by economic crises since 1980 and 2007, as the first reason for the success of Pentecostalism. Referring to the Costa Rican sociologist Jaime Valverde,⁴⁴ he explains that the function of Pentecostalism is to support the ideological structures of capitalism by giving meaning to the limited material conditions of the oppressed. Poverty and need would be glorified as components of God's plan, so that injustices and suffering would be accepted. As a second reason for the success of Pentecostalism he identifies unequal gender-specific power relations which, often in connection with violence against women by their partners, triggered personal crises and led to a world view which had previously given women security and meaning to life proving to be wrong. The need for orientation and meaning is met in the Pentecostal churches by interpreting the crises as markers planned by God on the way to him. Pentecostalism fulfils the function of supporting the unequal gender-specific power relations

⁴⁰ Cf. Amaya 2002.

⁴¹ Cf. Pilco Tarira 1990.

⁴² Cf. Cordero 2003.

⁴³ Cf. Chalderón 2015.

⁴⁴ Cf. Valverde 1990, 1991.

by advising women to bear and forgive injustice. Calderón postulates that violent men are not required to change their behavior, but that violence is regarded as natural and accepted.

The greatest merit of this study is to highlight the central importance of experiences of violence for many conversions of women to Pentecostalism in Costa Rica. Calderón's efforts to give women a voice against the gender-inappropriate distribution of power should also be appreciated. First, however, he adopts the deprivation argument to explain the success of Pentecostalism without critical interaction with alternative explanatory approaches.⁴⁵ Secondly, he assumes a false consciousness on the part of women and naturalizes the desire to overcome patriarchal values. Consequently, he dismisses their statements as results of ideological indoctrination. As an intellectual man, he turns the statements of subaltern women into their opposite and profits from the unequal distribution of power that he himself condemns.⁴⁶ In view of the various types of relationship crises, he considers only the breakdown of a relationship to be a behavior that corresponds to the right consciousness, without considering either its possible consequences for women or the possibility of changing relationships. He does not perceive that also in Pentecostal churches in some cases separation occurs and that many separated and divorced women receive support and encouragement there. Without an empirical basis, it is assumed that non-Pentecostal women are more active in shaping their lives than Pentecostal women, that is to say that a non-Pentecostal orientation is automatically linked to a greater ability to transform conditions of social injustice. He overlooks the ethical demands that Pentecostal churches make on men in almost prolific ways and the countless support services for men to overcome destructive patterns of behavior. His postulate that Pentecostal women are encouraged to be sexually compliant is wrong, at least in this generalization, insofar as elsewhere Pentecostal men are called upon to subordinate their sexual desires to those of their wives. And he misunderstands the forgiveness of the perpetrators as giving legitimation to the deeds. Indeed, he refers to a Pentecostal church in Cartago which he describes as progressive and notes that "human rights are respected" there,⁴⁷ insofar as no heteronormative concept of gender and no patriarchal reading of the Bible are represented. However, he stresses that this church is an exception and, since he identifies it in the logic of the binarity of submission and subversion as a place of subversion, it should serve as a model for all other churches in the country. Apart from this exception, he accuses Costa Rican Pentecostalism of giving legitimacy to violence because he confuses the triggers of many conversions with their effects. In short, it

⁴⁵ Cf. Robbins 2004.

⁴⁶ Cf. Spivak 1994.

⁴⁷ Cf. Calderón 2015, 245.

is not possible for him to perceive forms of being and acting that do not correspond to the narrative of oppressive Pentecostalism, so that he does not grasp the meaning and power that the Pentecostal discourse has for many women. This leads him to portray Pentecostal women, presumably without intention, as unsuspecting victims of a harmful religious discourse and to deny them the agency of acting subjects.

In summary, studies of the reasons for the attractiveness of Latin American Pentecostalism for women and its effects on them, either draw it as an instrument of oppression, whose success is based on patriarchal indoctrination and lack of emancipatory consciousness,⁴⁸ or as an instrument of liberation, whose success is based on an existing emancipatory consciousness or even a feminist strategy,⁴⁹ or they identify both oppressive and emancipatory effects and therefore describe them as paradoxical.⁵⁰ With sometimes considerably divergent approaches and conclusions, the studies of Butler Flora, Brusco, Martin, Calderón and others share the logic of the binarity of submission and subversion, as well as the naturalization of women's desire to liberate themselves from patriarchal values. Not to contextualize this narrative historically, but to use it unquestioningly as a pattern of interpretation for the experiences of Pentecostal women, leads to the fact that experiences, interpretations and needs that do not correspond to it are not perceived. Mahmood deconstructs this concept by arguing that the autonomy of the subject does not exist because norms and structures always precede the subject, create it and condition its identity. Consequently, agency always exists within specific conditions and is realized by consolidating or resignifying norms and by experiencing, inhabiting and living them in many ways. What this means for the researching the meaning of Pentecostalism for women in Costa Rica is shown below.

1.2 Aim of the Study

The present research aims to examine the reasons for the attractiveness of Pentecostalism for women and its effects on them. However, it does not ask whether Pentecostalism has an oppressive or emancipatory effect on women, but rather which opportunities for action and development it offers them within the given structures and which resources it provides for them. Like Mahmood⁵¹ the study avoids the binarity of submission and subversion, because this logic disregards the fact that all action is conditioned by power relations and takes place within power

⁴⁸ This pattern of interpretation can be found for example in Butler Flora 1975 and Calderón 2015.

⁴⁹ This pattern of interpretation can be found for example in Willems 1967 and Brusco 1995.

⁵⁰ Cf. Martin 2001 as well as Drogus 1997; Mariz/das Dores Sampos Machado 1997; Burdick 1998; Montecino/Obach 2001; Lorentzen/Mira 2005; English de Alminana 2016.

⁵¹ Cf. Mahmood 2012.

relations. Mahmood's concept of agency as a capacity for action, not against but within power structures makes it possible to perceive experiences, longings, possibilities of thought and action as well as their interpretations by the actors themselves, which do not correspond to the binary logic described. This, in turn, is the prerequisite for understanding what the Pentecostal discourse means for the actors and what its transformative power is for them, which opens up a new scope for them within the given circumstances. Starting from Mahmood's argumentation, the following questions must therefore be asked: What resources and abilities do women acquire through the Pentecostal doctrine and Pentecostal practices, in order to develop and grow within the given structures? Which options for action are opened up for them? And what is the plausibility, the meaning and the power of the Pentecostal discourse for them? To answer these questions, statements and practices of predominantly Pentecostal women shall be presented, in order to reconstruct Pentecostal concepts in their terms. It shall be analyzed how these women interpret their conversion, their convictions and the implications of their belonging to a Pentecostal church or community, in order to make the plausibility and power of the reconstructed discourse on them comprehensible. Furthermore, by way of a historical critique, aspects of the reconstructed discourse such as concrete practices as well as current Pentecostal name politics are genealogically contextualized, in order to show which historical events they react to, and to what extent local and global discourses are negotiated in them.⁵²

In the course of the field research it turned out that most of the women questioned, Evangelical as well as Catholic Pentecostals, described how their lives had changed through healing experiences in connection with their conversion to Pentecostalism, or at a later point in time. Many said that they had experienced a healing of emotional wounds and interpreted this experience as a source of new resources, skills and possibilities for action. The terms *sanidad interior* (inner healing) and *perdón* (forgiveness) not only dominated the interviews, but also the sermons, lectures and available written materials. The impression gained during field research of the significance of inner healing through forgiveness, shall be verified by the analysis of the collected data. The plausibility and significance of the healing discourse and the extent to which this enables changes in women's lives will be researched.

The central importance of the healing experience in Latin American Pentecostalism has been repeatedly pointed out. Hanneke Slootweg and Frans Kamsteeg emphasize that Pentecostal healing is particularly attractive for the poor because they cannot financially afford other

⁵² Cf. Bergunder 2014, 269-273; 2018, 211-215; Maltese 2015, 79.

options such as modern medicine and traditional healing methods.⁵³ Brusco notes that cures are the main reason for conversion for men.⁵⁴ Both observations are based on a concept of healing as overcoming physical suffering. Andrew Chesnut, Candy Gunther Brown, Rebecca Pierce Bomann and Luis Lugo, on the other hand, state that healing is also aimed at overcoming social and emotional problems.⁵⁵ The increasing emphasis on the importance of healing emotional problems reflects the development of healing discourses. Physical healing can be traced further back in a diachronous perspective than emotional and spiritual healing practices. These have gained importance in recent decades.⁵⁶ So far there has been a lack of research into the concrete meaning of inner healing in the Latin American context. This study provides a remedy.

Essentialist generalizations and gender stereotypes such as the feminist stereotype, according to which non-Western women are oppressed counterparts of Western women and in need of liberation and empowerment, are to be avoided in this study. Generalizations and stereotypes with regard to men are to be also avoided, which constitute a risk, as the focus is on the experiences and interpretations of women, whose emotional injuries are often related to the use of violence, alcohol consumption and promiscuity of men. No statements are to be made about the nature of Costa Rican men, but it is to be shown how women perceive themselves, also in their relationship to men, and how the Pentecostal healing experience influences this perception and offers options for action. To analyze the significance of the Pentecostal healing discourse for men and its effects on them exceeds the possibilities of this study and remains a future research desideratum. Women who have left a Pentecostal community as a result of negative experiences, for example, are not included in the study for reasons of research pragmatism. This opens up another research desideratum.

1.3 Field of Research

Costa Rica, occasionally referred to as the Switzerland of Central America with a relatively stable poverty rate of between 20 and 22 percent since 1990, is characterized in Latin American comparison by a high standard of living, a strong middle class despite increasing income inequality, a high quality of free education and health care, a relative ethnic homogeneity of the predominantly mestizo population, a lack of armed forces and a calm political development since 1949. Belonging to Pentecostalism in Costa Rica is not associated with ethnicity, and its development is not expected to be shaped by aftereffects of political conflicts. Costa Rican

⁵³ Cf. Kamsteeg 1991; Sloomweg 1998.

⁵⁴ Cf. Brusco 1995, 117; 2010, 89.

⁵⁵ Cf. Lugo 2006; Brown 2011, 3; Chesnut 2011, 175; Pierce Bomann 2011.

⁵⁶ Cf. Hunt 2017.

Pentecostalism is not exclusively, but also a middle-class phenomenon. With reference to David Martin, who justifies the dynamics of Pentecostalism with a mobilization of the marginalized,⁵⁷ Jean-Pierre Bastian therefore asks: “So if the explanatory variables for religious change, which are applied to other Latin American contexts, are not valid in the context of Costa Rica, shouldn’t one be able to assume that Catholic supremacy would be less affected and that the new religious movements would be less represented than elsewhere?”⁵⁸ He notes, however, that this is not the case: “So it seems that the religious reality of today’s Costa Rica, despite the absence of macrosocial variables as they have come to light in other contexts, hardly differs from that of the rest of Latin America.”⁵⁹ Consequently, Costa Rica is a suitable research field in which it can be assumed that these external factors do not need to be taken into account in a particular way in order to explain the growth of Pentecostalism.

Alajuela is Costa Rica’s second largest city, with a population of 50,000 - 266,000, depending on where to draw a line, and forms part of the metropolitan region of San José, which has 2.6 million inhabitants and is home to about 60 percent of the Costa Rican population. Alajuela offers itself as an exemplary field of research for this study because, in terms of social indicators, the city is a typical medium-sized Costa Rican city⁶⁰ and has a long Pentecostal history. Developments that have decisively shaped and continue to shape Costa Rican Pentecostalism are focused here. Thus, the first Evangelical missionaries were received more positively here than elsewhere and the first evangelization campaigns were supported by the local city administration, quite differently from San José, Cartago and Heredia. The second Methodist church in the country was built here, as was the second church of the AD, and the second The 700 Club counseling center was established here, after the first churches and the first center in San José. The *Renovación Carismática Católica* (Catholic Charismatic Renewal, RCC) spread from San José first to Alajuela, where finally the charismatic center *Centro Carismático Católico "Amigos de Jesús"* (CCCAJ) with influence beyond the region was established. Furthermore, new Pentecostal initiatives arose here: The non-denominational women's organization *Tierra Fértil* (TF) was founded here before it spread nationwide, and the starting point for the dissemination of the *Ministerio de Oración Teofófica* (Theophostic Prayer

⁵⁷ Cf. Martin 1990, 2002.

⁵⁸ Bastian/Fanger/Wehr/Werz 2000, 202.

⁵⁹ Bastian/Fanger/Wehr/Werz 2000, 202.

⁶⁰ Cf. Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos 2013, 57; Ministerio de Planificación Nacional y Política Económica 2013.

Ministry) in Costa Rica is also located in this city. In 2015, there were indications that a possible Pentecostalization of Catholicism also received decisive impulses in Alajuela.

The attempt to collect valid quantitative data on local Pentecostal churches and communities is hopeless because they frequently change their meeting rooms, grow and multiply, occasionally dissolve and sometimes cannot be identified from the outside. Thus, the author met the pastor of the church *Centro de Consejería Bíblica Emanuel "Dios Con Nosotros"* (CCBEDN) when she visited a handicraft shop to buy paints for participation in the women's group *Tardes Creativas* (Creative Afternoons) of the church *Centro Cristiano Vida Nueva* (CCVN). In the salesroom, the program of an Evangelical radio station was running, which became the occasion for a conversation with the shop owner. Finally, she led the author through a hallway into a room at the back of the house and explained that she was a pastor and this was her meeting room where she celebrated services, gave faith courses and offered counseling. The author identified another meeting room when she walked through the streets of the neighborhood on the last Sunday morning of her six-month research stay and found that about 30-60 people were attending a worship service in a house with open doors. Although there was a playground opposite this house that was regularly frequented by her children, she had not noticed that this house was used as a place of worship. Consequently, the following description of the Pentecostal landscape of Alajuela can only be an attempt to take a snapshot, based on the author's research and partly unpublished documents by Clifton Holland, founder and chairman of the research institute *Programa Latinoamericano de Estudios Sociorreligios* (PROLADES).

In 2015, seven of the more than 100 Evangelical churches in Alajuela described themselves as Baptist, five as Methodist and six as Adventist. At least eleven churches in and around Alajuela belonged to the AD, the country's largest Pentecostal denomination, estimated at 514 churches and missions and 80,000 members nationwide in 2013.⁶¹ Nine churches belonged to the *Iglesia del Evangelio Cuadrangular de Costa Rica* (IDEC), the country's second largest Pentecostal denomination. Other churches called themselves independent or belonged to smaller Pentecostal denominations, yet others belonged to traditionally non-Pentecostal denominations such as the *Asociación de Iglesias Evangélicas Centroamericanas* (AIEC).

The largest Evangelical Pentecostal churches in the city, in which more than 1000 people gathered on Sundays, were the churches *Iglesia Miel* (IM), *Ministerio Internacional Bendiciones* (MIB), *Iglesia Oasis Alajuela* (OA), *Misión Jesucristo Vive* (MJV) and *Misión*

⁶¹ Cf. Holland 2014, 19.

Apostólica Nido de Águilas Internacional Alajuela (MANAIA). The pastor of the church IM came from the Dominican Republic, had studied there at the seminary, had then converted and had been sent with his Costa Rican wife 1998 by a Dominican branch of the church *Misión Cristiana Elim de Guatemala* to Costa Rica.⁶² First, his congregation had gathered in a room in the city center until a building was completed whose hall could seat about 1000 people and which filled on Sundays in 2015 for three services. The church MIB was founded in 2004 by a pastor couple who had previously been members of an IDEC church. The meeting place was a warehouse in the center of the city, which could hold about 2500 people and where two services were held on Sundays. The church OA was a member of the *Asociación Cristiana Oasis de Esperanza* (ACOE), founded in 1975 in Moravia near San José, which in 2013 had 20 churches and about 14,000 members,⁶³ and which in turn was a member of the AD.⁶⁴ The meeting room of the church OA was a warehouse in the El Coyol district that could hold about 1000 people and was filled on Sundays for two services. The church MJV was founded in 1997 by two pastors who were a married couple. They had also previously belonged to an IDEC church, and helped in the founding of daughter churches in Rialto, Los Angeles and Las Vegas (USA), Caracas (Venezuela), León (Nicaragua) and Guadalajara (Mexico). The meeting room in the center of Alajuela was originally a movie theater that could seat up to 350 people and was filled on Sundays at four services. The church MANAIA was founded in 2003 by a couple who had previously belonged to the *Misión Apostólica Nido de Águilas Internacional San José*, which in turn had been founded in 1989 by a couple from the church *Centro Mundial de Adoración* (CMA) in San José and had developed into a denomination with 15 churches and seven communities by 2013.⁶⁵ Since around 2009, the meeting room in Alajuela has been a warehouse in the Plywood district, where about 1000 people worshipped on Sundays.

61 Evangelical pastors belonged to the pastors' fraternity (*fraternidad de pastores*) of Alajuela, some of whom belonged to churches or small denominations that were called independent, others belonged to the denominations AD, IDEC and *Iglesia de Dios Pentecostal*, and others belonged to Methodist and Baptist denominations, the Church of the Nazarene and the AIEC. The meetings of the pastors' fraternity were held monthly in a room of the church CCVN, which was a member of the AD. They were used for theological discussion, personal exchange and prayer, and for planning and organizing joint projects.

⁶² Cf. Interview 4_1, 03/12/2015.

⁶³ Cf. Holland 2014, 19.

⁶⁴ Cf. Holland/Bullón 2017, 218.

⁶⁵ Cf. Holland 2014, 19.

The CCCAJ was the center of the RCC in the diocese of Alajuela. In addition, RCC groups gathered in several Catholic congregations for prayer meetings, worship services, courses, counseling sessions and other events. In the inner city, these were the parishes of *Corazón de Jesús*, *La Agonía* and *La Trinidad*. In addition to the Evangelical Pentecostal churches and Catholic Pentecostal communities mentioned above, there were groups of non-denominational organizations called chapters. These included eleven youth chapters, at least five men's chapters and at least four women's chapters of the *Fraternidad Internacional de Hombres de Negocios del Evangelio Completo* (FGBMFI). These youth, men's and women's chapters gathered weekly in restaurants in and around Alajuela. About four chapters of the women's organization TF gathered in restaurants in and around Alajuela, and one chapter of the women's organization Aglow gathered in a meeting room in the city center.

1.4 Sources and Methods

The data collected during a field research stay from February to July 2015 on which this study is based consists of transcripts of 82 qualitative interviews, notes in research diaries and grey literature. Of the interviews mentioned, 66 are narrative interviews with women who belonged to a Pentecostal church or community. To reach theoretical saturation, care was taken in the selection of the informants to ensure that they belonged to as many denominations and social milieus as possible and were of different ages.⁶⁶ Some of those interviewed lived in the rural environment of Alajuela or visited churches in the rural environment, but the majority lived in the urban area. The interviews benefited from the fact that the practice of witnessing is a key element of the Pentecostal conversion process and that it is customary on various occasions to present one's own conversion process in the form of a personal testimony. This testimony in many cases offered a helpful opportunity to start the interview. Access to this format certainly enabled some respondents to overcome uncertainties about what and how to tell. At the same time, there was the difficulty that this form of a testimony is characterized by narratives like a stereotypical division of the life story into pre- and post-conversion. Consequently, an important task during the interviews was to penetrate the standardized surface of the testimony in order to arrive at the individual experiences and interpretations.

The other 16 interviews were with a member of a non-Pentecostal Evangelical church, four women who regarded themselves as belonging to the Catholic Church outside the RCC, eight pastors, both female and male, of Pentecostal churches, two Roman Catholic priests and a Professor at the Institute of Anthropology at the *Universidad de Costa Rica* (UCR). The

⁶⁶ Cf. Lamnek 2010, 167-173.

interviews lasted between twelve minutes and four hours, but mostly one and a half to two hours. All interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed after the research stay and evaluated according to Mayring's qualitative content analysis.⁶⁷ As part of the participating observation, the author attended worship services, Bible study groups, prayer groups, a creative group, meetings of non-denominational women's organizations, courses, trainings, congresses and celebrations, and meetings of the pastors' fraternity, and prepared discussion transcripts and observation protocols of these events. The grey literature consists of training materials, newspaper articles and leaflets. Furthermore, local secondary literature, in particular unpublished university publications, has been digitized in several libraries⁶⁸ for evaluation following the research stay. The author conducted follow-up surveys via e-mail and Facebook by asking informants for explanations on detailed wording, comments on specific topics or factual information.

Access to the research field was initially gained via internet research, but in the first weeks of field research mainly on foot in order to cover the churches in the city center as completely as possible. By participating in events in these churches, relationships were established, through which the author gained information on other churches within and outside the city center, including the more rural suburbs. The aim was to get to know individual churches that differed as much as possible in size, history, theology, age distribution and gender structure. However, this was not possible in a balanced degree, since the leaders and members of the churches and communities showed a varying degree of cooperation toward the author and her research interests. Through her participation in numerous CCVN events and relationships of trust with several women who belonged to it, the author gained a profound insight into the structures of this church and interviewed 23 women who belonged to it, as well as one woman pastor and the pastor in charge. The situation was quite different in the churches *Centro Internacional de Teoterapia Integral* and MJV, where the author did not succeed in gaining a deeper insight and from which only one informant each could be questioned. Persons who belonged to 29 different Pentecostal churches and communities were interviewed. An important contact person was Clifton Holland, who had lived and researched in Costa Rica since 1972 and established contact with the pastors' fraternity of Alajuela. This made it possible to get to know numerous pastors, several of whom in turn introduced the author to their churches and thus made further insights

⁶⁷ Cf. Mayring 2014.

⁶⁸ *Centro de Investigación en Estudios de la Mujer, Universidad Bíblica Latinoamericana, Universidad de Costa Rica, Universidad Nacional, Centro de Información y Documentación del Museo histórico cultural Juan Santamaría.*

and relationships possible. Where the names of informants or their relatives are mentioned in this study, they have been changed to ensure anonymity, except for Mayra Zapparoli Zecca, who is also quoted as the author of scientific literature.

1.6 Structure of the study

The work is divided into four parts. The second chapter of the introductory first part serves to provide the historical context of Pentecostalism in Costa Rica and Alajuela. The focus is on the genealogy of the relations between the Catholic Church and Evangelical denominations, because these relations establish the foundations of their self-understandings and shape the Pentecostal healing discourse. The second part contains the analysis and contextualization of the faith convictions, practices and experiences of women belonging to Pentecostal churches and communities that are shaped by the healing discourse. At the center is the discourse on inner healing, which, however, is inextricably linked with the discourse on physical and, above all, spiritual healing. The third part locates the healing discourse in the religious context, which is dominated by the Catholic official Church and lay religiosity and represents the biographical background for many of the women interviewed. The fourth part consists of a summary of the results and conclusions.

2 Identity and Identity Formation⁶⁹

Pentecostalism has been and still is shaped by continuous interactions between members of different denominations on a local and global level.⁷⁰ In Costa Rica, this applies in particular to interactions between members of Evangelical denominations and the Catholic Church. The hegemonic position of Catholicism, privileged as a state religion and still the majority religion despite all membership losses, means that Pentecostal identity in Costa Rica is determined by its relationship to Catholicism. On the side of the Evangelical Pentecostals, belonging to Pentecostalism does not determine their self-perception, since the term *pentecostal* implies an inner Evangelical demarcation as well as a connection with parts of Catholicism. Neither is desired in terms of identity politics. The situation is different with the term *evangélico* (Evangelical), which implies both a distinction from Catholicism and a denominational unity that allows to stage oneself as part of a group which is substantial enough to challenge Catholic sociopolitical hegemony. Evidence of this claim is that the most frequent self-designation of non-Catholics is not even *evangélico* (Evangelical) but *cristiano* (Christian), which theologically delegitimizes Catholicism. On the other hand, also on the side of Catholic Pentecostals the affiliation to Pentecostalism does not determine their self-perception, since they neither strive for the connection with Evangelicals nor for a separation from large parts of Catholicism. Instead Catholic Pentecostal emphasize their Catholicism, and they certainly claim to represent the true expression not only as Catholics of Christianity, but also as charismatic Catholics of Catholicism.

In this chapter first the current Pentecostal name and identity politics is analyzed and questions are raised with regard to its implications for the Pentecostal self-perception or rather for pentecostal self-perceptions. Following a genealogical approach⁷¹ it is then reconstructed, which historical events and negotiation processes have led to the current name and identity politics. The differences between the groups who call themselves *cristiano* (Christian) / *evangélico* (Evangelical) suggest that their being subsumed under this name is not based on naturally shared theological core tenets, but on the contingent fact that they happened to be in need of defending their rights vis-à-vis Catholicism. Third, an outlook of recent forms of rapprochement between Evangelicals and Catholics is given which shows that theological tenets can be relativized in the light of pragmatic considerations concerning the possible loss of

69 A similar version of this chapter was published under the title Negotiation Processes of “Pentecostal” and “Evangelical” Identity in Costa Rica in *PentecoStudies* 18.1 (2019), 79-98.

70 Cf. Bergunder 2010; Suarsana 2013; Maltese 2017, 49-51, 611-14.

71 Cf. Bergunder 2014, 269-273; 2018, 211-215; Maltese 2015, 79.

influence. Rather than understanding “Evangelical” on the basis of theological or liturgical factors, it makes more analytical sense to conceptualize it as a name that expresses a demarcation from and a challenge to the dominant religious groups with a view to maintaining one’s interest. The chapter ends with a look at the history of Pentecostalism in Alajuela, a city that has both a long Evangelical history compared with other parts of the nation and has repeatedly been the scene of developments that shaped Costa Rican Pentecostalism.

2.1 Name Politics

We always call ourselves Christians. Jehovah’s Witnesses and Adventists [...] are sects. [The Baptists and Methodists] are also [Christians]. [...] [The Catholics] [...] are Roman Catholic Apostolic because they depend on Rome, we depend on Christ. [...] They have their God and we have Christ. [...] These are different gods.⁷²

This is the way in which the pastor of the church *Manantial de Amor y Restauración* (MAR) described her group: Similar to Baptists and Methodists, it was Christian, which stood in contrast to the Catholics whose alleged religious centre was the pope. As a third category, the pastor mentioned sects, among which she counted Jehovah’s Witnesses and Adventists. This quotation illustrates the frontlines in which identity-making in Costa Rica takes place.

2.1.1 Demarcation: Christian/Evangelical versus Religious/Catholic

According to recent scholarship, in 2012 22.9 percent of the total population belonged to an Evangelical church. In 2013, 62.5 per cent of the Evangelical population belonged to a church that is referred to as a Pentecostal church in the classification established by Holland and frequently cited in relation to Costa Rica.⁷³ 15.9 percent of Evangelicals belonged to an Adventist church, 6.5 percent to a Baptist church and 4.9 percent to a Methodist or Moravian church. 1.4 percent of the Evangelical population was classified as Anglican, Presbyterian or Lutheran. Other smaller denominations and communities were the AIEC, the Church of the Nazarene, the Salvation Army, three Mennonite denominations, two Quaker communities, and others.

The term *cristiano* (Christian) is part of many church names and the most commonly used self-designation of non-Catholics. *Evangélico* (Evangelical) is used less frequently and predominantly as a synonym for *cristiano*. The term *pentecostal* (Pentecostal) is found in some church and denomination names, but is rarely used in everyday life.

⁷² Interview no. 39, 04/23/2015.

⁷³ Cf. Here and also further on Holland 2006, 2007, 2014.

One woman described herself as *de corte más pentecostal* (more Pentecostal type) and declared that she had joined a non-Pentecostal, Methodist church with the aim of making it more Pentecostal. As criterion of this lacking Pentecostal quality, she mentioned that God is not given there the freedom to reveal and to work. This was shown from her perspective by the fact that no *sanidad interior* (inner healing) and no *ministerio de liberación* (deliverance ministry) were practiced there. In order to remedy this, she trained in Theophostic Prayer Ministry,⁷⁴ with the intention of introducing its practice into her Methodist church. Another woman who belonged to an AIEC church reported that she had grown up *en una iglesia más pentecostal* (in a more Pentecostal church). Her present church was *más conservadora* (more conservative). *Conservador* (conservative) functions here within the Evangelical spectrum as an antonym of *pentecostal*. As criteria for determining whether a church is *más conservadora* or *más pentecostal* (more pentecostal), she named the choice of musical instruments for the service and the musical style. Elsewhere, she reported that if she needed inner healing, she would go to places other than her church, where no inner healing was practiced. The explanations given by these two women, who qualified their churches as not Pentecostal or as little Pentecostal, agreed in their statement that the discourse on inner healing was absent. These are indications that in Costa Rica participation in the inner healing discourse is considered a decisive characteristic of Pentecostalism.

Both women used the term *pentecostal* as a subcategory of *cristiano/evangélico*. However, this use is an exception to that of other informants, insofar as these hardly used *pentecostal*. *Pentecostal* as a subcategory of *cristiano/evangélico* hardly creates identity, because for Evangelical Pentecostals it is not the demarcation from Evangelical non-Pentecostals, but the demarcation from the Catholic Church that creates identity. Self-identification as Pentecostal would thus weaken the common identity of those within the Evangelical spectrum, whose distinctive feature is being non-Catholic or anti-Catholic. Framed by people who use *cristiano/evangélico* as self-designation, these terms seem to unite various groups throughout the non-Catholic camp along a shared theology:

- Christ is the centre of their faith.
- They have a personal relationship to Jesus based on individual prayer.
- They read the Bible to know God's will.
- Their love for God is revealed through their behavior, which is in line with God's will.

⁷⁴ Cf. chap. 5.3.3.

The name politics of Evangelical Pentecostals has had such a powerful effect that many Catholics have also used *cristianos* as an external name for Evangelicals. Other Catholics referred to Evangelicals as *evangélicos* or more rarely as members of *sectas* (sects), while *pentecostal* was also relatively unknown here and was at best used by priests. In contrast to other Catholics, members of the RCC called themselves *cristianos*, *cristianos católicos* (Catholic Christians) or *carismáticos* (charismatics). By using *cristiano* they broke the otherwise binary conceptualization of the categories *cristiano/evangélico* and *religioso* (religious)/*católico* (Catholic) and emphasized the denominational character of their Catholic identity, also in distinction to the cultural category *católico*.⁷⁵

According to demographic research, 63.4 percent of the population belonged to the Catholic Church in 2012.⁷⁶ Describing them, Evangelicals tend to use the term *católicos* (Catholics) in a pejorative sense along with *religiosos* (religious people). From this perspective, Catholics

- have the Pope as the center of their faith,
- have no personal relationship with Jesus because they worship idols instead of him and have a ritualized, superficial prayer practice,
- do not read the Bible and therefore do not know God's will,
- and espouse a secular behavior that is not in line with God's will.

This juxtaposition makes clear how the categories of *cristiano/evangélico* and *religioso/católico* are interdependent in non-Catholic discourse. *Cristiano* or *evangélico* thus represent names for an identity based on anti-Catholicism.

2.1.2 Hegemony: Sects and Liberals

While the terms discussed in the previous subsections draw boundaries toward the predominant group, the Catholic Church, there is another set of terms which mark the boundaries within the non-Catholic camp: *sectas* (sects) and *liberales* (liberals). *Secta* is primarily used to designate Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons. Adventists, who make up 3.6% of the total population, are an exception. They are esteemed by many non-Catholics as can be seen in the fact that the children of numerous Evangelical Pentecostals and even children and grandchildren of Evangelical Pentecostal pastors visited the *Instituto Centroamericano Adventista* in Alajuela, an Adventist secondary school which the US-American missionary and historian Wilton Nelson describes as an "achievement of the Evangelical movement".⁷⁷ An informant explained she

⁷⁵ Cf. Egeris Thorsen 2015, 140.

⁷⁶ Cf. Holland 2014.

⁷⁷ Cf. Nelson 1983, 331.

belonged to the church CCVN as well as to an Adventist church. According to her, the practice of prayer was better in the church CCVN because it was individual prayer, while the study of the Bible in the Adventist church was more profound:

In the Adventist Church I like the things that have to do with studies because they are very profound studies. [...] I love Evangelical style prayer. I don't like the way the Adventists pray. [...] They pray very superficially. [...] In an Evangelical church they suspected that I was an Adventist spy. And in one, two or three Adventist churches they told me I was an Evangelical spy. I did not run into a problem because I was very transparent from the beginning. When I went to any church, I said who I was and what I believed in, [...] and that my position was Christocentric. [...] The Evangelicals are more open than the Adventists.⁷⁸

The interlocutor differentiated between *evangélico* and *adventista* (Adventist) according to the criterion individual prayer vs. superficial prayer. According to her, of the four criteria for *cristiano/evangélico*, the Adventists met the last three. Consequently, she regarded them as part of the anti-Catholic coalition.

Liberal is used to designate the historical non-Catholic denominations that have rather small memberships and a less strict ethical code: Anglican, Presbyterian and Lutheran Churches. Those who categorize themselves as *cristiano/evangélico* assume that *liberales* do not comply with the criteria mentioned above. If *sectas* serves to exclude the too strict lifestyles, *liberales* marks the other extreme. Treating *sectas* and *liberales* as a sort of appendix the binary *cristiano/evangélico* vs. *religioso/católico* renders further differences among non-Catholic denominations irrelevant.

In sum, a close look at how *evangélico* is used shows that it expresses a difference vis-à-vis other groups. Apart from that, it is not used consistently, which is the reason why it requires additional, although ambivalent boundaries, such as *católico/religioso*, *secta* and *liberales*, with Adventists tending to disturb this scheme.

2.2 Historical Context

After analyzing current Evangelical-Pentecostal name politics, the following section will contextualize it historically. The reason why *evangélico* is used inconsistently is that the groups subsumed under this name do not share common essentials, but a common historically contingent experience of discrimination.

⁷⁸ Interview no. 67, 06/17/2015.

2.2.1 The Constitution of the Anti-Catholic Coalition: 1890-1965

According to Article 54 of the Constitution of 1844, the Free State of Costa Rica supports and protects Catholicism. Article 51 of the Constitution of 1882 introduced religious freedom. This dual religious statute still exists today: Catholicism is the official religion and is supported by the state, while other religious communities have the civil status of registered associations.⁷⁹ The first Evangelical Christians in Costa Rica were North Americans, British, Germans and Jamaicans who came to Costa Rica in the nineteenth century for economic reasons and among whom Evangelicalism remained a religion of foreign minorities tolerated by the Catholic Church.

The anti-Catholic coalition of different denominations can be traced back to the 1890s, when the first missionaries of different denominational backgrounds reached Costa Rica with the Central American Mission (CAM) and experienced rejection from the clergy and large sections of the population. During Mass and in the press, priests gave instructions not to greet the missionaries, not to sell them food, not to rent houses to them and not to attend their events. People who nevertheless had missionaries preaching in their homes were threatened by their neighbors, and some Evangelical assemblies ended because people threw stones at the building, made noise with pots, or physically attacked the participants.⁸⁰ In the first decades Costa Rica proved to be a very difficult mission area: in 1922 the CAM could only count five churches with about 250 converted.

As a reaction to the World Mission Conference in Edinburgh in 1910, at which Latin America had been excluded as a mission area because the continent was considered already christianized, in 1916 a conference took place in Panama, at which delegates of different denominations and mission societies of predominantly North American origin gathered together and divided up Central America into mission areas. Costa Rica was assigned to the Methodist Mission, which from then on became active there. In addition, the Latin America Evangelism Campaign, later called *Misión Latinoamericana* (ML), initiated major evangelism campaigns in Costa Rica for the first time in 1922 and 1927.⁸¹ In connection with the 1927 campaign, hostilities broke out between conservatives and clerics on the one hand and liberals, missionaries and participants in the campaign on the other. In the 1920s, members of the CAM, the ML and the Methodist Mission cooperated to create an *Instituto Bíblico* (Bible Institute), renamed in 1941 as

⁷⁹ Cf. Bastian/Fanger/Wehr/Werz 2000, 205f.

⁸⁰ Cf. Nelson 1983, 139-167.

⁸¹ Cf. Nelson 1983, 205-232; Hartch 2014, 39-42.

Seminario Bíblico Latinoamericano (SBL) and renamed again as *Universidad Bíblica Latinoamericana* in 1997, and to build a hospital called *Clínica Bíblica* and an orphanage called *Hogar Bíblico*. The hospital was built for charitable reasons on the one hand, on the other hand its construction was in order to counteract the problem that Evangelicals were discriminated against in other hospitals. In 1929 a missionary couple of the ML had a church called *Templo Bíblico* built in San José, against which members of the Catholic Church organized a procession, during which the church was cursed and labelled as *casa de herejía* (heretic house).⁸²

Until the 1940s, the missionary efforts came from the CAM, the ML and the Methodist Mission, who all joined together for specific projects. From the 1940s onwards, new groups and denominations, such as the Assemblies of God and the Church of God (Cleveland, Tennessee), began to send missionaries who would soon gain influence, as would the increasing number of Baptists.⁸³ When the constitution was revised following the 1948 revolution, representatives of the new churches and societies in Costa Rica officially for the first time officially united to defend their rights establishing the *Comité de Acción Evangélica* (Evangelical Action Committee, CAE) against the Constitutional Assembly and advocated for a legal status that would protect them from public aggression and discrimination.⁸⁴ *Evangélico* was thus the name of a political pressure group formed by some very different non-Catholic organizations that were not primarily united around theological but political interests.

The CAE did not achieve its goal to have the constitutional article on religion modified. Nevertheless, in 1950 the secretary of the CAE initiated an organization to establish permanent cooperation between the assembled churches. Delegates of Methodist, Wesleyan and Baptist Churches, of the AD, the AIEC, which had emerged from the CAM, of the *Asociación de Iglesias Bíblicas Costarricenses* (AIBC), which had emerged from the ML, and of the Holy Pentecostal Mission gathered and founded the *Alianza Evangélica de Costa Rica* (Evangelical Alliance of Costa Rica, AE). Their aims were to support Christian life, to create a pastoral and a lay association, to represent the interests of the affiliated churches toward the state, to try to achieve their legal and factual equality, and to establish common norms and strategies to solve problems between the communities. Other churches joined, so that by 1955 90 percent of non-Catholic denominations in Costa Rica were AE churches.

82 Cf. Nelson 1983, 224f.

83 Cf. Nelson 1983, 270-281.

84 Cf. Nelson 1983, 255.

The first years of the AE were marked by an increasing social influence of the Catholic Church on the state resulting from the abolition of the anticlerical laws of 1884. This strengthened the importance of the AE for its members: It helped to find assembly places, organized joint services, provided forms for children to be exempted from Catholic religious education, and intervened in cases of religious discrimination and persecution. It achieved the exemption from property taxes for its affiliated churches and organized relief operations in the event of accidents and natural disasters.

2.2.2 Charismatic Spring: 1965-1980

Toward the end of the 1960s the importance of the anti-Catholic coalition and thus also of the AE decreased. On the one hand this was due to the reconciliatory signals of the Catholic Church following the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) and the General Conference of the Latin American Bishops' Council in Medellín (1968). Evangelicals were now officially no longer regarded as heretics, but as separated brothers and sisters. This change of perspective made it possible that in 1967 the director of the Costa Rican Catholic seminary participated in the service for laying the foundation stone of a Lutheran church and that in 1968 ecumenical services were celebrated in a Catholic and an Anglican church. On the other hand, the Charismatic renewal movement brought people of different denominations together, as will be shown below.

The beginnings of the Costa Rican Charismatic renewal movement can be traced back to 1966 when North American missionaries at their language institute in San José began to organize weekly prayer meetings, such as those led by the new missionary of the Latin American Mission Robert Smith and his wife, who had experienced the Charismatic renewal movement in New England. Attended by missionaries from various organizations, these meetings became a site for experiences that were regarded as a new outpouring of the Holy Spirit as displayed in the healings reported. In 1969, two Argentine pastors gave an evangelization seminar in Costa Rica attended by pastors from the Assemblies of God, Baptist, Methodist and other churches. Its speeches were broadcast by the radio station *Faro del Caribe* that had been founded by the Latin American Mission in 1948. This, and the broadcast of similar events, contributed to the dissemination of the movement, which by 1970 had also reached Mennonite missionaries in Puerto Viejo on the Caribbean coast.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Cf. Holland 2010; Prieto Valladares/Snyder 2010, 278f.

In 1970, the superintendent of the *Iglesia Santidad Pentecostal* in Costa Rica invited the US priest Francis MacNutt together with two US pastors of Methodist denomination to speak during a retreat. Francis Mac Nutt visited the country further times, participated in further retreats, spoke in the Bible seminary, in the church *Templo Bíblico* and at private meetings of Catholics and Evangelicals. The US-American priest Francis Corbett and the US-American Catholic writer Barbara Shlemon were also invited. Some Evangelical Costa-Rican leaders took part in the *Primer Congreso Latinoamericano de Renovación Carismática* (First Latin American Congress for Charismatic Renewal) in Argentina in 1972.

Following Francis Mac Nutt's visit, Catholic and Evangelical students founded the *Café Ágape* near the UCR in San José as a common meeting place. At that time several ecumenical communities were founded in and around San José, which also met for prayer meetings. Numerous ecumenical meetings for pupils and students were held in the *Campamento Roblealto* facility at Heredia. The following informant, who at the time of the interview belonged to an Evangelical Pentecostal church in Alajuela, also took part in such a retreat. At that time, she had belonged to the Catholic Church, studied psychology at the UCR and came from a Catholic group to an ecumenical student group via a retreat. Decades later she converted to an Evangelical church:

I was at university, and I come from a Catholic family. I met fellow students who invited me to a Catholic church. Her name is Fatima church, in San José. And we had a retreat, and there I began to learn a little more about who God is, and above all about the Holy Spirit. [...] Before that I had followed everything that Catholics do, first communion, confirmation, ritualized things, [...] going to Mass and nothing else. But this time I somehow [...] had another contact, another relationship. It was very nice, I liked it. [...] And from then on, I also found an ecumenical group in the university, and I attended. There were Catholics and there were Christians. [...] Cell groups were begun to form in order to learn. Thus, I began to get to know God better.⁸⁶

In 1972, when Sister María Cecilia Arias returned from a study visit to Boston University, she reported that she had experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and miraculous healings in a prayer group. A prayer group formed around her and gathered in the house of her brother José Miguel Arias. In many parts of the country similar prayer groups were formed within the Catholic Church, and it is estimated that about 62 priests belonged to the charismatic movement in 1978.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Interview no. 33, 04/15/2015.

⁸⁷ Cf. Bastian/Fanger/Wehr/Werz 2000, 83-86.

Other events promoting the renewal movement were the national foundations of the international, non-denominational men's organization Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International (FGBMFI) as *Fraternidad de Hombres de Negocios del Evangelio Completo* and the women's organization Women's Aglow Fellowship as Aglow Costa Rica in San José in 1979. These decidedly non-denominational, upper middle-class associations organized weekly meetings and initiated small groups throughout Costa Rica.

Therefore, this movement not only affected the Catholic church, but also large parts of the AIEC churches, the Baptist and Methodist churches, and the AD churches, and some of these churches were in turn influencing each other. In other words and contrary to scholars who see non-Catholic groups as prototype of Pentecostalism, this Charismatic revival was not a one-way transmission from non-Catholic to Catholic groups.

In the following period, opposition movements arose both in the Catholic Church and among AE-affiliated churches, which rejected the Charismatic teachings regarding spiritual gifts. The leadership of the Catholic renewal movement was taken over by Reinaldo Pol, a priest and former member of Sister Arias's group who initially integrated non-Catholic Charismatics. But by the end of the 1970s the atmosphere between the latter and Catholics changed considerably.

Evangelical leaders experienced that the charismatic movement caused divisions, and Catholic clerics accused the Evangelical churches of proselytism because numerous Catholics who had come to know Evangelicals in the charismatic groups had converted. An example of Catholics poached by Evangelicals in connection with charismatic assemblies can be found in the history of the church *Iglesia Jesucristo es el Señor* (IJS) in Alajuela, which emerged in the 1980s from an ecumenical prayer group. The ecumenical group was taken over by two people who belonged to a church that had recently been started as a charismatic church from an IDEC church. The group initially gathered in private rooms, but eventually bought land and built a church building. In depicting these events, the pastor of the church IJS used the term *pentecostal* for the new charismatic ecumenical group, while he referred to the church that emerged as *evangélica*. Thus, a charismatic ecumenical prayer group became an Evangelical Pentecostal church and Catholic Pentecostals became Evangelical:

Two or three families of the charismatic renewal movement began to gather, and then two members of one Evangelical church began to coordinate and lead these people in their [...] Bible studies and such things. [...] There, so to speak, a Pentecostal movement became an Evangelical movement. [...] They gathered in

houses. After some time, they bought a piece of land. So [...] they built a small building there.⁸⁸

The changed mood between Evangelical and Catholic church leaders was expressed both in the Catholic magazine *Eco Católico* and in polemical exchanges in the daily *La Nación*.⁸⁹ To stop the member loss and strengthen Catholic identity, bishops and priests in Costa Rica, just like in other Latin American countries, began to emphasize popular practices of Catholic lay piety like “traditional Catholic prayers and devotions.”⁹⁰ Archbishop Arrieta tried to integrate the Charismatic renewal movement into the Catholic Church, in order to counter any proselytism by the non-catholic Churches and to make the attractiveness of the Charismatic movement more fruitful for his own Church.⁹¹ In 1979, he was successful in reaching a settlement by merging the lay communities *Agua Viva* (Living Water) and *Agape* with the movement *Renovación Espiritual* (Spiritual Renewal), which was under the Archdiocese. In the same year, the Bishops’ Conference adopted a declaration in which practices such as speaking in tongues were mentioned as problematic aspects of the charismatic renewal. Yet, the joy to prayer, interest in the Bible and personal involvement in Mass were positively emphasized. As a result of this modest concession by the Catholic Church, the tensions between the hierarchy and the Charismatic groups ceased, even though some clerics remained sceptical of the movement. While ecumenically minded lay communities lost their appeal in the following years, renewalist impulses, now purposely named Catholic Spiritual Renewal experienced an upswing. Thus, the Catholic Church succeeded in winning over large parts of the potentially threatening Charismatic movement. This re-established the opposition between Catholics and the rest.⁹²

The rejection of Evangelical converts by Catholics is illustrated in the following by three quotes from women who converted in the 1980s and 1990s. The quotes testify to the hostile mood that women faced at that time as a result of conversion:

At that time, conversion was [...] a disgrace to the whole village. At that time [...] signatures were collected to close the church.⁹³

This quotation shows that the identity of the village population was decisively determined by the affiliation of all to the Catholic Church. When an Evangelical church was built, this was interpreted as an attack on the village community. The conversion of individual villagers was

⁸⁸ Interview no. 20_3, 03/27/2015.

⁸⁹ Cf. Nelson 1983, 334f; Oviedo Cervantes 2003, 56.

⁹⁰ Egeris Thorsen 2016, 465.

⁹¹ Cf. Vargas 2009, quoted from Holland 2009, 5f.

⁹² Cf. Bastian/Fanger/Wehr/Werz 2000, 84f.

⁹³ Interview no. 45, 05/08/2015.

regarded as a threat of division. As a result, the population united to close the new church and restore the integrity of the village. Other informants told these stories:

The uncles, the grandmother - the whole world was against us, they even said: "I don't know you." Or: "Don't come to us."⁹⁴

At that time we were called "Hallelujah" or "tambourine player". Now you hear something like that less, but before it was more like the index finger. [...] [An] uncle [...] told me: "Well, are they already brainwashing you?"⁹⁵

These two quotes are examples of family responses to conversion. Converts felt marginalized, and Evangelical churches had the reputation of being agents of ideological indoctrination.

2.2.3 The Reception of the Liberation Theology

While the binaries *cristiano/evangélico* versus *religioso/católico* suggest the existence of two opposite, homogeneous groups, the spectrum was highly heterogeneous. Concerning the Evangelical Churches, this can be seen in the aforementioned difficulties of classifying Adventists adequately and in conflicts that arose in connection with the reception of liberation theology. Within the AE the *Seminario Bíblico Latinoamericano* became the venue for debating theological differences.⁹⁶ It was accused of Socialism, Marxism and Sandinismo. The result was that the AIBC, to which the *Seminario* formally belonged, dissociated itself from it, and the AE established new institutions for theological training such as the *Escuela de Estudios Pastorales* (School of Pastoral Studies). The pastor of the church IJS in Alajuela witnessed the development of this conflict and was one of the students who left the SBL because of its preference of liberation theology:

I started in the SBL. [...] But [during] the [Sandinista] revolution it somehow became very [...] socialist, and so I left it. Then, I started at ESEPA, a seminary that was also founded by the AIBC [...] but because I had to drive to San José, [...] I didn't finish there. And the Methodist mission had its theological department here. So, I applied [...] and was accepted. I did my bachelor's degree in theology at the Methodist University here in Alajuela.⁹⁷

Wilton Nelson, who was himself a lecturer and director of the SBL, interprets the conflict as the result of a polarization between representatives of liberation theology and the charismatic renewal movement and writes in 1983:

At the beginning of the 1970s, a polarization emerged that transcended denominational differences. At one extreme, a theology emerged that emphasized the secular. [...] In their efforts to achieve social justice, they [...] rejected traditional

⁹⁴ Interview no. 38, 04/22/2015.

⁹⁵ Interview no. 71, 07/08/2015.

⁹⁶ Cf. Nelson 1983, 332f.

⁹⁷ Interview no. 20_3, 03/27/2015.

evangelism [...] and turned to “liberation theology” [quote in the original] with its Marxist orientation. Their conviction was that the goal of Christianity is not the salvation of the individual, but of society, and that this salvation is [...] political and economic rather than moral and spiritual. [...] On the opposite side [...] were those who represented an “ultraspiritualized” gospel. [...] They emphasize absolutely opposite aspects in relation to the secular gospel. Its followers long for spiritual experiences [...] such as speaking in “tongues”, “prophecy”, casting out demons and miraculously healing the sick. Its followers are characterized by their sometimes cheerful, sometimes mystical songs, accompanied by guitars and clapping. Neo-Pentecostalism has become popular in many Evangelical churches. Polarization has divided the churches. The leaders consider themselves revolutionaries, some social, others spiritual. The theologians of “liberation” criticize the traditional church for emphasizing too much the heavenly and too little the earthly; the Neo-Pentecostal accuse them of exactly the opposite.⁹⁸

The conflict about the implications of liberation theology also resulted in divisions within the AE-affiliated churches. In the 1970s, the AIEC and the AD left the AE, albeit the latter only temporarily. In 1985 another five pastors who supported liberation theology left the AE with their churches and founded the *Federación de Iglesias Evangélicas Costarricenses* (Fraternity of Evangelical Costa Rican Churches)⁹⁹ which is now associated with the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Today, the Evangelical Alliance is visible mainly in two ways: First, it offers theological-pastoral training which is carried out in churches at over 100 locations in Costa Rica.¹⁰⁰ Secondly, it strives for political influence, especially with regard to issues of sexual morality, and to this end the Alliance is increasingly seeking a close link with the Catholic Church, as will be shown in the following section.

To a large extent the identity of the non-Catholic churches was determined by the relationships with the Catholic Church. The category *cristiano/evangélico* goes back to the coalition of several denominations to an alliance, whose common ground lay less in theological agreement than in joint political interests. But they did legitimize themselves with theological terms while delegitimizing competing groups also with theological terms. There were phases of rapprochement between the Catholic Church and the non-Catholic denominations and at the same time conflicts and divisions within the anti-Catholic coalition. Phases of strict demarcation between the Catholic Church and non-Catholic denominations strengthened the common identity of the latter.

⁹⁸ Cf. Nelson 1983, 332f.

⁹⁹ Cf. Holland 2014, 27.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. alianzaevangelica.org/pastores-y-lideres-mejor-capacitados/ und alianzaevangelica.org/decima-quinta-graduacion-del-plan-de-capacitacion-por-extension/ [12.3.2018].

2.3 New Alliances

The name politics of Evangelicals demonstrates the impact of mutual distortions that took place in the history of relations between Evangelicals and Catholics, but also obscure their entangled history. Historical descriptions of both sides represent the past as an unbroken continuity that follows theological core tenets. Yet, a closer look at recent developments in the sociopolitical discourse of Costa Rica shows that the theological and liturgical traits, that essentialist conceptualizations of Evangelicalism draw from, are all but a natural given. Rather, they are secondary to the pragmatics of bloc-building in order to challenge any position whose hegemony might result in a disadvantage.

2.3.1 Individual Recognition

The discourse of a binary setting of *cristiano/evangélico* versus *religioso/católico* is still dominant in everyday language, but on a personal level, an increasing number of encounters take place that contribute to decrease the distance between Evangelicals and Catholics. A growing number of individual non-Catholics admits that Catholics may have a personal relationship with Jesus, read the Bible and live in accordance to God's will, as in the case of the woman quoted below:

I know a young man who takes time every day [...], he does not leave the house without praying for an hour. He is a Catholic. [...] Once I accompanied him to a house for a prayer meeting, and God worked through him to bring healing, and so. [...] He says to me: [...] "I do not worship [...] idols." [...] It's about the relationship someone has with God. [...] There are people who are in the Catholic Church, and they are special, [...] different. And there are people in the Christian churches who are terrible, [...] who [...] blaspheme, quarrel, or cause quarrels. [...] Such persons just go to church, but [...] the Lord does not live in them.¹⁰¹

Both Evangelical and Catholic Pentecostals participate in the discourse on inner healing. Many of them were not aware that it was a common feature. Nevertheless, conscious adaptations also took place, as the following quote from a Catholic woman who belonged to the CCCAJ in Alajuela shows. She explained that the leaders of the *Cursos de Iniciación de Vida en el Espíritu* (Courses for the Beginning of Life in the Spirit, in short: Initiation Courses) consciously took over the altar call and the acceptance prayer from the Evangelicals and had integrated them into the flow of those courses:

The theme is discussed and then the persons are called one after the other to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. [...] We did not do this before. You know that the Evangelicals give all kinds of lectures, and in the end, there is an altar call. So, among us there are always two people who go to them and explain: "Will you accept Jesus as Lord and Savior?" We give them the text from the Epistle to the Romans:

¹⁰¹ Interview no. 39, 04/23/2015.

“If you confess with your mouth and believe with all your heart that Jesus is Lord, you will be saved.”¹⁰²

The informant quoted below, who also belonged to the CCCAJ, was open to input from the Evangelical side, too. She criticized that the similarities between Evangelical and Catholic Pentecostals led many priests to reject the RCC:

Many priests do not like the RCC. There are priests who think that we are Evangelical. [...] I don't care. [...] Keep the good and discard the bad.¹⁰³ [...] If I hear a sermon from an Evangelical brother and it brings me something, [...] why shouldn't I listen to his word?¹⁰⁴

Individual Evangelical Pentecostals therefore recognized the beliefs and faith practices of some Catholic Pentecostals, and individual Catholic Pentecostals recognized Evangelical Pentecostals for their beliefs and practices. In individual cases Catholic Pentecostals deliberately integrated elements from the Evangelical Pentecostal faith practice into their own practice. However, similarities between Evangelical and Catholic Pentecostals provoked scepticism among some priests toward the RCC, because they feared that the RCC could be “a Trojan horse within the once secure Roman Catholic walls, which would eventually function as a stepping stone to Evangelicalism for baptized Catholics”¹⁰⁵.

Even within the non-Pentecostal Catholic majority it was noticeable that more and more Catholics cultivated personal relationships with Evangelicals because, for example, family members had converted. As a result of their conversion Evangelicals experienced less and less repression on the part of their families. Two examples of appreciative recognition of Evangelicals by non-Pentecostal Catholics can be found in the following quotations:

I was once with the [...] Evangelicals, I had the feeling that there was more enthusiasm. [...] We gather less often, and they dedicate more hours a week, more days. They limit themselves more in comparison to what Catholics still do/ that we go to the disco.¹⁰⁶

There is a Christian course near here. [...] Quite great. And we learned a lot. [...] This has always fulfilled me. [...] A Colombian Christian invited us. [...] A method to give us more input for the personal relationship with God, to learn more about the Bible. It's not just about going to Mass.¹⁰⁷

The first cited informant stressed the emotional involvement of the Evangelicals as well as the consequent ethical implications of their beliefs in daily life, while the last cited informant

¹⁰² Interview no. 52_1, 05/21/2015. Cf. the Bible verse Romans 10.9.

¹⁰³ Cf. the Bible verse 1 Thessalonians 5.21.

¹⁰⁴ Interview no. 1, 03/07/2015.

¹⁰⁵ Egeris Thorsen 2015, 21; cf. Chesnut 2003a, 72.

¹⁰⁶ Interview no. 82, 07/27/2015.

¹⁰⁷ Interview no. 78, 07/16/2015.

presented an Evangelical faith course as an enriching complement to attending Mass. Another indication that Evangelicals increasingly experience social recognition is the message and success of the film *Hombre de Fé: Keylor Navas* (Man of Faith: Keylor Navas). In this film, the life of the Costa Rican soccer player Keylor Navas is marked by a childhood of deprivation in comparison to his present life blessed with fame and prosperity, in which he is not only the goalkeeper for his own national team, but also for the Real Madrid football club. Keylor Navas is portrayed as a man who has overcome all obstacles, because he has not stopped fighting, and because as a *crisiano evangélico* (Evangelical Christian), he has not stopped believing. This film was shown from December 2017 in Evangelical churches, but beyond that in all big cinemas of the country. Obviously the antihegemonic coalition of those who called themselves *crisiano/evangélico* had succeeded in shedding the social stigma, even though a majority of people still belong to the Catholic Church.

2.3.2 Sociopolitical Alliances

In recent years, the Evangelicals have been recognized increasingly by the Catholic majority as believing Christians. Additionally, joint efforts against the legal liberalizing in ethical sexual and fertility questions led to sociopolitical alliances between conservative, Evangelical and Catholic Pentecostals and Non-Pentecostals. The legalization of in vitro fertilization, the liberalization of legislation concerning abortion, the legal recognition of same-sex couples and, most recently, a reform of sex education in schools resulted in strong disputes between conservatives and liberals across denominational boundaries.

The debate concerning the ban on in vitro fertilization has occupied Costa Rican politics, the media and the public for several years. The technology was banned in 2000, but in 2012 the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ruled that the ban must be lifted because it violates human rights. The debate culminated in September 2015, when President Luis Guillermo Solís passed a decree allowing the introduction of the technology without the consent of Parliament, which was however temporarily suspended after several constitutional complaints.¹⁰⁸ In March 2016, in-vitro fertilization finally was legalized. Abortion is legal in Costa Rica only on condition that a woman's health or life is endangered by pregnancy or childbirth. When individual politicians make occasional statements that call for a liberalization of certain related laws, a social outcry is predictable.¹⁰⁹ By contrast, Costa Rica is one of the most tolerant countries in the region in terms of the legal recognition of same-sex couples. Registered civil

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Burgdörfer 2015, 2.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. ameliarueda.com/nota/diputada-del-frente-amplio-prepara-proyecto-de-ley-para-legalizar-el-aborto [14.3.2017].

partnerships have been recognized since May 2015. Yet efforts to implement this change have led to aggravated social debate and have revealed the extreme differences of positions.¹¹⁰

Since 2008, regular demonstrations have been held against these liberalizations, which were initially organized separately by the AE and the Catholic Church.¹¹¹ Since 2013, several thousand Evangelicals and Catholics have regularly united in *Marchas por La Vida* (Marches for Life).¹¹² The social discussion intensified during 2017, after the Ministry of Education published the *Programa de Estudio de Afectividad y Sexualidad Integral* (Program for Holistic Affectivity and Sexual Education), which was intended to modify school sex education according to the ideal of diversity.¹¹³ The opponents of this program accused the Ministry of Education of indoctrinating children with the *ideología de género* (gender ideology) and of illegitimately interfering in intra-family affairs with school sex education. Under the slogans *#AMisHijosLosEducoYo* (I educate my children) and *#ConMisHijosNoTeMetas* (Don't mess with my children) Evangelical and Catholic Conservatives demonstrated together in July and December 2017. In December eight of twelve candidates for the Presidency took part in a demonstration against the education program mentioned. In January 2018 the Inter-American Court of Human Rights ruled that it was discriminatory to grant heterosexual couples legal privileges different from same-sex couples, and in this way forced parliament to introduce same-sex marriage. From this moment on, the TV journalist Fabricio Alvarado, who was a singer and preacher of the church CMA and saw the self-designated apostle Rony Chaves as his spiritual father, became the most successful presidential candidate of those opposing liberalization concerning sexual-moral issues in the run-up to the presidential elections. He turned his resistance against same-sex marriage and Costa Rica's commitment to withdraw from the American Convention on Human Rights into the determining topics of the election campaign and received 24.9% votes, more than all other candidates in the first ballot on 4th February 2018 as a result of this strategy. Although he was defeated in the run-off election on 1st April 2018 by his competitor Carlos Alvarado of the social-liberal ruling party with 39.3% to 60.7%, his success shows that the fear of liberal moral politics has led to pragmatic coalitions between Catholics and Evangelical Alliance-groups, that until a few years ago were considered impossible. The Costa Rican Bishops' Conference and the Evangelical Alliance even issued a

¹¹⁰ Cf. Smith-Castro/Molina Delgado 2011.

¹¹¹ Cf. hazteoir.org/noticia/costa-rica-multitudinaria-defensa-familia-y-vida-proyectos-politicos-14137 [16.3.2018], familiasporlafamilia.blogspot.de/2008/09/costa-rica-los-obispos-y-los-principios.html?m=0 [16.3.2018] and ceirberea.blogdiario.com/1218166200/miles-de-evang-licos-marcharon-en-defensa-de-la-familia-en-costa-rica/ [16.3.2018].

¹¹² Cf. e.g. elpais.com/internacional/2013/08/11/actualidad/1376176524_110956.html [16.3.2018].

¹¹³ Cf. Ministerio de Educación Pública de la República de Costa Rica 2017.

joint statement on the elections, that was a clear recommendation on how to vote.¹¹⁴ The Catholic writer Carlos Alonso Vargas on his Facebook profile gave a theological reason for giving his own voice as a Catholic to an “Evangelical” candidate, who was fighting against sexual liberalization, two weeks before the run-off:

As a Catholic, ... I am convinced that someone who promotes abortion, same-sex “marriage” [quote in the original], euthanasia, etc. is more repugnant to the Virgin Mary than someone who does not believe in the worship of religious images.¹¹⁵

This quote shows that concerning sociopolitical questions, shared norms have become more important than denominational boundaries. The pastor of the church CCVN, who had been in office since 1965, stated that the opposition between the Evangelical churches and the Catholic Church had been overcome and that there were now other, common opponents:

When I got to know the gospel, we who knew the gospel had to struggle with the Catholics. The Catholics attacked us. [...] Not today, today it is quite the opposite, [...] in the sense that today it is the people who say they believe in nothing who attack Christians and Catholics, the faithful in other words, whether they are Catholics or Evangelicals. [...] The balance of power has changed.¹¹⁶

The pastor quoted the changed majority relations as a reason for overcoming the opposition. He identified the unifying characteristic of those who now attacked both Catholics and Evangelicals to be that they were non-believers. It can be assumed that many of those whom he characterized as non-believers would not have called themselves so. In view of the new sociopolitical alliances outlined above and the new opposition that accompanied them, it can be assumed that the group of people characterized as non-believers by the pastor, were rather united by the advocacy of sexual and reproductive liberalizations than by an explicit rejection of Christian beliefs. While the conservative discourse among Pentecostals on questions of sexual and reproductive ethics is the dominant one, here too no uniform political attitude is found.¹¹⁷ Thus young people who belonged to the church *Iglesia Manos Sanadoras de Jesús* (MSDJ) took part in the *Marcha por la Diversidad* (March for Diversity) in San José on July 1, 2018. Afterwards one of them published a photo of herself on her Facebook page, where she could be seen with the rainbow flag and which she commented as follows:

There are neither homosexuals nor bisexuals nor heterosexuals, there is only LOVE [capital letters in original]¹¹⁸

¹¹⁴ Cf. La Conferencia Episcopal de Costa Rica/La Federación Alianza Evangélica Costarricense 2018.

¹¹⁵ facebook.com/carlosalonso.vargas?lst=100008853792117%3A1296078121%3A1521550536 [18.3.2018].

¹¹⁶ Interview no. 18, 03/25/2015.

¹¹⁷ Cf. also Steigenga 2001, 62.122.

¹¹⁸ facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=1870292156367249&set=a.537889036274241&type=3&theater [21.9.2018].

Even the widespread binary conceptualization Pentecostal versus Liberal in consequence is not sustainable.¹¹⁹

2.4 History of Pentecostalism in Alajuela

Nelson describes Alajuela as a liberal city in comparison to the cities of San José, Cartago and Heredia. Alajuela's liberal tradition led to the fact that the first Evangelical missionaries met with a better reception here than in the other cities. In 1895 McConnell, the first Evangelical missionary family of the Missionary Society CAM moved from San José to Alajuela. In November of the same year 15 people converted in Alajuela, and the following year, among others, a priest converted together with his family.¹²⁰ In 1920 the Methodist Mission began its work in Alajuela and in 1928 the second Methodist church in the country was built in the center of the city, with 141 faithful in 1956.¹²¹ In 1927 when the preacher Angel Archilla Cabrera of the Presbyterian Church in Puerto Rico met with rejection in many places within the framework of the evangelism campaign organized by the Missionary Society ML, Alajuela's city administration behaved differently, asking him to hold conferences for which it made the municipal theatre available, and which were finally attended by the elite of the city as well.¹²²

In 1948, the AD delegates began their missionary work in Alajuela, from which the church CCVN emerged as the second church of this denomination in Costa Rica. The main pastor of the church CCVN since 1965 presented its history as follows:

The Lord has allowed me to build several churches. Then, with time, the AD opened. [...] It had been very conservative, a very conservative Pentecostalism. [...] At the end of the 1960s a very strong charismatic movement came about, coming from South America and also from North America. It captured not only the Catholic Church, but also [...] the conservative churches, traditional Pentecostal and traditional non-Pentecostal [churches]. That was 1968, 70, 72. So there [...] what we today call *Asociación* [...] CCVN came into being. So, let's say, we have/ there is [...] a big umbrella. This big umbrella is the AD. Under this legal umbrella there is a small umbrella. That is us and others [...] We have relations with the AD, but we have other approaches [...] in the way of evangelism, in the way of [...] hierarchy. [...] It is [...] more flexible. [...] And then the churches that belong to us came into being. We have one in Quebradas de Tambor, we have one in Cacao de Atenas, Santa Eulalia, La Guácima, Los Altos de Naranjo. And they multiply again, they create new churches. We have six organized churches, large ones, with their church buildings and everything, and there are others that are just beginning. [...] We pastors meet [...] once a month. Everyone has his own particularities. [...] Some are in rural areas, and each rural area is different.¹²³

¹¹⁹ Cf. Maltese 2017, 255 FN 34.

¹²⁰ Cf. Nelson 1983, 144.

¹²¹ Cf. Nelson 1983, 197

¹²² Cf. Nelson 1983, 216-223.

¹²³ Interview no. 18, 03/25/2015.

According to this pastor, the charismatic movement had left a lasting mark on the church CCVN and led to a partial dissociation from the AD. The church CCVN had given rise to various new congregations in the city and province which remained connected as an association to which six churches in and around Alajuela and other younger congregations belonged by 2015, whose pastors gathered monthly. In the further course of the interview the pastor assessed the effects of the liberal tradition of Alajuela on the missionary activity of the Evangelicals as negative in contrast to Nelson. The fact that the people in Alajuela were *un poco intelectual* (somewhat intellectual) and therefore not interested in the gospel made it difficult for his predecessors to proclaim it. Unanimously the city was described as liberal; however these contrasting effects of the city's imprint as they were perceived, can possibly be explained by the fact that this imprint enabled Evangelicals to make first contact with the population insofar as they encountered open-minded inhabitants, but later made binding conversions more difficult when the initially interested population got a feeling of the far-reaching consequences of conversion.

In Alajuela, the charismatic movement was shaped by a pastor couple who had been sent to Alajuela by an IDEC church in San José at the end of the 1960s. When they began to preach, heal and cast out demons in public places, the sending church criticized these practices, so that it came to a break. The couple invited national and international preachers and built the church *Catedral del Evangelio* (CE) on the outskirts of the city center in 1976. Several informants from different churches reported that during these campaigns or in this church they had experienced healing and had converted, and several pastors who belonged to the pastors' fraternity of Alajuela called this pastor their spiritual father.

For Alajuela, the beginning of the charismatic movement within the Catholic Church dates back to 1974, when two couples took part in an initiation course in San José and then formed two prayer groups who gathered in private houses. Soon a corresponding course was held in the Marist School, in which more than 750 people are said to have participated. From then on, every Tuesday evening meetings of the charismatic movement took place in the church of *La Agonía*.¹²⁴ At the behest of the Bishop, the then priest of this parish is said to have supported the development of the movement throughout the diocese. New prayer groups were formed in several city districts and diocesan regions. In 1975, a house was rented by the Catholic Church of Alajuelas as a center for the movement where counseling and prayer meetings were held and a small library was set up. In the early 1990s, the *Fundación Amigos de Jesús* was established

¹²⁴ The official name of the congregation is *Santo Cristo de Esquipulas*, and the official name of the church it belongs to is *Iglesia del Santo Cristo de la Agonía*. The congregation and the church are called *La Agonía* by the residents of Alajuela and especially by the faithful belonging to it. This term is therefore used here.

to build and maintain a two-story building on an acquired plot of land, which was then called the CCCAJ, and in which, since its completion in 1998, events such as counseling, prayer meetings and various courses have been held almost daily.¹²⁵

The Pentecostal counseling practice in Alajuela was significantly influenced by a The 700 Club counseling center, which was opened as a branch of a The 700 Club counseling center in San José in 1987 at the latest¹²⁶ and closed around 1999.¹²⁷ The staff advised, evangelized, gave lectures and trained others for counseling.

The founding of the non-denominational women's organization TF in 1989 was a formative impulse for the Pentecostal landscape of Costa Rica which emanated from Alajuela. The women's organization Women's Aglow Fellowship, now called Aglow International has become the largest non-denominational women's organization internationally.¹²⁸ In the 1990s, the Ladies of the Fellowship was founded as a women's organization within the FGBMFI, whose first Costa Rican local group, *Damas de la fraternidad*, was founded in 2010. Nevertheless, a corresponding group for women was missing in Alajuela in 1989. This motivated the wife of a man who started to visit a FGBMFI local group there, to found such a group, so she initiated TF. She explained that some women whose husbands attended FGBMFI meetings feared that FGBMFI was a new religion. In order to convince the women that the aim of the FGBMFI meetings was not a change of religion, but an intensification of the individual relationship to God, she had initiated corresponding women's meetings:

When the husbands began to go to FGBMFI, there were many women who did not want them to go because they thought they would be converted to another religion there. So some husbands began to say why don't we hold meetings for wives so they would know what we were doing there, and so we wouldn't have so many conflicts with them anymore. That's how we started, and after that, okay, the vision changed, because it was now about satisfying the needs of [...] the women, not just being a companion for the man. We had heard of Aglow, but at that time [...] Aglow was not known in Costa Rica. That was a very small group, without any impact on society, so to speak. [...] We started with a group of women [...] to gather in a house, and we invited other women whose husbands also went there [to FGBMFI]. We introduced them to the Lord, and we invited them to share in the testimony and a little bit of the Bible and such things. That's how we started.¹²⁹

¹²⁵ Cf. Renovación Carismática Católica de Alajuela 1994; Oviedo Cervantes 2003, 39f.

¹²⁶ This *terminus a quo* comes from an informant in an e-mail dated 02/24/2016. According to this she had received counseling in this center in that year.

¹²⁷ Cf. interview no. 45, 05/08/2015.

¹²⁸ Cf. Griffith 1997, 27.

¹²⁹ Interview 02/2016. This interview was done by the daughter of the person interviewed. It was recorded as an audio file and sent to the author by e-mail.

In 2015, 52 local groups belonged to TF, who met weekly in hotels or restaurants. Every year a national, one-day TF congress took place in San José with 2000 participants.

Another input within Costa Rican Pentecostalism that came from Alajuela was the introduction of the Theophostic Prayer Ministry. This goes back to a pharmacist who belonged to the church CCVN and around 1999 met a staff member of the founders of the Theophostic Prayer Ministry. As a result of positive experiences with this method, she learned it, translated the relevant training material into Spanish and since 2001 has held a large number of seminars in various churches and educational institutions in various places. By 2015, she estimated that 250 people had completed their training in Costa Rica. These persons belonged to numerous denominations including the Catholic Church, but practiced Theophostic Prayer Ministries both in their churches and in various professional contexts, thus contributing to its dissemination.

2.5 Conclusions

The construction of the binarity of *cristiano/evangélico* versus *religioso/católico*, which gives identity to Evangelical Pentecostals, is the result of local and global church political dynamics and made any alliance between Evangelical and Catholic Pentecostals impossible for many years. Although in the context of the charismatic movement of the 1960s and 1970s relations developed between them, which had a lasting influence on the Pentecostal discourse, the phase of rapprochement was followed by years of mutual condemnations. For some years now, different forms of rapprochement have been observed again. With regard to their religious convictions Evangelical Pentecostals are increasingly respected by Catholic Pentecostals, but also by the Catholic majority. They have thus succeeded in shedding the social stigma. On the other hand, some Evangelical Pentecostal Christians acknowledge the convictions and practices of some Catholic Pentecostal Christians. Beyond these individual encounters over the past years, as a result of common sociopolitical interests, alliances have developed, which before would have seemed impossible. The social and legislative liberalization regarding topics of sexual and reproductive ethics unites conservative Evangelicals and Catholics in the fight against this development, which they condemn as moral and spiritual decay. Thus, it happens that members of the Evangelical churches, who in the first decades of the twentieth century criticized the sociopolitical influence of the Catholic Church because of its position as religious hegemonic power, tried to form an alliance with it in 2018 in order to further their own sociopolitical interests.

Despite these recent developments in hegemonic politics, the binary conceptualization *cristiano/evangélico* versus *religioso/católico* still influences the perception of religious groups

in Costa Rica. The self-representations of Evangelicals and Catholics lead to a perception of both the anti-Catholic coalition and the Catholic Church as homogeneous groups, so that Evangelical and Catholic Pentecostals in Costa Rica ignore the entangled history of said groups, especially with regard to the 1970s and 1980s, as well as shared doctrinal convictions and spiritual practices. Until recently, the majority of Costa Rica studies have rather uncritically adopted the self-representations of Evangelicals and Catholics described above. Thus, they have virtually reiterated the binary naming politics mentioned above. Yet an approach that fails to trace the entanglements and interests of the various groups subsumed under the name “Pentecostal” also fails to acknowledge the role Catholic groups had in altering the religious landscape of Costa Rica and establishing what today is discussed as Pentecostalism. Put differently, Catholics are portrayed as passive receivers – a misrepresentation that serves first and foremost the triumphalist claims of actors, who call themselves “Evangelical”, rather than theoretically and methodologically transparent academic research. As an alternative I have proposed a “genealogical [...] contextualization”¹³⁰, which shows the contingency of the current demarcations and takes into account political dynamics on the local level along with their entanglement in global developments. This historicizing approach allows for a higher sensitivity regarding the fluidity of Pentecostalism and for a consistent and scholarly transparent way of drawing implications from the conceptualization of Pentecostalism, without losing sight of the heterogeneity of the studied groups and its constitutive global dimension.

¹³⁰ Maltese 2015, 79; cf. Bergunder 2014.

Part Two: Gender and Healing

3 Topics of Healing

Putting Pentecostalism in Costa Rica into historical context has shown that the genealogy of relations between the Catholic Church and non-Catholic denominations shapes their self-understanding. In addition, interactions between representatives of the Catholic Church and non-Catholic denominations in the context of the charismatic renewal movement, and beyond, shaped faith convictions and practices of Evangelical as well as Catholic Pentecostals. This is evident principally in the discourse on healing, which was of central importance for the women interviewed for this study. In particular, they described the experience of the so-called inner healing as transformative, when they spoke about healing emotional wounds through forgiveness, becoming more conscious of the value of their own person, and beyond that also about spiritually struggling with evil forces. In the following, the healing discourse will be reconstructed and analyzed on the basis of oral statements by informants and written material picked up in Alajuela, in order to clarify its significance for women in the specific context.

Fundamental to the pentecostal healing system transcending denominations is the understanding of the person as a three-part composite of body, soul and spirit. According to this understanding, God heals all areas of humanity in their own way. Through physical healing practices he frees from physical illness, and medicine is also considered to be God's possibility to heal. The soul is understood as a place of mind, will and emotions and is treated with counseling and psychotherapy. The spirit is regarded as the spiritual dimension of the human being, which is relevant for the relationship with God in this life and how it is faring beyond. The cause of spiritual problems is seen in demonic influences, which have to be battled spiritually through deliverance. At the same time it is assumed that the components of the person are not isolated from each other, but that body, soul and spirit are inter-related. Consequently, it is assumed that the etiologies of suffering work together. Physical illness may have not only physical, but also psychological or spiritual causes. Likewise, the reason for demonic influences may be not only spiritual offences or burdens, but also the particular vulnerability of a person as a result of mental injury or physical illness. And psychological distress is not only caused by psychological injuries, but also by physical causes or by demons. From the assumption of these pneumo-psychosomatic connections it follows that types of healing are also interconnected and can be combined.

The reports of the informants as well as other oral and written sources show that within the pentecostal healing discourse in Alajuela the inner healing is given greatest importance. Not

only pastoral and psychotherapeutic methods serve to achieve inner healing, but methods of physical and spiritual healing too are ultimately geared toward it. The central belief in inner healing is that Jesus heals emotional wounds as well as behavioral patterns and thoughts that are personally and socially destructive. The goal of inner healing is not to change the conditions, though this is not excluded, but to change a person's attitude in relation to these conditions. This change demands, that those affected find a constructive way of dealing with the existential effects of suffering and guilt and reconcile themselves with their own biography and self-concept. The necessary preconditions for this reconciliation are on the one hand granting and receiving forgiveness, and on the other hand an awareness of being God's beloved, valuable being.

3.1 Dealing with Suffering

3.1.1 Forgiveness

3.1.1.1 Theology of Forgiveness

The Pentecostal theology of forgiveness which dominates in Alajuela can be summarized as follows, based on the statements of informants and the written documents of the faith courses *Nueva Vida en Cristo* (New Life in Christ) and *Renovada* (Renewed): Forgiveness is regarded as the *conditio sine qua non* not only of inner healing (*sanidad/sanación interior*), but also of salvation in the hereafter (*salvación*), because there is a conviction that lack of forgiveness leads to God not forgiving. Faith in God's justice in this life and beyond helps injured persons to refrain from thoughts of revenge. The commandments of love your neighbor and enemy are interpreted as commandments for forgiveness. It is assumed that the devil causes misconduct, so that people do not bear responsibility for their deeds. At the same time, the devil works against forgiveness in the injured person. By them not forgiving he gains power, but by forgiving he is defeated. In the following, these aspects of this theology of forgiveness are explained and documented.

Forgiveness as a prerequisite for inner healing

The co-pastor of the church MSDJ was convinced that inner healing and spiritual growth are not possible without forgiveness. To support this assumption, she reported about a woman who was unwilling to forgive her husband. Due to her unwillingness to forgive, the pastor assumed she could not help her because God could not heal her:

We also had cases [...] of a woman, [...] and she [i.e. the pastor] told her: "You must forgive your husband." And she said to her: "I can't do that [...]." [...] Then the pastor said to her: "Okay, that's your decision and I respect it, but I can't keep praying for

you because you don't want to forgive. I can spend myself in prayer for you, but if there is no forgiveness in your heart, there is nothing I can do."¹³¹

The need for forgiveness as a prerequisite for inner healing is confirmed in the course book *Nueva Vida en Cristo* when it states that people who do not forgive become embittered slaves of hatred and revenge.¹³² In the course book *Renovada*, the conviction that healing requires forgiveness is substantiated by personal testimonies of several women.¹³³

Forgiveness as a prerequisite for eschatological salvation

According to a widespread conviction, the soteriological consequence of not forgiving is to not receive God's forgiveness after death. Some informants report that in order to avoid possible damnation, they regularly check themselves for possible emotional wounds and resulting negative emotions such as resentment, hatred or thoughts of revenge. If they found these in themselves, they tried to overcome them by forgiving the wrongdoing that caused them. The informant quoted below declared forgiveness decisive for the question of eternal life or death. This shows that the efforts for forgiveness are also motivated by the threatening perspective of eternal damnation:

The Lord commands me to forgive. For if I do not forgive, it is very serious because I will not be forgiven. It is a matter of life and death. Either I forgive and go with the Lord when the Lord calls me [...] I cannot appear before the Lord when I have forgiven no one.¹³⁴

In the course book *Renovada* an interpretation of the Bible passage Matthew 18:21-35 is offered which describes the devastating eschatological consequences of not forgiving.¹³⁵

While these arguments follow the passages Matthew 18:21-35 as well as Matthew 6:14f and Luke 11:4, insofar as God's forgiveness is presented here as being dependent on interhuman forgiveness, other informants rather follow Ephesians 4:32 and Colossians 3:13. Interhuman forgiveness is called for as a grateful answer to God's forgiveness. Thus a young man justified his motivation to forgive with the desire to react appropriately to God's forgiveness of his own guilt instead of fearing a threatening eschatological perspective:

If God has forgiven me for everything I do, why should I not forgive my father? [...] God has forgiven me despite all the mistakes one makes. So who am I not to forgive?¹³⁶

¹³¹ Interview no. 58, 06/01/2015.

¹³² Cf. Robinson 2001, 18.

¹³³ Cf. Sumner 2010, 57f.

¹³⁴ Interview no. 44, 05/07/2015.

¹³⁵ Cf. Sumner 2010, 51.

¹³⁶ Interview no. 62, 06/05/2015.

God's justice as the horizon of human forgiveness

The fact that faith in God's justice refers not only to a judgement beyond but also to a judgement in this world is shown by the statement of an informant who belonged to the church IJS and said that God would know how to deal justly with perpetrators. In view of the often inadequate legal processing, she trusted that God would still provide for appropriate punishment in this world. For example, a tragic event in the family of a perpetrator could be God's punishment for his deed. The conviction of such a justice in this life seems to help victims to overcome their own need for revenge, especially in view of a low level of trust in state jurisdiction:

There is a human justice [...] that must be respected. But the only judge is God. And yes, the murderers often don't get what we think they should get. [...] God will have to look at them. I can't cling to anything, say when someone kills someone, when someone rapes someone. From a human perspective, I want him to pay. I might want to see that, but only God will know. [...] There are consequences in his life, [...] maybe in his family.¹³⁷

In the course books *Nueva Vida en Cristo* and *Renovada*, trust in God's justice is mentioned as a reason for one's own renunciation of punitive demands. Whether God's punishments are to be expected in this world or in the hereafter is not explained.¹³⁸

Forgiveness as a consequence of love for neighbor and enemy

An informant who had changed churches a few months earlier as a result of personal conflicts spoke of love for those who had hurt her. She described this love as one that does not aim to be close, but aims to see the person as God's creature and leads to forgiveness:

I decide to forgive her, and I [say] every day: "Lord, today I bring you the woman pastor, I bring you the pastor, I bring" it was [still] another family [...], "and today we decide to forgive them, and we love them."¹³⁹

Another informant combined the double commandment of love with the demand for forgiveness and concluded that whoever does not forgive the neighbor does not love God:

How can you say that you love God if you do not forgive your neighbor who is near here?¹⁴⁰

Convictions like these are suspected to contribute to the relative homogeneity of the forgiveness discourse because they lead to the confession of not forgiving being interpreted as an expression of lacking love for God and obedience to God.

¹³⁷ Interview no. 33, 04/15/2015.

¹³⁸ Cf. Robinson 2001, 19f; Sumner 2010, 53.

¹³⁹ Interview no. 37, 04/20/2015.

¹⁴⁰ Interview no. 44, 05/07/2015.

Forgiveness as victory over the devil

The devil acts as an explanation when a person does not live up to Pentecostal claims. Attributing wrongdoing to the devil facilitates forgiveness. The pastor of the church CCBEDN reported that the conflict between her and her mother escalated when she converted at the age of 13 and her mother tried with psychological and physical violence to undo her commitment in her new church. When she understood, however, that it was not her mother who wanted to harm her, but the devil who tried to dissuade her from Christ, she found it easy to forgive her mother. She tells all those whom she now accompanies as pastor in the healing process that it is not people themselves who are responsible for suffering, but the devil who works in them:

If one understands that it is not the person, that it is Satan who rises up against us, that everything that worked in my mother at that time was the enemy, so that I would not follow the way of Christ any further - it [i.e. forgiveness] was not difficult for me. [...] I assumed that everything was the enemy and point. And if someone assumes that, then it's very simple! Because then you don't see the person. [...] The Bible says that our fight is not against flesh and blood, it is against armies, principalities and powers.¹⁴¹ If I understand that it is not that person, [...] and I see that it is a demon, that it is Satan through them, if I see it that way from the beginning, I don't even have to forgive that person, because my fight is not against them. I will always love them.¹⁴²

While the explanation of wrongdoing through the work of the devil makes forgiveness easier, it is also considered the devil's interest to prevent it. The question of forgiveness or non-forgiveness is therefore tantamount to the question of the dominion of God or the devil over a person's life. Non-forgiveness, as well as destructive emotions such as hatred, resentment, and vengeance, are considered spiritual gates (*puertas espirituales*), through which demons gain access to all areas of a person's life, and thus the victory of the devil occurs. Forgiveness, on the other hand, means victory over the devil, because it closes spiritual gates and expels demons. For people who have been injured, the question of forgiveness or non-forgiveness is crucial for spiritual salvation, because

for example, in a rape, a lot of spirits come in. But really a lot!¹⁴³

One informant explained that she had felt hatred, resentment and vindictiveness as a result of a rape, which had given the devil access to her life. As a result of the forgiveness, however, the devil no longer had any access point or possibility of influence:

The rape had caused hatred, resentment and revenge, so these were the approaches through which the demonic beings could cling fast. At the moment of forgiveness, at the moment of renunciation of revenge, at the moment of surrendering our lives

¹⁴¹ Cf. the Bible verse Ephesians 6.12.

¹⁴² Interview no. 45, 05/08/2015.

¹⁴³ Interview no. 73_2, 07/10/2015.

to God's sovereignty, so that he may be the one who avenges, who judges, so that he may speak for us, then there is no access point left to which the enemy can cling.¹⁴⁴

In the course book *Nueva Vida en Cristo* with reference to Ephesians 4.26-27 and 2 Corinthians 2.10-11 wrath is mentioned as an access point for the devil into the life of humans, making it possible for him to rule over it. Wrath is to be overcome in order to make the devil powerless.¹⁴⁵

3.1.1.2 Practice of Forgiveness

Repentance as a prerequisite for forgiveness

The significance of the recognition of guilt, repentance and the need for a request for forgiveness on the part of a person being accused draws controversial response. The pastor of the church MANAIA considered forgiveness possible without repentance, but it was much more difficult to accomplish than if repentance was apparent. In order to support the person's request for forgiveness, she practiced confronting the conflict parties with each other because the emotions and behavior of the person changed as a result of the encounter:

If we can make a connection with the person who has done harm, then it is beautiful, because then something breaks, then there is a face to face, we look at each other. [...] This phase [...] is called [...] confrontational counseling. [...] Not in all cases this is possible, because there are people who [...] don't want to ask for forgiveness, but in the majority of cases I actually managed to get the perpetrator to come and say "sorry".¹⁴⁶

An informant judged forgiveness without recognizable remorse to be difficult to achieve on the basis of her own experiences. She confessed how difficult it was for her to forgive as her husband had shown no remorse throughout his life:

To forgive when there is no repentance is very difficult.¹⁴⁷

Unlike these two women, other informants insisted that the repentance of the accused person was irrelevant to forgiveness. They argued that they were freeing themselves from this person through forgiveness. If, on the other hand, they depended on the perpetrator's repentance in order to be able to forgive, they would achieve the opposite of the desired deliverance. This conviction is consistent with the statements in the course material. According to the course book *Nueva Vida en Cristo*, a guilty person is obliged to repent and ask for forgiveness, but the

¹⁴⁴ Interview no. 76, 07/14/2015.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Robinson 2001, 18.

¹⁴⁶ Interview no. 61, 06/04/2015.

¹⁴⁷ Interview no. 43_1, 04/28/2015.

injured person's forgiveness does not depend on it.¹⁴⁸ The *Renovada* course book also stresses that repentance is not a condition for forgiveness.¹⁴⁹

Understanding as a prerequisite for forgiveness

An informant from the CCCAJ talked about a retreat where attempts were made to understand the biographical background of accused people in order to promote granting forgiveness:

When we had a retreat a year ago, [...] [it was about] forgiveness above all. [...] There were times when we had to cry terribly, [...] but it was also nice because at the same time you understood a lot, learned a lot, and then you learn to understand the people.¹⁵⁰

The practice of healing prayer, standing in place prayer, and Theophostic Prayer Ministry are based on the assumptions that the reasons for human misconduct are harmful experiences in childhood. For example, the Theophostic Prayer Ministry training used a film sequence showing a session of its founder Edward Smith with a client. It can be observed how the two of them, starting from present emotions in conversation, through emotions associated with specific childhood memories, arrive at the client's relationship with his father. It is shown that the client succeeds in reassessing the behavior of his father, which he perceived as offensive, by recognizing that he did not intentionally hurt him, but that his behavior was in turn based on his own childhood experiences. This understanding of his father's background made it easier for the client to forgive him.¹⁵¹

Decision as a prerequisite for forgiveness

Even more important for the success of forgiveness than the two aspects just mentioned is the active decision of an injured person to forgive, as this is not seen as an uncontrollable feeling. The informant, who had changed churches a few months earlier as a result of personal conflicts, explained that it was necessary to acknowledge one's own negative feelings and decide on forgiveness so that God could begin to eliminate these feelings and heal the soul. Her role model is Jesus, who forgave Peter's denial,¹⁵² thus helping her to decide to forgive those who denied her and her family. She compared forgiveness with love, inasmuch as in both of them the corresponding feelings followed on from a conscious decision in the course of time:

Every day [...] you must say: "Lord, today I forgive them", even if you do not feel it. Because it's not like you say: "That's it. I forgive." No, it's every day, and it takes a while until you think about it and it finally doesn't hurt you anymore. So it's a

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Robinson 2001, 19-21; Robinson 2005, 19.

¹⁴⁹ Cf. Sumners 2010, 53.

¹⁵⁰ Interview no. 3, 03/10/2015.

¹⁵¹ Cf. Smith 2006.

¹⁵² Cf. the Bible passages Mark 14.66-72, Matthew 26.69-75, Luke 22.56-62 und John 18.15-18, 25-27.

process. [...] Every day in your morning prayer, take them in there and there will come a moment when you will finally say: “Look, what I have felt, I no longer feel.” That’s how forgiveness works. Almost three months, and every day we decide to forgive so that nothing remains. [...] It is a decision. You can hear what you want, but if you don’t decide and acknowledge that you have bitterness and lack of forgiveness/ [...] [If you] say, “Yes, that’s in me”, then God begins. Then you give God permission to take out what is in you, what is not right. [...] God told me [...]: “And Peter denied me three times.” [...] So I decide: “Forgive! If you have forgiven Peter, who am I that I could not forgive?” [...] I decide to love you, [...] then I begin to discover beautiful things about you, then I understand that you have many [...] beautiful things in your heart, good attitudes. It grows and blossoms. [...] It’s the same with forgiveness.¹⁵³

An informant who belonged to the church CCVN reported that she felt liberated and empowered by realizing that forgiveness is not an unavailable feeling, but a decision. She had recognized her own responsibility to shape her life and her well-being through the decision to forgive. She no longer perceived herself as a victim of the decisions and actions of others, but as a responsible actor:

Forgiveness [...] is a decision. [...] I have learned this through Bible reading, prayers and sermons and everything, I have learned it in the church. For I would never have felt forgiveness. [...] Until I learned that it is my own decision, it is my decision to withdraw or to move forward against all adversity. This liberated my life.¹⁵⁴

The experience that the conscious decision to forgive causes emotional deliverance helps to transform a self-concept of helplessness into a self-concept of autonomy and control.

Visualization as a prerequisite for forgiveness

It is considered a painful but necessary condition to bring to mind an injury in order to be able to forgive it. To explain this, the pastor of the church MANAIA referred to the image of a thorn in her hand, which she compared with the consequences of an emotional injury. The removal of the thorn hurt as much as the visualization of an emotional injury, but afterwards the pain disappeared:

It’s like pulling a thorn out of my hand. You have a thorn in it, you pull it out, and that hurt you. But there comes a moment when you no longer feel it.¹⁵⁵

The experience that forgiveness hurts, because it is based on bringing to mind the injury, let an informant compare forgiveness with death: To forgive

is like dying yourself. Because sometimes there are people who have really hurt you.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Interview no. 37, 04/20/2015.

¹⁵⁴ Interview no. 44, 05/07/2015.

¹⁵⁵ Interview no. 61, 06/04/2015.

¹⁵⁶ Interview no. 39, 04/23/2015.

The forgiveness of living people

Several informants reported a discussion with the person who had inflicted suffering on them. It had been important to them to confront them with their wrongdoing, but also to ask for forgiveness themselves for possible, sometimes even named mistakes. The conviction that one should always ask for forgiveness oneself is based on the conviction of one's own fallibility as a result of humanity's sinful constitution. It seems that this conviction is conducive to the willingness to forgive the misconduct of others.

This assumption was also made by an informant who belonged to the church IJS and reported that as a child she was sexually and emotionally abused by her father. Although she had already assumed that she had forgiven him, she was repeatedly overwhelmed by negative emotions and finally found that she had not yet accomplished forgiveness. God had finally told her that she had to visit her father. When she finally complied with this request, she spoke more openly than ever before about the common past with her sister during the four-hour drive. This conversation had already contributed to her healing. The process of forgiveness was completed by the encounter with the father and the communication of forgiveness to him. Asking him for forgiveness and forgiving herself and him without being dependent on her father's non-executed request for forgiveness or repentance had given her a feeling of being liberated and healed. The report quoted below also shows, however, that the perspective of not receiving forgiveness from God herself in the face of a lack of forgiveness frightened her and in this way encouraged her motivation and her efforts to forgive:

God made it possible for me to go [there] and it was he who sent me to forgive my father. After many years I had to go and see him face to face. And say to him, "Papa, I forgive you." [...] We forgave him, but my father never accepted what he had done. [...] I forgave myself and I forgave him. As for himself, I had nothing more to do with it. That was it. [...] When I begin in the Lord, [...] the Word of God begins to speak to me. [...] One day when I read the word that the Lord says "If you do not forgive, I will not forgive you," [...] I begin to have nightmares. [...] But I knew that God worked in me, that what God wanted to show me was that I would be free of it. [...] So I begin to pray, "Lord, I will forgive my father, [...] teach me, and thank you, [...] for having forgiven him." I said the prayer and forgave him and am very free because I forgave him. But the nightmares returned. [...] One day [...] a Venezuelan [...] prophetess [...] began to speak and pray there and the whole thing. And suddenly I felt that I was going to collapse. [...] She came and began to pray for me. She told me: "You must forgive your father, forgive your father and say this prayer, in the name of Jesus you forgive your father." [...] She told me everything no one knew. [...] I say the prayer to her. That I really want to forgive him, I free myself, I free him. [...] I thought I had completed that. I said, "It's good, I did it." I thought. But God has other ways. Because there is simple forgiveness and not [simple forgiveness]. [...] One night I dreamt. I wake up and feel hatred. [...] I went to church [...] I went to the altar. And I began to cry. I said, "Lord, what is it? I feel hatred for my father and I had asked you to forgive him. Help me!" [...] A [...] boy [...] comes and stands: "Magdalena, the Lord tells you to go and forgive him. [...] On the way

you will notice that he will do great things.” And I said to him, “Lord, I will not look him in the eye.” [...] He said to me, “And when you look into his eyes, you will see what I have done.” [...] My father lived in Guanacaste. [...] I had to go [there]. [...] The car we had was a pickup truck, [...] so my sister and I drove along, we could talk about anything. So that’s what God had done. [...] Ever since we left there, [...] we started talking, [...] getting things out that had hurt us, things she didn’t know about me, what I had experienced. [...] God was already healing us on the way. [...] When we noticed it, we just arrived at Tilarán. [...] Dad [...] awaited us in the park. [...] We both went there, he is there, I arrived, greeted him normally. I saw him and felt nothing. I felt no hate [...] He was without glasses, my father always used [...] dark glasses. I saw his eyes and felt nothing. I felt no hatred, I felt no fear, I felt nothing. [...] I told him: “We are here because we need to talk to you. Because God sent us. I want to ask your forgiveness and [...] I come to forgive you.” [...] When I saw his eyes, I felt that I was free. What God wanted to tell me was that when you see his eyes, you will see what I have done. He freed me. My sister too.¹⁵⁷

An informant who belonged to the church IM told how important it was for her to tell her father that she had forgiven him for his disdain and to ask him for forgiveness for her own resentment before he died. She differentiated between the acute feeling of forgiveness that occurred in the concrete situation of communicating the forgiveness to him, and a fundamental feeling of being freed from resentment through forgiveness. The latter she had achieved at a later stage during a retreat:

My mother separated when she was pregnant, so he said I was not his child, so I was very angry with him. [...] I went [to the hospital]. [...] He couldn’t speak. [...] When I left, [...] I held a lot of grudges against him, because [...] he treated me very disparagingly. [...] I was 16 years old when he died. [...] I told him that [...] he should forgive me because I was so angry with him. That I didn’t want him to think that I didn’t love him, because I always loved him, despite everything. [...] That he could walk calmly, [...] that I forgave him. [...] He cried. [...] I took his hand and he pressed it like this. I’m sure he said goodbye. The next day he died. [...] I haven’t been mad at him since. [...] At one of the seminars, [...] the deliverance I felt became even stronger. [...] For it was still there. [...] It was like the next step I had to take after he died. And of course it’s not overnight that you just forgive like that. But yes, in that moment already, I told him that I forgave him and everything and that he could go calmly. [...] I: Why should I go there if he [...] doesn’t love me anyway? But I’m the one who looks most like him, and he says I’m not his. [...] When he shook my hand and I told him that, when he cried, I knew that it was [...] mutual forgiveness. [...] After my father had died and everything, after some time, I don’t know at which [retreat] it was, there I felt an even stronger deliverance. [...] I had decided, but that day I gave everything away. I felt a certain burden and [...] gave everything away. [...] I felt lighter. Of course you cry. [...] That really frees me a lot. You feel peace.¹⁵⁸

Unlike the last two informants quoted, the one who tried to forgive the members of the church she abandoned due to personal conflicts did not seek open debate. Perhaps this is due to the short period of time that had elapsed since the conflict. She said that she asked God daily for his support in her forgiveness efforts by telling him her decision to forgive. She longed for the

¹⁵⁷ Interview no. 39, 04/23/2015.

¹⁵⁸ Interview no. 48, 05/13/2015.

day when thinking of the persons concerned and possible encounters with them would no longer hurt her and asked God to save her from an encounter until the forgiveness process was completed. For this informant, too, forgiveness was connected with an admission of one's own guilt and a request for forgiveness, although at that time not toward the other party to the conflict, but toward God:

When I meet them on the street/ yes, I still ask God to give me time. That I don't meet them yet [...] so that I can process this a little longer. [...] Because if she turns away from me, it might hurt me. [...] I must prepare myself for all this. So I said God – and God is very [...] obliging in these things - I said, “Lord, don't let them meet me yet. Until you see that I am prepared to greet, or that they may not return the greeting.” [...] We begin to ask for forgiveness and forgive what they have done to us. [...] We pray: [...] “Lord forgive them, have mercy on the pastors, the church leaders.” [...] We do not allow this to reach our hearts, but we begin to pray and forgive.¹⁵⁹

Forgiving the dead

Just like the informants who spoke of the need to communicate their forgiveness to the accused, informants whose accused had already died also spoke about this need. The informant quoted below reported that when she visited her pastor for counseling because of a post-natal depression, the question of the forgiveness of her deceased uncle, who had sexually abused her in her childhood, became crucial. To finally communicate her forgiveness to this uncle was the prerequisite for her emotional deliverance. She solved the problem of not being able to speak to him personally by asking God in prayer as mediator to pass on the message to the deceased:

There was much need in my childhood. [...] The aunt who cared for me, her husband [...] abused me. [...] That hurt me. [...] This [...] man who was my uncle, whom I called Papa, he grabbed me. And that was a long time. And I was so afraid I couldn't say anything. [...] My self-esteem was so damaged. [...] I said that I had forgiven this man, but no. [...] When I visited him in the hospital, [...] I was so happy to see him as he was, tubes everywhere, and in my head I said, “Damn old man. This is what you had to look like because you were so bad to me.” [I was then] already married and a Christian, wasn't I? [...] You go through a process. But when I later [...] [told the pastor], one day because I had a postnatal depression, I got an appointment, so that's where the Holy Spirit took it out and I [told] him. [...] Then he [...] told me I should forgive him. That this would help me. [...] I actually decided to forgive him. And thank God, God could work such a great work on me. [...] Then I said to him, “Father, [...] I don't know where this man is, but you know where you have him. Tell him that I forgive him everything he has done to me.” And that's it. I had finally freed myself.¹⁶⁰

An informant who belonged to the church CCVN reported that she was guided by her counselor in the healing prayer to forgive her deceased father. In contrast to the informant just quoted, she

¹⁵⁹ Interview no. 37_1, 04/20/2015.

¹⁶⁰ Interview no. 29, 04/09/2015.

did not address God as mediator, but her father directly, informed him of her forgiveness and asked him to ask her for forgiveness and to forgive her:

I even managed to forgive my father when he was already dead. In one of these healing prayers, [...] this sister in Christ said to me, “You must forgive your Father,” and we spoke a prayer to forgive. To say to him: “Papa, in the name of Jesus I forgive you with all my heart everything you have done to me”, because there were many bad [...] things. [...] I told him, “Papa, I don’t know where you are, but God has you somewhere. [...] I want to forgive you with all my heart.” But I also want the other way round, that I forgive him and he forgives me. That he asks me for forgiveness.¹⁶¹

Painless Remembering as a Result of Forgiveness

Several informants formulated that forgiveness does not lead to oblivion, but to painless remembrance. The pastor of the church MIB explained:

Like when you hold on to something [...] and when forgiveness comes, it is like when you let it go. [...] I remembered the things, but without pain. Every time someone talked about rape, I cried, I was afraid, something terrible grabbed me. [...] But when I forgave, I remembered the things, but rather to praise God, rather to say, “Look what God has done in my life.”¹⁶²

In order to explain the transformation from painful to painless memory, the pastor of the church MANAIA used the image of a wound that remains visible as a scar after healing, but no longer causes pain:

Forgiving does not mean forgetting. You can remember without pain, [...] like a scar. You cut your hand and if you care for the wound so that it does not become inflamed/ because the [...] process of pain begins with the wound. [...] There are memories, of course, but it doesn’t hurt anymore.¹⁶³

This conviction can also be found in the *Renovada* course book.¹⁶⁴ In contrast to this, the course book *Nueva Vida en Cristo* states that the memories disappear after some time as a result of forgiveness.¹⁶⁵

Non-forgiveness

Some informants confessed that they tried to forgive because they knew about the spiritual meaning of forgiveness, but that they could not. An informant who had belonged to the church CCVN for many years reported that her husband had used psychological and physical violence against her until his death and that her father had left her family when she and her siblings were small. She had spoken about the emotional injuries caused by this in counseling sessions and

¹⁶¹ Interview no. 63, 06/15/2015.

¹⁶² Interview Nr. 65, 06/16/2015.

¹⁶³ Interview Nr. 61, 06/04/2015.

¹⁶⁴ Cf. Sumner 2010, 52.

¹⁶⁵ Cf. Camacho/Salas Murillo 2001; Robinson 2001, 18.

other contexts, but she had failed to forgive. Her ambivalent remarks show that it burdened her not to live up to the demand for forgiveness:

Forgiveness is very important. [...] It was difficult for me. [...] It is difficult. [...] I did it with the pastor. [...] But it's really very hard [...] until you manage to remember [...] without pain [...] But [...] over time, as you get more involved with God, read, listen to testimonies, listen to the pastor, all that helps you heal the wounds, because it's very hard. [...] With my friend Patricia, this pastor, I have a lot of trust in her, in her and in the friend who prophesies, I trust them very much. [...] It took me a long time to make it. [...] It is very difficult, it is very difficult. [...] It was very hard. I remember that [my father] left us. And I have a brother, the middle one, who has a disability, and my mother, to leave her, with children, three small children, that was very difficult. [...] It's still hard for me to remember. [...] It's easy to talk, but what you really feel /¹⁶⁶

The leader of the women's group *Tardes Creativas* (Creative Afternoons) of the church CCVN reported that she helps other women in the forgiveness process by telling her own story of her forgiving her husband's adultery. From her perspective, the spiritual healing of women is their own responsibility, for God only helps when one allows it by forgiving. Her statement quoted below shows that although the need for forgiveness is generally accepted, not all women succeed in doing so. It can be assumed that these women, in addition to the pain caused by the emotional injury, also suffer from the perspective of forfeiting inner healing and eschatological salvation, as well as from possible social consequences of the supposed lack of obedience to God:

I have often spoken about my husband's adultery [...] when I advised another woman and told her that it was possible [to forgive]. [...] There are women who [...] have said, "I cannot forgive it. I tried, but [...] I can't." They won't let go. They want to continue living in the past. [...] The Lord is a gentleman. If we allow him, he will do it. But if we don't allow him, he'll hold back like a gentleman."¹⁶⁷

One informant, who suspected that her husband was cheating her with other women, criticized the unconditional claim to forgiveness because she thought that forgiveness makes women defenceless and leads to them being exploited. To forgive her husband seemed to her a sign of weakness. A counselor of the church CCVN, on the other hand, had told her that forgiveness was a sign of strength against the devil, but that she was weak:

I know that you should forgive 70 times seven times, but when a husband has done that to you three or four times, no more, that becomes a habit. [...] And you yourself as a woman are always the fool, you always have to forgive. [...] I've already told Sandra [i.e. the counselor] that [I] no longer [forgive]. That on the day he does something to me/ I don't anymore. "No, Juana, don't think about it, let's pray to the father," she tells me. "The enemy holds you because you are very weak." [...] I am very weak. That's why the enemy attacks me more than him. [...] I have forgiven

¹⁶⁶ Interview no. 43_1, 04/28/2015.

¹⁶⁷ Interview no. 28, 04/08/2015.

my husband. But it wasn't honest forgiveness, [...] it was just like that. Because one still lives with this displeasure about what he did. One still lives with this distrust.¹⁶⁸

In addition to the emotional injury caused by her husband's presumed promiscuity, this informant's self-concept was also burdened by the interpretation that her lack of forgiveness was a sign of weakness toward the devil, even when she tried to counter this interpretation with her own interpretation that forgiveness was a sign of weakness toward her husband.

3.1.1.3 Options for Action beyond Forgiveness

The forgiveness of misconduct, which represents a current threat, is associated with special challenges. Although an option for separation or divorce exists in the case of currently imminent ill-treatment, in order to free oneself from the danger of further physical or psychological injury, it is accompanied by considerable emotional, social and material consequences for women. In this dilemma between emotional, social and material dependency on the one hand, and the danger of further physical and psychological injury, including the danger of death, on the other hand, women in Pentecostal churches and communities are always confronted with the necessity of forgiveness. Beyond forgiveness, women are also advised on other different options for action; between these they have to balance their knowledge of the Bible and their own understanding in order to reach a decision supported by pastors and counselors.

Subordination and spiritual authority

Detailed reports of marital relationships and their development are only available to the author from informants who belonged to the church CCVN. It can be assumed that the discourse was similar in other Pentecostal churches and communities of Alajuela. An informant, who was known nationally as a musician and singer in the Evangelical-Pentecostal context, reported about her marriage to a *no cristiano* (non-Christian), which had been burdened with violence and alcohol abuse for years. She understood his violence and alcohol abuse as God's punishment for her disobedience, because she interpreted it as a violation of God's will to marry a *no cristiano*. That one day he converted and changed his life so that they now had a happy marriage, she attributed to the fact that she had cast out demons and given an impeccable testimony by fulfilling her duties to God, her husband and the children. She had thus subordinated herself to him in important decisions and asked for permission to visit the church, for example. At the same time, she had called for respect, because of her knowledge of her value and her authority as a daughter of God and had increasingly not tolerated his attacks but rejected them in the name of Jesus:

¹⁶⁸ Interview no. 30, 04/10/2015.

I have always been very submissive. He was not converted; he did not know Christ. [...] I subordinated myself to him, [...] like every Christian woman. [...] When I married this person who wanted nothing to do with God, [...] I knew that this was not okay. Because of God's word I somehow knew that I had no fellowship with him. [...] I was 19 years old, and [...] he had been an alcoholic already when he was 19 years old. [...] For him there were quite normal things that I called sin. [...] Then began [...] many years of alcoholism. So, all this time I tried to give him testimony, I tried to tell him about Christ [...] The Word of God says that you can win your husband with your testimony. [...] It was a very difficult time, but thank God, through his mercy, my husband came to the feet of the Lord. Now, of course, it is completely different, now he serves together with me, it is he who does the sound engineering for me. [...] I no longer allowed him to raise his hand against me, to strike me, I did not allow him to raise his voice against me. I told him, "In the name of Jesus, I am a daughter of God, and you respect me." Then sometimes he got angry, sometimes he just walked away. When he was very drunk, I started praying for him [...] and chasing away all the spirits of alcoholism and everything [...]. I then began to fight in another way, because I learned more [about it], didn't I, and because the Lord enabled me. So that was a hard time, very difficult, with my children. [...] But I praise the Lord, because now are wonderful times. [...] Through the testimony I gave him, he could get to the Lord. He wanted to come [to the Lord], but vice had captured him. But he always agreed that I had always given him good testimony. I never ill-treated him, I never said bad words to him. He always saw me in church with my children, [...] that testimony influenced [him] quite a bit.¹⁶⁹

The quoted informant pursued a double strategy in her behavior toward her husband, subordinating herself to him in important decisions, asking for permission for her own activities and striving to fulfill all duties as wife and mother, while defending herself against attacks by invoking her spiritual authority and casting out demons in spiritual warfare. Another informant shared some of the experiences of the above, but experienced some things differently. Her husband also consumed alcohol abusively, was violent and jealous of her activities outside her home, which consisted of studying, of working as a primary school teacher and of church activities. She also did not separate from her husband but declared the devil to be the author of his behavior. Her situation had also improved considerably years before the conversation from which the following quote is taken, however not because her husband converted, but because he had Parkinson's disease and his behavior had changed as a result of his reliance on her support. She, too, pursued the double strategy of subordination and spiritual authority, which differed in detail from that of the aforementioned informant. Like the aforementioned informant, she used her spiritual authority to ward off physical assault. But her subordination was not so much that she asked her husband for permission, but rather that she tried to assert her interests as inconspicuously and conflict-free as possible. Thus, she had tried to ensure that he noticed as little as possible of her studies. Her professional activity had provoked her husband very much, since she had not been able to conceal it. With regard to her faith, she had

¹⁶⁹ Interview no. 8, 03/18/2015.

tried to find a way that was as bearable as possible for her husband. She had accompanied her daughters, who had already visited the church CCVN, because she had assumed that it had given her husband security to know that she had not gone to church alone but with her daughters. She had always read the Bible secretly. Nevertheless, she felt that his resistance to her religious activities was so exhausting that she sometimes considered not to pursue them. Despite his resistance, she never considered giving up her studies and her profession, because firstly she found both fulfilling, and secondly, she considered them necessary to financially secure her family. She interpreted her husband's Parkinson's disease as an answer to prayer, in as much as God had limited the demons in him through the disease, so that he had fundamentally changed his behavior toward her:

I married at the age of 17. [...] [From the age] of 17 years to 33 years, when I met the Lord, I experienced a very difficult time in my life. I had to overcome many hurdles to study. Not [for] economic reasons, but against the will of my husband. I went to a school that trains primary school teachers and studied [there], but it was a very difficult time. I studied in my spare time, but when my husband came, I had to hide the notebooks. [...] He came from a very violent family. And that had an effect on my life. [...] Then I started to work, and then the problem got even worse, because the aggression got stronger. He [...] drank alcohol, so other things were added. Those were twenty very difficult years. [...] My daughters, who were already young people, had found friends who belonged to the CCVN. [...] So I thought, so that my husband wouldn't get angry, I'd better go with my daughters, because that would give him some security. [...] So since the three of us [...] went [to church], the problem became a bit smaller, it was still a lot of persecution and everything, as the word goes, that the first enemies will be those out of your own house,¹⁷⁰ won't they? I stayed there against all odds, but it was still a very difficult situation. The devil was furious. [...] I couldn't read the Bible in my house. I could not make Christian music in my house. [...] I began to use strange methods, I hid in the closet, where with a candle I read the Bible. Well-hidden from my husband. [...] And after that, over time, the persecution became less, I already had a little freedom to go to church with my daughters. [...] My husband [...] watched very closely what I was doing. That was very very difficult, a time when I often, shall we say, wanted to throw in the towel, it would be better not to go [...] so that I wouldn't be persecuted or maltreated and so on. But the truth is that when the Lord is in you, he gives you strength and strength, and then finally/ it's about 15 years or 16 years ago, he fell ill with Parkinson's disease. [...] The persecution stopped completely. [...] The situation has changed completely. Since the illness/ I have found it in my life to be God's answer, for I said to the Lord: "Ah, Lord, let anything happen!" I don't know if God has allowed the disease to reduce his aggression, his violence [...], so let's say, although he doesn't go to church anymore these days and nothing, he believes strongly and he asks and he hears *Enlace* [i.e. an evangelical radio station] and he hears the songs and you see that there is a very different attitude. [...] Well, he allowed me, I can go to church, I can participate [...] The situation remained the same for many years without changing. But the one that changed was me. So God began to support my life very much in those times of violence. It began so that my husband [wanted to kick me] and something happened and he [...] could not do it, there was this power of the Lord, [...] protection, [...] support for my life. So, [...] above all, with him the situation did not change, but it changed in me, in the sense that there was God's

¹⁷⁰ Cf. the Bible verse Matthew 10.36.

support for me. [...] I began [...] to empower myself with the word. [...] One word, [...] that says that the Lord has freed me from the [...] violent man¹⁷¹, and that the past things are like water.¹⁷² Through all these things I began to strongly empower myself with the word. [...] I actually remember that when dicey situations arose, I said, “Satan, you will not be able to touch me!” Such things. [...] Inside me I rejected any activity of this kind [...] and the Lord fully supported [that]. [...] To empower myself on the basis of what the word says, that no one could touch me, that no one could harm me. [...] The situation changed completely. I believe that God began to give me an authority, [...] an authority to speak, to understand, to proclaim the Word. Well, that helped, and everything disappeared. Until it completely disappeared. [...] I began to see that there is authority in the word. And he began to be so afraid of the word. [...] So that he was fighting something – he didn’t know what it was, but it was strong. Yes, I saw much support from God in my life. And that to empower oneself with the word and to seize the authority that God has given us and that one did not know before.¹⁷³

The quoted informant appropriated biblical statements that gave her strength, patience, hope, self-confidence and assertiveness. In her concrete situation, she weighed between options for action, taking into account both statements of the Bible and her concrete situation and own needs, in order to arrive at the best possible solution. In comparison with the informant quoted above, the man quoted last granted her less freedom. Nevertheless, she pursued her interests, and in this way triggered conflicts. While the second informant would not have repeated the statement of the first that every Christian woman had to subordinate herself to her husband so unreservedly, both referred to their spiritual authority toward their husbands, in order to ward off abuse. The first did this by demanding respect for her quality as a daughter of God, and the second directly addressed the devil in her husband, whom she prohibited to touch her. In both cases the recourse to spiritual authority was effective, insofar as the men let themselves be rejected by it. This is due to the fact that even as non-Pentecostals they did not question the basic convictions of the existence and power of God and the devil.¹⁷⁴ In this way, the Catholic tradition of authority gives Pentecostal women power to defend and assert their own interests against their husbands.¹⁷⁵

Another informant spoke about her dealings with her formerly violent husband. Her way of acting differed from that of the aforementioned informants in that she did not address the problems with spiritual authority and spiritual warfare. Instead, she realized one day that she herself was to blame for the problems, because she had caused his misconduct through her

¹⁷¹ Cf. the Bible verses 2 Samuel 22.49 and Psalm 18.48.

¹⁷² Cf. the Bible verse Job 11.16.

¹⁷³ Interview no. 44, 05/07/2015.

¹⁷⁴ Cf. Kessler 1995, 21.

¹⁷⁵ A shared tradition of authority can serve as a power resource in encounters with men, as Mahmood realises with reference to the Egyptian women’s mosque movement; cf. Mahmood 2012, 176-178.

disrespect for him. Her disrespect caused his drinking and violence. She had achieved his change of behavior through her change of behavior in the form of consistent subordination:

I never gave him [...] a chance. [...] For he often attacked me, he often beat me, I [...] said: “You will never touch one of my children, never. [...] [Only] over my dead body.” When he wanted to say something, [...] I was the one who manipulated everything. So one day I [...] went to an event [...] by a preacher, [...] and I was brought forward, [...] there was prayer and he said to me, “Sister, the Lord says that you must give your husband absolute stewardship. And that he is the head and not the tail.” [...] I gave it to him. [...] Well, I said, “Yes, Lord, from now on I will obey.” [...] I came and I told him [...]: “You are the head of the family and not the tail. So, from now on I don’t want to be the head anymore.” [...] Now they [i.e. the children] come to me and I tell them, “No, [...] there he is. He is the authority, not me.” [...] My house [...] has changed. [...] There are no more celebrations here, there is no more alcohol. There was a lot of alcohol from him. [...] He has changed completely. [...] The way of living, the way of dressing, the way of speaking. [...] He was very jealous, extremely jealous. [...] He drank a lot. [...] He worked, [...] at noon he came and hit me because his colleague told him: “Your wife is probably cheating on you at home right now.” He came and hit me. [...] He slapped my mouth bloody. [...] Not anymore. [...] He made a 180-degree turn.¹⁷⁶

There was consensus among these three informants that the women had to subordinate themselves to the husbands, but their practical execution of the commandment varied. Crucial to understanding the dual strategy of submission and spiritual authority that the first two women pursued is the conviction that it is demons that have caused evil in men. Belief in these external forces made it easier for informants to forgive their husbands and subordinate themselves to them in different ways, because the attribution of responsibility to demons freed men from responsibility for their misconduct. The informants were convinced that they were not fighting against the men, but against demons. The fact that the first and third informants did not talk about wanting to assert their own interests against the will of the men, may have something to do with the fact that they attributed the misconduct of their husbands to their own misconduct. While the former interpreted her suffering under her husband as God’s punishment because she had violated his will by marrying a *no cristiano*, the latter interpreted her disrespect for the man as the reason for his earlier misconduct. In contrast to these two informants, the second informant did not seem to share the idea of self-inflicted suffering, and unlike the other two, she therefore did not fail to assert her own interests against the man’s will.

Abandonment of a relationship

In the sixth issue of the series on the training of counselors, *Lo básico de la consejería cristiana* (The foundations of Christian counseling), published by The 700 Club, counseling of people in marital crisis and divorcees is explained. It states that the counseling of married couples should

¹⁷⁶ Interview no. 21, 03/30/2015.

always aim at reconciliation and restoration, because marriage is an irrevocable pact according to God's will. The only biblically permitted reasons for a divorce are the adultery of one of the partners and being abandoned by an unbelieving partner. Even in connection with domestic violence, the aim of counseling should ultimately be reconciliation, which should be made possible by temporarily separating the spouses, changing the husband's life and forgiving the wife. If, however, a divorce is completed, God can forgive it regardless of its circumstances. Likewise, churches should be forgiving and supportive toward divorced people.¹⁷⁷

The convictions of the informants were only partially consistent with these guidelines for dealing with married couples in crisis situations. There was agreement on how to deal with divorced persons. These said that they had not been stigmatized, but had received emotional and partly also material support. In the following, several persons are quoted: Two informants did not divorce despite physical abuse, one informant tried in vain to prevent a divorce, and two informants themselves initiated their divorce. In addition, one pastor and two pastors are quoted, who explained how they dealt with women in marital crises and with divorcees in the counseling context.

An informant, who belonged to the church CCVN, compared the counseling given to women in marital conflict situations at a counseling center of the *Instituto Nacional de las Mujeres* (INAMU) with that given to them in churches, and concluded that the aim of the church counseling was the reconciliation of married couples, while the INAMU was engaged in feminist divorce propaganda. She mainly justified her criticism of the growing number of divorces socio-economically: Divorces led especially to the children growing up in poverty, because divorced men often did not fulfil their maintenance obligations, consequently received prison sentences and could then earn even less money that they could give to their children. She presented her own behavior as exemplary: She had endured her violent husband until his death, and thus sacrificed herself for her six children, who never had to suffer need, because her husband earned enough money and gave it to the family. For this informant, theological arguments were subordinate to socio-economic ones:

There are many [counseling services for women] outside the [...] church. [...] Here in the municipal administration, [...] INAMU, [...] that is something from the Women's Institute. However, there is a lot of feminism there. [...] If you have a man who hits you or something, if you go there, immediately/ [makes a wiping hand movement]. Too much feminism. [...] By contrast, in [...] the church, well, that's what they least want, a couple to separate, because that's not in God's plan. [...] There are some, for whom there is no solution, any more [...] or they don't want to

¹⁷⁷ Cf. El Club 700, 136-140.

seek the solution, but the majority do. [...] I never considered it, because with so many children, and I had no vocation. No, never, I couldn't. [...] My mother couldn't. [...] In the past, you held out. [...] We never missed anything. [...] I didn't have to work, and nothing else, thank God. [...] What I did was endure my men [i.e. the husband and the sons]. [...] The [present] time is terrible, now it's worse. Now they get married and you see that they can't stand it for a moment and divorce. [...] But it's always the woman who seeks [help]. Especially because of the children. [...] It's very sad when the children grow up without a father. [...] But you see it a lot, [...] the wife divorced, raises the children alone. [...] And the prison is full of men who don't pay the alimony. [...] There [they] pay even less because they can't work. So it's the children who suffer. [...] Not me, I endured everything. Maybe because I didn't suffer material need, because there was no need in the house, but it's sad when a man spends money on the street with women and booze, and when nothing arrives home, it's hard.¹⁷⁸

The rejection of the INAMU approach can also be understood as an expression of longing for healing and reconciliation, which apparently corresponds more to the Pentecostal discourse. Like the informant just quoted, another one also refused divorce, but this one justified her judgement theologically: Because marriage is indissoluble, it is God who gives strength to endure. In spite of this conviction she herself had repeatedly considered a separation, but either she had finally decided against it, or God had intervened to prevent it:

There were moments when I wanted to leave him and [...] divorce him, but I am among those who believe that marriage is for life. [...] There was much physical and emotional abuse. [...] I felt that God had a plan. Because in many situations when I wanted to leave my husband [...], something happened. So I began to pray more. I said, "Lord, don't let me make a decision that isn't right, that isn't yours. Give me the strength to endure until the moment you touch that heart."¹⁷⁹

That the previously quoted informant argued primarily socio-economically, while this informant argued her rejection of divorces exclusively theologically, corresponds to the degree of her involvement in the church CCVN. While the former belonged to the more distant group of those who only took part in selected events, the latter belonged to the closest circle of volunteers. Both women took the same position, but justified it in different ways. This shows that the opposition to divorce and the preference for upholding problematic marital relations is not a specific feature of Pentecostalism, but a conviction that is also represented beyond it. In addition, it will become apparent that Pentecostal positions in view of this topic differ considerably.

Another informant said that for years during which her husband lived separated from her, she hoped to be able to prevent a divorce. She reported how siblings of faith during this time had strengthened their hope for his return. A pastor had told her that her love for her husband

¹⁷⁸ Interview no. 43_1, 04/28/2015.

¹⁷⁹ Interview no. 8, 03/18/2015.

corresponded to God's plan to convert him through her. The pastor described her as a pearl, and when she understood that pearls arise from injuries, she was irritated by the realization that God was planning her injury for his salvation, but she accepted the task:

In the time when we were separated, when I knew that he had a relationship with another, I felt disgust, horror, anger and so on. And in my house, one Thursday before I went to church, I asked God if it was okay for me to look at my husband in this way. Because what I felt was terrible. In the spiritual warfare, Lisa told me that she and Alfonso would each pray for one of us, and when she came to pray for me, the first thing she told me was: "For you should not see your husband the way you see him. You will be the pearl I will use to bring him to me. What he needs is love." [...] I cried a lot that day. Let's say it was when I learned how a pearl is made, it is through pain and suffering.¹⁸⁰

This image of the pearl is based on a Marianist ideal of femininity that demands to sacrifice oneself for the husband, which encouraged the informant to hold fast to the hope of his return and conversion. When this hope was finally shattered by his proposal for a divorce, she was all the more disturbed, because she had been convinced of the truth of the messages, according to which it was God's plan for her to stay together with her husband. However, in prayer she found a way out, by coming to a new interpretation of the situation. God had told her that he would allow her to divorce, and that it would benefit her spiritually because it would free her from the demons, who otherwise would have access to her on account of her having been married to an adulterer. This explanation led to the hope of receiving God's blessing after a divorce, which she had so far not been able to receive because of her husband's sin:

José sent me a divorce petition. [...] I only had ten days' time to answer to the court, they were very hard days for me, although God had already given me a sign that I had asked him to give me, to know if I should divorce or not. [...] I still don't feel quite well, I thought God wouldn't allow me to sign a divorce, but there will be some reason even though I don't know it yet. One day, while I was praying, God gave me the thought that he would allow divorce so that I would not stagnate any further, that he would free me from the evil that José had brought through his sin, and that God would give me things, but that this union [would] in some way prevent it, because I rather sanctified José by my blessing, and because I had been rejected by him, God allowed it. It was something like this that he told me, so that I felt better, because I told God that I was kind of angry with him because I had to divorce him, and because he allowed me to do it. I am no longer angry, I have asked God for forgiveness, for I knew that God had some reason that I did not know to allow this.¹⁸¹

This spiritual interpretation of divorce as deliverance from demons, who would gain access to the wife through the man's sin, was also given by a CCVN church counselor at the divorce from her husband. She, unlike the informant just quoted, initiated it herself, when he had another extramarital sexual relationship. In retrospect she explained the permanent exhaustion she had

¹⁸⁰ E-Mail dated 09/07/2016.

¹⁸¹ E-Mails dated 04/27 and 04/29/2016.

suffered from came from those demons. After the separation, she did not feel exhausted anymore, because the demons had been denied access to her:

What is the point of contaminating oneself, by having a sexual relationship with a man who is travelling with I don't know how many women? [...] I always felt very tired, very exhausted, very/ of course, the bunch of demons who molested me! [...] Then after that I began to grow.¹⁸²

An informant, who belonged to the church *Casa de Oración* in San Rafael de Alajuela and who had also initiated the divorce from her husband, said that during this phase she had been decisively supported by her prayer group and by God himself:

And at that time, when I got a divorce, if I had not had the group, I don't know what would have happened in my life. [...] [They helped me] in all kinds of ways. Through prayer, through support, through accompaniment. Yes, in that, they helped me a lot. But who really supported me is God, because he performed a supernatural miracle, [...] the division of goods and everything. Only him, because not even the lawyers. [...] It was only he who enlightened me and showed me the things I should do.¹⁸³

This informant apparently did not feel condemned by the prayer group at all, but supported in a comprehensive way. The following shows how pastoral practice deals with people in problematic matrimonial relationships and with divorced persons beyond the support of forgiveness for injuries suffered. The pastor of the church MANAIA spoke about the threat to physical integrity, up to the life-threatening situation to which many women are exposed by their husbands. If she perceives such a threat, she advises divorce, even if men ask for forgiveness, because they often fall back into the harmful patterns of behavior. In such cases she understood divorce as a chance to shape life according to their own needs and to become happy. Some women, for example, would only be able to work after a divorce, and lead a better life than before, even though they were single mothers, because at least they would no longer have to bear the burden of their violent, promiscuous husbands, who had not supported them in any way. She also referred to other destructive relationships, such as friendships that in cases of harmful behavior patterns only terminating the relationship after forgiveness helps, for the purpose of self-protection of those involved. Despite all openness toward the best option of divorce in some cases in her perspective, this pastor was also convinced that in most cases relationships should be saved. She justified this with the pragmatic insight that an imperfect husband offered more support than none at all:

We are not patrons of divorce, but there are women who are exposed to a [...] latent life-threatening [...] situation. Here in this church I have been in charge of the case of a woman, whom I have told to leave the [...] man with whom she lived, because

¹⁸² Interview no. 22, 03/30/2015.

¹⁸³ Interview no. 46, 05/11/2015.

she was in danger. In fact, he killed her. [...] There is much aggression, much violence. [...] I had couples here where I got the man who might have harmed her to ask her [...] for forgiveness, she forgives him, but no more reinstatement. “You will no longer be my husband, I will no longer participate in the abuse.” [...] There must be a very fine line. [...] Not only in couples, let’s say you and me, friends. And I have harmed you and harmed you and harmed you and harmed you very much. But [...] I came to ask for forgiveness. You tell me, “All right. I forgive you, but [...] I won’t see you anymore. I love you in Christ, you in your world, and I in mine, and everyone happy and content, forgive.” But when we see each other on the street: “God bless you, how are you?” But I don’t go into your house anymore, and you don’t go into mine, [...] because you have to create a defense mechanism, [...] not to hurt yourself, because there are people who [...] do it again. [...] There are people who [...] don’t want a written divorce, but within a house they are already divorced. He sleeps in one bed; she sleeps in another. They argue all the time. I: “Look, wouldn’t it be nicer if you were happy, forgive yourselves, divide up the goods, and each one lives godly by himself?” [...] There are women who [...] had to divorce and they deal alone with the childcare, and they are [...] happier than when they were with this brutal man who didn’t help her, who didn’t support her. A woman, [...] where the husband became unfaithful with another man, and [...] after she had made the decision to leave him, [...] she became a business woman. She stood up, surpassed herself, came through. [...] They are good friends, but that’s it. There was nothing to do [...] But the majority is restored. The majority regulates it. [...] There are couples who want to be cured and we say: “There’s not much more to do here. [...] Forgive yourselves and everyone goes his own way.” But there are others who say: [...] “Yes, it’s okay. It’ll take time, it’s a big repair.” Or [...] I take the example of a hand. If you have an accident with your hand and this finger stays so crooked, and the doctor says, “Well, the finger will stay that way.” [...] I prefer it to be crooked, [...] but I have my five fingers. [...] That’s your decision. Logic tells me that although the finger is crooked, I want it there. Although my husband is not the best husband in the world. [...] It’s preferable that you go on.¹⁸⁴

Such clear words in favor of divorce in specific circumstances were not given by the pastor of the church CCVN, but he also declared to advise separation in cases of physical abuse:

We do not encourage anyone to divorce, because divorce is not a solution. But if there is aggression and the danger of [...] serious consequences, then we animate her [...] that in this case she better [...] separates, so she doesn't suffer.¹⁸⁵

This pastor qualified the statement that he did not push anyone to divorce, immediately explaining that in cases of domestic violence he encouraged women to separate. These contradictory statements are indications of his struggle to find a way between the biblical-theological doctrine and the pastoral-therapeutic experience. The pastor of the church IJS expressed himself in a similar way:

I always emphasize that there are ways out, that we seek solutions, that it is possible, that we have an extraordinary God, but also a God who demands from us our greatest effort to give the best to advance the things we have. It is not just a passive matter. God’s will and my willingness to work belong together to bring things forward. Which unfortunately doesn’t always work. But the least a [...] person can do is

¹⁸⁴ Interview no. 61, 06/04/2015.

¹⁸⁵ Interview no. 18, 03/25/2015.

attempting to achieve the best. But we do not believe that it is just that a woman is subjected to a situation by force, by violence [...] of the husband. [...] We appeal to personal responsibility, but we also understand that there are circumstances that sometimes slip out of our hands, don't they? In such cases: God has called us to freedom, not slavery, has he not?¹⁸⁶ But there are situations that we can solve if we exert ourselves. I think it would be unfair not to try. But if the effort didn't work, okay.¹⁸⁷

This pastor emphasized the interaction of the human effort to solve marital problems with the divine work through which a seemingly hopeless marriage could be saved. At the same time, he spoke from counseling experience, adding that there are situations such as domestic violence in which a woman has to separate.

In summary, the opposition to divorce is based on biblical-theological foundations as well as on socio-economic reflection. At the same time, biblical-theological arguments serve not only to reject divorces, but also to justify them, when divorce is interpreted as deliverance from demons who, through the sin of a man, gained access to the woman connected to him in marriage. In order to come to decisions on how to act in marital crisis, women balance matters individually by taking into account the concrete situation, their own needs and biblical statements. In this process they are supported by counselors and pastors, who in turn weigh up biblical-theological and pastoral-therapeutic aspects. The supportive treatment of divorced people in Pentecostal churches is based on the conviction that God's forgiveness is independent of the reasons for divorce.

3.2 Dealing with Guilt

Several informants spoke of the experience of having become guilty in the course of their own biography. They either said that they longed for forgiveness or that they had experienced forgiveness. While some emphasized God's forgiveness, for others it was crucial to forgive themselves, and yet others spoke of people who had forgiven them or whose forgiveness they desired.

3.2.1 Forgiveness and Punishment by God

The pastor of the church *Centro Cristiano Fuente de Bendición* (CCFB) used the terms *amor* (love) and *perdón* (forgiveness) almost synonymously when she said that God's generous love and forgiveness transformed her damaged self-concept and thereby enabled her to forgive others:

¹⁸⁶ Cf. the Bible verse Galatians 5.1.

¹⁸⁷ Interview no. 20_3, 03/27/2015.

The key was to feel myself forgiven. [...] Because I said: “I am worth nothing”, and several times [...] I planned to take my life, and then I felt, [...] that I was forgiven and loved. I could experience God’s exuberant love. [...] I first needed to feel that I was forgiven in order to be able to forgive.¹⁸⁸

According to the written records of a congress held in the church CCVN, the prerequisite for God’s forgiveness is that humans forgive themselves and show repentance and the will to obey God’s will in future. Similarly, the first edition of the course book *Nueva Vida en Cristo* requires an admission of guilt for God to forgive.¹⁸⁹ Besides the idea of a merciful, forgiving God, there is also the idea of God as a punishing judge. The statements of informants who interpreted painful events as punishment for their sins correspond to this image of God.

Thus, a woman belonging to the church CCVN confessed that after having belonged to a church since her childhood with her parents, she had moved away from it after her wedding, because she and her husband would have liked to celebrate festivities. But God had punished her for the worldly life and for turning away from him by one of her daughters dying and her husband becoming unemployed. As a result of the punishment she had repented, had returned to the church and had henceforth lived a life pleasing to God. When God finally gave her husband a job, she knew that he had forgiven her and that she had atoned for her guilt. She was convinced that in order to obtain God’s forgiveness, one must first suffer the proper punishment for one’s own sins in this world. Therefore, she warned her children against sin. She interpreted the fact that one of her daughters became illegitimately pregnant twice, that her husband became addicted to drugs and that the marriage failed as punishment for her daughter’s sins:

I grew up, I had my children and everything, I went rogue and turned to the world. [...] For a while I left the church because I liked to go out and dance with my husband. [...] But then it happened that [...] many tragedies began. The death of my daughter [...] was devastating. [...] The [...] poverty. [...] I came back through the death of my daughter, [...] because [...] it was [...] very hard. I got angry with the Lord, but [...] it was my fault. It was my fault; I know it was because of that. [...] What we do, we pay for here. [...] The victim was my daughter. [...] The death of a child because of my own disobedience is very hard. [...] I asked the Lord for forgiveness. I know that because of my disobedience it had happened and he punished me really hard. [...] Through my daughter I made progress. [...] I learned not to lie, to be [...] and to live, [...] as was right. Thank God I made progress, because my life [...] has changed in all areas. [...] We had a neighbor we didn’t know was working for *Dos Pinos* [i.e. a dairy company], he was the head of *Dos Pinos* Human Resources. And he came and [...] told him [i.e. the husband]: “Well, Don Carlos, is it you who is looking for work? [...] There is a job at *Dos Pinos*. Go there.” Then I understood that God had forgiven me. [...] I went rogue because I wanted to. Therefore [...] everything that happened to me happened to me. [...] I went on my own and alone I had to return, dirty and on the ground. [...] It’s hard [...] for the Lord to forgive you. [...] You have to go through something. [...] I give advice to my

¹⁸⁸ Interview no. 77, 07/15/2015.

¹⁸⁹ Cf. Robinson 2004, 11.

children. [...] I told her [i.e. a daughter]: “Sin is paid for with death.” [...] Everything has already happened to her. She got pregnant, she got pregnant again. After she got pregnant, she got married. The marriage didn’t last a year. The man became a drug addict.¹⁹⁰

Another informant, who belonged to the church *Iglesia Casa de Dios* in the district Pueblo Nuevo de Alajuela, was also convinced of God’s justice in this world. She regretted, that she failed to have such a firm faith and intimate relationship with God as other people, who surrendered their whole lives to God and trusted him to have a plan and control over all events. She felt to be distant from God and interpreted this perceived deficit as God’s punishment for two abortions. She had asked God for forgiveness, but because of the distance she still felt, she concluded that he had not yet forgiven her:

I don’t think he would let me [come close] [...] because I had two abortions. I say it’s him who won’t let me [come close]. Because I asked him for forgiveness, I asked God to forgive me, but well, I say it has to be that which leads to me not having the faith I want in him.¹⁹¹

3.2.2 Self-Forgiveness

An informant who belonged to the church CCVN spoke about her wrongdoing toward her husband. She did not marry him out of love, and when her child was diagnosed with a fatal illness and she was consequently advised to refrain from further pregnancies, she was driven by suicidal and murderous thoughts. She abused her husband and finally separated from him. She was finally healed as a result of realizing that all events were part of God’s good plan for her life, because realizing this had freed her from a feeling of guilt, so that she could forgive herself for her unjust behavior toward her husband. It was then possible to reconcile with him and with God:

The most important thing is to forgive yourself first. For often [...] we may not forgive this and that, but [...] that does not concern us. What concerns us is what is first in my life, because if I forgive myself, then I can really easily forgive everyone. [...] An example of not feeling like a mother because I couldn’t have children and feeling from one moment to the next: No, things happen because God has a plan. Or to be able to talk about such things without [...] it hurting, I have the feeling that it is to forgive oneself. Because there are things that you carry along inside you. You [...] don’t share them with anyone. But inside, [...] I said: “[...] I don’t understand if God exists, why [...] can’t I have any more children?” [...] These are situations that later, [...] when you forgive yourself, you can finally realize that these are situations that happen in life, that happen with a plan that God has. [...] I have the feeling that is the point when you forgive yourself.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Interview no. 21, 03/30/2015.

¹⁹¹ Interview no. 11_1, 03/18/2015.

¹⁹² Interview no. 55, 05/27/2015.

Before this informant had become convinced that everything that happened was based on God's good plan, she had interpreted her son's illness, the prospect of not having healthy children, and marriage to a man she had never loved, as God's punishment for her misconduct and consequently as self-inflicted. The knowledge of God's good plan freed her from feelings of guilt. Then she was able to forgive herself and others. As God's plan she interpreted that she should become the leader of the non-denominational women's group *Pacto de Amor y Fe* (PAF) and in this way convey God's love to many women so that they do not lose hope in difficult life situations.

According to the written records of a congress held in the church CCVN, self-forgiveness, as well as forgiving the wrongdoing of others, enables spiritual growth and makes you realize God's plans.

3.2.3 Forgiveness by Others

The pastor of the church *Centro Cristiano Seguidores del Rey* (CCSR) emphasized the importance of confessing one's guilt and asking for forgiveness from others. She herself experienced both as healing for the relationship with her mother-in-law, who in turn had asked her for forgiveness:

I told her: [...] "I would like to ask your forgiveness because I know that I was not the daughter-in-law you had hoped for, I know that I was an outrageous person, indecent; I treated you disrespectfully." [...] And she told me [...] that rather she wanted to ask me for forgiveness, and from then on, we never had problems again. [...] If I don't ask for forgiveness, [...] I harm myself.¹⁹³

An informant who belonged to the church IJS spoke about her need to ask forgiveness from her eldest son, who had grown up in the meantime, for abusing him as a child, so that they could both heal. God's forgiveness was not enough to overcome the pain of one's own guilt. The guilt of her wrongdoing weighed more heavily on her than the suffering she experienced as a child through abuse by her parents, which she had been able to forgive:

I prayed and I asked God for forgiveness, but there is something I would really like to discuss with a pastor; I think I need to talk to one of my sons. [...] Since I was brought up like this, and although I already knew the word, I often chastised my eldest son, and I was sometimes very angry because [...] he was so difficult. So I think I always feel [...] that I should ask my son for forgiveness and talk to him and try to say [...] that; because I say I acknowledge that I was very hard on him, so I think he needs something too, don't you, a deliverance. [...] Because sometimes my heart hurts and I say: Yes, I was very hard with him. And [...] sometimes you have children, and you have neither the maturity nor the ability to raise your children.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ Interview no. 68, 06/18/2015.

¹⁹⁴ Interview no. 41, 04/24/2015.

In the course book *Nueva Vida en Cristo* as well, the request for being forgiven by others is attributed existential importance. In the presentation of the course book the request for being forgiven by others, as well as in the stories of the informants just quoted, is regarded as a prerequisite for healing a relationship, and as a prerequisite for the inner healing of both participants. In addition, the aim of the request to be forgiven is mentioned in the course book as fellowship with God. In order to achieve all this, there are four steps to reconcile with people you have become guilty with: One first must acknowledge one's own misconduct, then ask God for forgiveness for it, then check oneself whether one has forgiven the other person for their misconduct, and finally seek an opportunity to speak with the person. In this conversation, regardless of the possible guilt of the other person, one should refrain from explanations, precisely name one's own misconduct and ask for forgiveness.¹⁹⁵ The duty to confess sins to each other rests on a reference to the Bible verse in James 5.16.¹⁹⁶ Irrespective of the question of one's own guilt, or that of others, this is the basis of the firm conviction that in favor of an improvement of the situation one should start with one's own options for action and not expect the cooperation of others.

3.3 The Self-Concept

An informant who belonged to the CCCAJ differentiated between two approaches to inner healing, that of forgiveness and that of healing the self-concept. According to her, which path is the right one for you depends on your individual biography. She herself did not have to forgive injuries by others because she had not experienced any maltreatment. Rather, her need for inner healing had arisen from the consequences of a childhood in poverty and from the death of her twin brother, which had damaged her self-concept:

I [...] didn't feel that I had to forgive, rather I had to recover. For it was not that much had been done to me, but rather the circumstances in which I had lived. The loss of my brother, the environment in which I lived.¹⁹⁷

While forgiveness and healing of the self-concept are presented as two separate approaches to inner healing here, other informants argued that forgiveness would contribute to the healing of their self-concept, in that it freed them from the fixation on people who had hurt them and generally from a passive role as a victim. As a result of a self-determined decision to forgive, they experienced, they could change their lives by making their own decision. Forgiveness thus

¹⁹⁵ Cf. Robinson 2001, 20f.

¹⁹⁶ Cf. Robinson 2005, 18.

¹⁹⁷ Interview no. 52, 05/21/2015.

gave them an experience of self-efficacy and control that, according to their statements, transformed their self-concept.

Another aspect that made the transformation of the self-concept possible was the experience of God's love, which let them recognize the value of their own person. The example of a new participant in the women's group of the church MSDJ will show how this experience is conveyed and how it can have an effect. When she visited the group for the first time, she almost continuously looked down at the floor and did not take part in the conversation. She seemed to be withdrawn and sad. During the following meetings, the leaders emphasized in an elaborate and repetitive manner that those present were loved by God, and were precious and beautiful. When the new participant said that no one cared for her, the leaders replied tirelessly that the group was her family, that the group members were her sisters, and that this family was always there for her. If the new participant did not appear at one of the meetings, the leaders then called to inquire about her well-being. After attending the meetings for a few weeks, her gestures and facial expression had changed. She took part in things, smiled and laughed. Instead of being withdrawn and sad, she now seemed open-minded and cheerful. Asked about this transformation, the co-pastor of the church, who occasionally led the women's group, stated that the central mandate that God had given her and her church was to communicate to women that they were precious:

You get to know the sheep, don't you? And they [...] feel this trust, so maybe they come and tell you: [...] "At work they abuse me." [...] What you try to do is to show her that she has value, that she is very precious, that she is a daughter of God, and that even though such things happen, the Lord is there. [...] Because she [...] feels [...] very little, [...] so "I'm worth nothing, and don't you see how they abuse and humiliate me?" That's why it needs to be drummed into them. [...] To make her say, "Yes, of course, I am valuable." [...] She's changed a lot compared to how she arrived, when she didn't talk and did nothing, now you can see it from a distance. [...] She said, "I have no one." [...] I told her: "No, you have us." So that she can see that although she has no children, no siblings, nothing, she can count on us. [...] She says to me: "Thank you, because I have the feeling that you are my family. That [...] the Lord has sent you to me." So that she can at least rely on someone, so that she doesn't feel so alone. And so that she may have someone there, if something happens to her, that she may have someone to rely on. But it is part of the vocation, because the Lord has called us to help and lift up women.¹⁹⁸

The co-pastor saw it as the task of the community to let women experience that they are valuable through encouragement and care. The following quote shows that this was also her central experience, when in a difficult phase of her life she joined the prayer group of the woman who later established the church MSDJ. Her self-concept changed completely, when she herself was

¹⁹⁸ Interview no. 58, 06/01/2015.

called to be a co-pastor and understood that the meaning of her life was not limited to the role of wife and mother, but that she had valuable spiritual gifts. In this way, she had realized that she was too valuable to be abused by her husband, so that she initially forbade him abusing her and finally separated from him. The authority and self-confidence that she had gained through her spiritual gifts and through biblical and theological training, she now passed on to other women, instructing them to assume spiritual tasks and responsibility:

In my spiritual ignorance [...] I told the Lord several times: [...] “God, what about me? [...] I am already a wife, I am a mother. [...] What do I do?” Because if you devote yourself totally to running the house, [...] to the children, the husband/ What about me? [...] But when I met her [i.e. the leader of the prayer group and later founder of the church] and began to serve, [...] I discovered the plan for my life. [...] It was a complete change. [...] The Lord effected many changes in me. [...] I learned to value myself as a woman. To understand [...] that what seemed normal to me before, is not normal. To have a husband who controls you. [...] That I am very valuable as a woman, and that [...] no one has the right [...] to abuse me, to humiliate me, much less to raise a hand against me. [...] We talked to him and we told him it couldn’t go on like this. I told him: “I don’t deserve that you abuse me. That you humiliate me. [...] That you attack me [...] physically.” [...] He promised [...] to change, but it took about a week. [...] Then he did the same thing again. So [...] unfortunately, I had to kick him out. Because of the violence. [...] The Lord gave me the [gift of] healing. [...] At the moment this gift [...] is already growing within me. [...] I notice it, [...] when I pray for someone. [...] I see [...] wow, the Lord has made it, so I say, there it grows. The Lord speaks much to me through dreams. Through visions. I declare in the name of Jesus that I expect the [gift of] prophecy. [...] He has given me the gift of speaking in tongues, but I have the feeling that somehow [...] it has fallen asleep, that it is not yet activated. [...] He has given me the [gift] to discern spirits. [...] Working with women is a calling. [...] I am a pastor, and I don’t know what else my Lord will give me. [...] I pray and anoint whenever the Holy Spirit says. [...] I accompany the pastor to almost everything. [...] But if she can’t, she tells me: “It’s your turn to go. Go.” [...] It’s normal to feel [...] [as an inexperienced leader of a women’s group meeting] a little fear, but they [i.e. the women] grow, they lose their fear. [...] In the beginning I helped them. I said, “Well, Ana, you ask the question and I do the prayer.” [...] And one day I said to her, “No, Ana, that’s enough. You can pray.” And she did.¹⁹⁹

The experience that the self-concept is transformed by the trust of others in one’s abilities, the assumption of responsibility and the successful execution of new, challenging tasks, was also described by an informant who belonged to the CCCAJ:

In the growth courses I give lectures, [...] a thing that was impossible for me, because I thought I was very nervous, [I thought] that I knew nothing. [...] I don’t know if I’m doing it well or badly, but I’m giving the lectures. And maybe I do it well, because I’m always asked to do it.²⁰⁰

Singing and dancing in church services were also among the activities in churches that helped women gain recognition. While worldly dancing was considered a sin, many churches had

¹⁹⁹ Interview no. 58, 06/01/2015.

²⁰⁰ Interview no. 63, 06/15/2015.

dance groups who performed in worship services to the glory of God. This new interpretation of dance, which becomes apparent through the semantic distinction between *bailar* for secular, frequently sexually connotated dancing and *danzar* for spiritual, explicitly non sexual dancing, enabled especially women to exercise a joyful activity within a protected framework, and to be recognized for their abilities.

During one of the meetings of the women's group, the pastor of the church MSDJ, encouraged those present to wear glamorous makeup, hairstyle and clothes in both public and private rooms. Whether she saw in this outfit a means to transform the self-concept, the expression of a transformed self-concept, or both, is not clear from her statement:

Put on something beautiful, earrings, do your hair, make up, not only to go outside, but also to be in the house. Give yourselves a value!²⁰¹

The pastor of the church ICC understood the external appearance of women as an expression of their emotional constitution. She was convinced that inner healing had an effect, so that healed women became more confident and joyful, their gestures and facial expressions changed, and many began to pay more attention to their makeup, hairstyle and clothes. On the other hand, a self-concept of having no value expresses itself in a corresponding self-portrayal:

When a woman heals, when a woman changes her way of thinking, even her way of dressing changes. [...] Everything. Her personality. She is a more self-assured woman, a happier woman. [...] I had women with sadness on their faces. [...] Women who looked older, because of all the suffering they carried around with them. [...] What is inside you is reflected on the outside. [...] Some of them actually changed the way they dressed. [...] They didn't feel pretty or important, but they felt rather useless, so they didn't clean up. The moment they began to value themselves, they began to get ready. [...] They seem completely transformed. I have always believed that when God transforms me inwardly, one must notice it outwardly.²⁰²

The pastor of the church MANAIA explained that she follows the transformation of the self-concept of women with the help of a two-phase concept. The first phase is that of finding identity, during which she conveys to women that their value depends neither on their ability to give birth nor on their treatment by others, but solely on God's love for them. In order to give women a self-concept of being God's beloved creatures, she discusses with them theological issues such as predestination, Christ's death of reconciliation and spiritual rebirth. The second phase can be described as that of finding their personality, insofar as the pastor helps the women to recognize their gifts and vocation, and to find out which part of church work corresponds to their personality and their abilities:

²⁰¹ Research diary 04/06/2015.

²⁰² Interview no. 26, 04/07/2015.

With women [...], [...] work is done in two phases. The [first] phase is about identity. How can they understand that they were not born as women just to have children, or [...] if they have undergone painful experiences such as abuse, or if they have been abandoned by a husband? [...] They must [...] seize the power that God has given to them. [...] Jesus himself [...] was strongly supported by women. [...] The women [...] then begin a phase in which they receive spiritual milk. It is about the pure Bible, [...] predestination, rebirth, reconciliation, everything. What Christ did on the cross. The God of the Bible. Then the women [...] begin to understand why they were created, whether they have experienced rape, whether [...] they have been abandoned. One must [...] penetrate to the core of what Christ has done for them. And why they are valuable and important. Then we begin to work on getting to know their [own] gifts. What am I called to do? There are women who are evangelists, [...] they can have a missionary call. [...] A test is made. We also work a lot on temperament, [...] they must discover [their own].²⁰³

An informant who belonged to the church CCVN said that her self-esteem had been severely damaged by the abuse of her husband. In the church she had been made aware that she was precious as God's daughter, and a princess, and did not have to accept any injury. When she really took that in, she was increasingly able to set limits on her husband's behavior toward her:

Although I knew the Lord, I've got a low self-esteem [...], to face a violent person [...] with vices and everything, eroded my self-esteem. So, the Lord had to raise me up again and say to me again: "You are my daughter. You don't have to endure physical and verbal injury. You are my princess." So, the Lord began to restore my self-esteem, and in line with this restoration of my self-esteem, I did not allow certain things at home anymore.²⁰⁴

Another informant who belonged to the church CCVN described God's love for women with a phrase from the Bible verse Psalm 17.8:

He loves us, doesn't he? We are super special because the Bible talks so much about women, doesn't it? But for God we are all important, but the Bible says that we are like the apple of his eye. He loves us with eternal love.²⁰⁵

Based on this Bible verse, the meaning of women for God is often referred to as *la niña de sus ojos*, which is translated as "eyeball". Since *niña* means "pupil" as well as "girl" or "daughter", *la niña de sus ojos* connotes just like the Hebrew term *בת עין* (*bat ayin*, daughter of the eye) the ideal of an intimate, exclusive father-daughter relationship. The song of the same name by the Evangelical Venezuelan singer Daniel Calveti was one of the most frequently sung songs at Evangelical Pentecostal events for women during the research stay.

An informant, who belonged to the CCCAJ and is called Irene in the following quote, explained that during her initiation course she understood that Jesus died for her personally and that he

²⁰³ Interview no. 61, 06/04/2015.

²⁰⁴ Interview no. 8, 03/18/2015.

²⁰⁵ Interview no. 43_1, 04/28/2015.

would have died for her even if she were the only person in the world. The awareness of being important for Jesus is the foundation of her self-concept:

It deals with a theme, that is, God's love, and it introduces you to this God, how much he loves you. This God who is Father. This God who [...] created you. [...] When I realized that God loved Irene so much/ because he says: "God loved the world so much/" no, [...] because the world is very big; "God loved Irene so much that he sent his only Son so that all who believe in him would not be lost but saved."²⁰⁶

In the context of the healing prayer, the biography of persons seeking help is reinterpreted as God's plan to lead them to him, during which he was always lovingly and supportively close to them. Similar things happen in the context of Theophotic Prayer Ministry, when Jesus enters the imagined scenery in visualized imagines of memories, so that the memories receive a new meaning. These biographical reinterpretations are intended to contribute to achieve reconciliation with one's own past and consequently to transform the self-concept.

The pastor of the church IM, Nelson Paredes, is the author of a book entitled *Mujeres que bendicen* (Women who bless) which was sold in his church's bookstore and deals with women's weaknesses and strengths, spiritual threats and resources. He emphasizes that the lives of men, families, the home country, and civilization as a whole depend on the action of women, and contradicts the notion that the value of a woman depends solely on physical characteristics. Instead, the value of a woman arises from her love and suffering for her husband, and it is a woman's greatest privilege to sacrifice and selflessly care for a child and the father of the child.²⁰⁷ This Marianist ideal of women is accompanied by an appreciation of traditional female household and family activities. Thus, Paredes postulates that God sees and values all these activities, even if they are often not acknowledged and valued by other people.

The value of women's sacrifice for the family was a central theme of a festive event at the Alajuela Theatre on March 7, 2015, which was organized by women from various churches on the occasion of International Women's Day. Several speakers said that the sacrifice to look after the household and family activities made women particularly valuable to God. One speaker said that for years she had enjoyed spending time with her children and husband, until she finally realized that they took her efforts for granted, but did not really perceive herself. Disappointed by realizing this, God had said to her: "I see you. I love you. I see every meal you prepare for your family. I see every piece of clothing you iron for your family."²⁰⁸ She understood that

²⁰⁶ Interview no. 52, 05/21/2015; cf. the Bible verse John 3.16.

²⁰⁷ Cf. Paredes 2008, especially 13.

²⁰⁸ Research diary 03/07/2015.

women were not made to receive recognition from people, but to be glorified by God. For God their activities are valuable, even if people do not value them. She exhorted the women present not to question the value of their own actions and of their own person. She did not criticize the behavior of her husband and her children, which was perceived as disrespectful, but on the contrary judged her husband to be a good husband. What changed her life, therefore, was not the change of relationships or conditions, but the transformation of her self-concept. Through the insight into the theological evaluation of her actions and her person, she became aware of her value and emotionally independent of the recognition by fellow human beings.

The same message was conveyed by another speaker of this event in an interpretation of the passage of the Bible Genesis 29.16-30.24. She referred the fate of Leah, Jacob's lowly wife, to that of the women present and explained that God intervened to oppose the husband's disdain by giving birth to many children to Lea and making her the mother of more than half the tribes of Israel. She concluded that a woman's self-concept should not depend on her husband's respect because his disregard is compensated by God's appreciation of her activities. This speaker also did not question the behavior of men who disdained their wives, did not seek to change relationships or conditions, and explicitly distanced herself from feminism. Instead, she emphasized that women should stand by their husbands despite their disdain. She concluded her presentation as follows:

We are not feminists. We are women who love their husbands, because that is how it should be. This is the perfect blessing.²⁰⁹

When a member of the church CCVN conducted the *Renovada* course with a group of women from different denominations, she also pursued the goal of transforming the participants' self-concept, by trying to help women gain independence from the recognition by husbands and children. She told them to let their self-concept be determined not by others, but solely by God's truth that they were his beloved, precious daughters, because

the love of our children and our husband will not fulfill us. The only perfect love is from God.²¹⁰

Well-known preachers and prophetesses too proclaimed that domestic activities are more valuable to God than ecclesiastical ones. Their success goes hand in hand with giving less appreciation to their own activities. Thus, during a women's congress on February 27, 2015 entitled *Dios tiene un propósito para tí* (God has a purpose for you) in the church IM, a preacher

²⁰⁹ Research diary 03/07/2015.

²¹⁰ Research diary 05/19/2015; cf. also Sumner 2010, 2-10.

praised the devotion of women to the family and the household and described it as more valuable than all ecclesiastical ministries:

You are not a coincidence! [...] You are God's creation! [...] There is a divine plan! [...] Perhaps there are women who are pastors, evangelists, apostles [...]. But the highest office is my family, is my house!²¹¹

The concept that domestic activities are more valuable to God than ecclesiastical activities is summarized in the frequently quoted phrase *La primera iglesia es la casa* (The first church is the house), which not only enhances traditional female activities in the house, but also corresponding activities in churches such as cleaning and decorating. Upgrading this in turn makes it easier for men to carry out activities at home and in the churches, which are traditionally the domain of women. In the churches, for example, men were seen wiping the floor or washing dishes. It can therefore be summarized that the upgrading of traditionally female activities in the home strengthens the self-concept of women, just as much as the male dominance in public areas of activity such as the church and beyond, but at the same time also leads to the fact that domestic and family activities receive more appreciation and thus become more attractive. Although it is not the primary goal to change conditions, it cannot be ruled out that conditions may change as a result of this concept, because men are also motivated to participate in these activities through upgrading domestic and family activities.

²¹¹ Research diary, 02/27/2015.

4. Places of Healing

The themes of inner healing dominate counseling sessions, worship services, congresses, lectures, meetings of denominational women's groups and non-denominational organizations, as well as course sessions and retreats. Everywhere there is talk about forgiveness and performing forgiveness, the value of the individual woman as a beloved creature of God is discussed and turned into a tangible experience. If these topics are regarded as existential for all believers, conveying them is considered particularly important in the context of conversion, as it represents the prerequisite for healing and sanctification. Consequently, these topics dominate the events for converts in a special way, so that they can be liberated from spiritual burdens in their life before conversion, and so that transition from the old to the new life is made possible. An informant, who belonged to the church CCVN, explained the dominance of the topic of forgiveness in the meetings of her church with the necessity of forgiveness as a prerequisite for spiritual salvation:

And then, when one has received the Lord and everything, then one has to approach those things that prevent us from growing in our life because there is a lack of forgiveness. [...] Forgiveness is treated a lot, in almost all meetings of the church. It is very important because we know that it [i.e. the lack of forgiveness] prevents the person from growing and receiving salvation. [...] By listening to lectures and sermons and reading the Bible, I understood the meaning of forgiveness.²¹²

In the following, places and settings of healing will be examined. How are they organized? How are they perceived by group leaders and participants? How are the issues of inner healing addressed? How is healing made tangible? What is the discursive background?

4.1 Counseling

4.1.1 Practice

4.1.1.1 Prerequisites and Organization

Consejería (Counseling) is a central ministry in Evangelical Pentecostal churches as well as in the communities of the RCC. In smaller churches the pastor, male or female, or the couple when both are pastors are principally available for this ministry. In the larger Evangelical churches and in the communities of the RCC, counselors are active who have acquired counseling methods and psychological foundation in internal church seminars or in non-denominational seminars, in some cases also in university seminars. These persons enjoy recognition and respect for their work in their churches and communities and occasionally beyond. Some

²¹² Interview no. 44, 05/07/2015.

informants spoke of their counselor as their spiritual mother from whom they learned the basics of faith and with whose help they began a changed life.

The genuine time for counseling is after conversion. According to the importance of forgiveness at the moment of transition from the old to the new life as a condition for healing and sanctification, counseling in the context of this turning point is considered particularly important to heal the spiritual wounds of the old life and then also to prepare for the new life by imparting ethical guidelines and preparing one's own activities to be part of the church community. Beyond this time context of conversion, Pentecostals also take advantage of the possibility of counseling years after conversion in any kind of crisis situation. The following describes how several counselors and a pastor proceeded in their counseling activities and which convictions and which training formed the basis of this activity.

After four years of evening study, a counselor who had belonged to the church CCVN for about 20 years at the time of the quoted conversation was now, as a retired teacher, about to complete her Bachelor's degree in Theology at the private Bible school *Universidad Bíblica Word* in Heredia. In the context of her teacher training, she had attended courses in psychology at a state university and participated in several The 700 Club counseling courses. She met regularly with the other counselors of her church under the guidance of the pastor for sharing experiences and for training. Experts such as pastors and psychologists were also invited to these meetings. She mentioned confidentiality and the knowledge of one's own calling as prerequisites for the counseling service, but the most important thing is that one has a personal relationship with Jesus and a profound knowledge of the Bible, because the counseling is not about conveying personal experience or habits, but about God's will as revealed in the Bible, which develops its power for specific situations in prayer through the Holy Spirit:

The techniques can be learned in courses and from leaders. [...] But if there is no dependence on the Lord, no fellowship with the Lord, then it is only the letter,²¹³ then it will leave no impression on the other person. [...] It is the Holy Spirit that gets exactly to where that person needs healing. Therefore, I believe that the most important thing is a good relationship with the Lord.²¹⁴

In prayer, the Holy Spirit lets her realize the feelings of the person seeking advice and gives her the right course of action. She saw herself as an instrument of the Holy Spirit whose purpose was to mediate between God and those seeking advice. This function becomes clear in the following quotation:

²¹³ Cf. the Bible verse 2 Corinthians 3.6.

²¹⁴ Interview no. 73_2, 07/10/2015.

Once the Lord said to me: “Get a blanket, pray for it and lay it over her.” I started praying for the blanket while talking to the girl, and when the moment came that I needed the blanket/ the girl had been raped, but I didn’t know. [...] And later the Lord said to me: “Cover her, cover her!” And it was very beautiful because it was God who got out of her everything she felt, the shame, the pollution, the rejection, the fear.²¹⁵

As an instrument of God, she could pass the burden of those seeking advice on to Jesus. This relieved her herself:

One is an instrument and [...] not a storeroom. [...] You come and leave the burden with me, but I throw it onto the cross, for otherwise one begins to be ill or to suffer, because you find no way out.²¹⁶

The fact that this counselor saw herself as an instrument of the Holy Spirit gave her a spiritual feeling of power; as a result of this she issued prophecies and decrees for others both within and outside the context of counseling, and she was convinced of the effect and truth of these:

I have a word of power. [...] What I say will happen, [...] what I decree for a person. For that is what God has told me. He will support every word I say.²¹⁷

She explained that she usually accompanied people seeking help for up to four sessions, but had also advised individual women for years. An important part of the counseling sessions is the reappraisal of the family history, because this determines decisively the spiritual course of events. Depending on the specific problems of a person and their cause, she recurs to counseling methods of inner healing such as the healing prayer or the substitute prayer or even methods of spiritual healing such as deliverance ministry and spiritual warfare. At the end of the counseling sessions, she identifies the person’s gifts, anoints the person, and points out her ethical responsibility:

It is like putting on God’s seal. And I also talk to them about their responsibility that they should have because they are now clean and should guard the temple of God. It is no longer their house, but the temple of the Lord, and we should guard what we say, what we think, and even what we hear. [...] I anoint them and we ask the Lord to enliven the gifts, because sometimes people don’t even know what they are good for. Sometimes, while the person is talking, you can already perceive their gifts.²¹⁸

The pastor, whose counseling work is described below, and her husband founded the church ICC, which had about 300 members at the time of the interview quoted below. The majority of the members were women who had approached the pastor in crisis situations. The pastor explained that when women turned to her for help, they first conducted a *discipulado*

²¹⁵ Interview no. 73_2, 07/10/2015.

²¹⁶ Interview no. 73_2, 07/10/2015.

²¹⁷ Interview no. 22, 03/30/2015.

²¹⁸ Interview no. 73_2, 07/10/2015.

(discipleship course) with her over a period of four months in weekly individual sessions, in which both faith contents were imparted and individual counseling took place. Her husband also dealt with men. She emphasized that in order to solve problems, it is crucial to take note of the family system. Therefore, she tried to speak not only with the women themselves, but also with their family members. The search for help was often triggered by marriage or education problems that were connected with a wrong self-concept, which in turn was caused by psychological injuries in their biography. Therefore, she reflected their biography, their self-concept and their behavior patterns with the women. The explanations quoted below show that the pastor's aim was to replace negative self-concepts with positive self-concepts based on faith, and destructive behavior patterns with productive ones. In order to achieve the latter, she endeavored to activate the women's own resources and develop practical options for action with them:

When women come to church, [...] we had to work a lot with them, learn to forgive their feelings, [...] heal injuries. [...] Wrong behavior patterns, very bad habits, [...] which they had already from their grandmothers, from their mothers. [...] We had to work on healing the soul, how to learn to behave as [...] daughters of God. [...] It has been like an aggression detoxing process and that they learn to value themselves. [...] With some I have worked on how they educate their [...] children. I had to work with mothers and with children. [...] I have the case of a sister who was abandoned by her husband. [...] This affected the ten-year-old daughter very much. [...] The daughter began to rebel and other unpleasant things and the mother yelled at her out of frustration, the girl yelled, it was chaos. [...] Working with the mother, [...] the healing she had to experience, also working with the daughter. [...] It was a blessing that the mother visited me to ask for help for both. Many women don't seek help, they are just aggressive. And those who seek help are the daughters. When you work with the daughter [...] the violence continues at home, because those who have to change are the parents. [...] I talk to them a lot; I listen to them. [...] They start telling you everything [...] what they've been told, what they are like. [...] You start writing down all these patterns [...] and you create a profile. When their wrong self-concept is completely described, [...] we get the good out, because that is reinforced, but then we have to work on the bad. [...] We begin to replace the bad with the good, [...] which helps her change her life. For example, there are mothers who can only roar to solve a domestic problem, because that's how they were brought up. [...] We make rules for home. If you teach your children these rules, you don't have to shout if they don't listen to you. You have rules. "Okay, you disobeyed that rule, there's a consequence." [...] We begin to educate. [...] Many husbands told me [...]: "How did you manage to change my wife?" "No, [...] she needed orientation about something she didn't know." There are a lot of people here who think they're doing things very badly who are doing them well, but they don't have anyone to tell them they're doing them well. And some little things that aren't right, you help [...] channel them, and then they become great at home. [...]

It is in crisis situations, that people seek God rather than in times when everything is all right. [...] I have seen women who have come to us because of a crisis and in the process, they have come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and he became part of their life and no one will ever take that away from them, even when the crisis is over. [...] I have seen people approaching the church [...] only at the moment of the crisis, and when the crisis is over, they move away from the church. Many women come

to the Lord when they seek help for their families. [...] God heals them, purifies them and does something wonderful. Others, when the problem is over, leave again. [...] Many people see God like calling 112, like an ambulance. In moments of crisis: God. But then I forget. But most people stay in church. They get to know God and take their first steps in Christianity. [...]

There are many young people who come first and later they bring their parents. We have also seen married couples come together. Because she brings him or because she has given him an ultimatum: "If we don't go to church, we separate." So, if the husband doesn't want to separate, he comes to church. I have had cases of women [...] who come to church alone and later their husbands come. When they see that the women have changed, that they are different, the men come to church. And their children too. [...] We also have women who have come to church alone and their husbands have not forbidden them to come to church, but they have never accompanied them to church. [...] Perhaps their children accompany them and integrate, but the man does not want to. [...] The pattern is different; it is not always the same.²¹⁹

For the communities of the RCC too, counseling is a cornerstone of activities and serves both pastoral and therapeutic as well as evangelistic purposes. The CCCAJ's counseling services were not only accessed by Pentecostal Catholics, but also by non-Pentecostal Catholics. Since establishing the center in 1998, there were always two persons assigned to the counseling service Mondays to Fridays from 2 to 5 pm. Anyone who wanted counseling could consult these persons within the time advertised, with or without an appointment. Forming teams of two as well as setting a duty plan for the shifts created stability; a new person was only selected for the ministry if another person was permanently absent, usually due to illness or death.

The selecting authority was the governing body of the CCCAJ, the *Equipo Timón*, which determined by prayer and discussion who was suitable for the ministry. One informant cited as selection criteria the completion of the successive faith courses and qualities such as responsibility, reliability, consistency, seriousness, devotion to God and spiritual maturity. Since the call to an office by *Equipo Timón* was considered God's call, it was customary to follow it. Another informant, who had been a counselor for six months at the time of the interview quoted below, said that she feared accepting this call. But after God had told her, through various persons, that he had intended her for this office, she gave in:

I had always been afraid of this ministry, [...] because there are people coming with terrible problems. [...] The coordinator told me, "We thought you could be in this ministry", and I told her, "Give me time." [...] I didn't listen to God, I didn't listen to her, I didn't listen to anyone, I was afraid. [...] One day, while I was in my house, a lady calls me [...]: "Can you advise me? [...] I have a problem." I told her, "But why don't you go to the house [i.e. the CCCAJ]? There is a group for counseling and prayer." "No, I want you to counsel me." [...] About three days later another one calls me with the same situation. [...] "I want you to counsel me," they said. In this way I realized that it was not just one, not two, but three people, and I said, "This is

²¹⁹ Interview no. 26, 04/07/2015.

a message from God. God wants me to be active in this ministry.” [...] So I called the current coordinator and told her what had happened to me. [...] I said: [...] “I can go on Fridays.” A gentleman who was on Fridays with another colleague got sick, so I went on Fridays. That was six months ago. It’s a beautiful ministry, but very difficult, [...] because [...] people come with terrible problems.²²⁰

This quote shows that this CCCAJ counselor, like the CCVN counselor quoted above, sees herself as an instrument of God who reveals his will to her through the Bible to serve those seeking advice:

I urgently pray to God before I come to do this ministry. One cannot give advice to a person if it does not come from the Word of God. [...] The first thing I say to them is: “It is not us, it is the Lord who speaks here.” [...] People begin to tell their problems, [...] and [...] God begins to speak. Through the word of God. [...] For me it is very important to know Bible quotations in order to be able to say something to the people according to the situation. Give them advice and pray for them [...] and tell them that it [i.e. the counseling] is not meant to be just once [...] and that God is doing the work on them.²²¹

Those who were trained as counselors in the CCCAJ sat in with other counselors and attended counseling seminars. Booklets and books that were displayed in the CCCAJ for training purposes dealt with dealing with issues of shame and guilt, dealing with depression, healing physical suffering, forgiveness and spiritual warfare. The CCCAJ counselor quoted below explained active and passive counseling experience; life experience, prayer and Bible reading are far more important for counseling than any theoretical knowledge. In the CCCAJ, as in the church CCVN, the central elements of counseling were talking, prayer and sharing the Word of God in relation to the specific situation. In order for a person seeking help to be able to change himself and find a solution, obedience to God’s Word was essential:

One learns it by doing it. And by taking advice from others oneself. [...] And through practice. [...] I advise a person, on that day she tells me about her situation, her problem, but then I go home, start to read the word of God and I say: “This quote helps this person. God will speak to this person through this quote.” [...] When the person comes back, I will say to him, “Look, God says that. [...] God says that, not me.” And if they are obedient, they will change. When they are ready, [...] when God is working in them, of course they will change, and many women have been healed/ I have been healed that way, by obedience.²²²

The counselor quoted below reported that the former leading priest of the parish of *La Agonía*, to whom the CCCAJ was assigned, belonged to the RCC himself and recommended time and again to confessors that they seek advice in the CCCAJ. Some who followed this advice took part in an initiation course after the counseling and joined the CCCAJ. But the new leading

²²⁰ Interview no. 63, 06/15/2015.

²²¹ Interview no. 63, 06/15/2015.

²²² Interview no. 54, 05/27/2015.

priest was not sympathetic to the RCC, so that there was concern about the future cooperation with the congregation and about the future of the missionary possibilities of the counseling offer:

There are priests who believe in healing and others who do not. For example, we had a leading [...] charismatic priest. [...] He always said: “Go to the Renewal [i.e. to the RCC], there they can help you to heal.” [...] But now we have a priest who [...] is not charismatic; we have certain confrontations, because he [...] does not understand us. [...] If someone goes to that priest, [...] he won’t send us any more people. The other one does. [...] He has done initiation courses. [...] And he sent the people, but now with the priest, I don’t think so.²²³

The term “healing” in this quote stands for inner healing. From the perspective of this informant, the belief in inner healing is considered characteristic to belonging to the RCC. This shows that the discourse on inner healing connects Catholic and Evangelical Pentecostals, while it separates followers of the RCC from other Catholics. The following quote from an informant who belonged to the church *Iglesia Linaje Escogido*, who in turn belonged to AIEC, shows that participating or not in this discourse also enables a demarcation line to be drawn between Evangelical Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals. The informant explained that although counseling is offered in this church, it is exclusively as a practical support in problem situations and not with the aim of comprehensive healing of biographically conditioned psychological injuries. She distinguished between *consejería* (counseling), which is offered in her church, and *sanidad interior* (inner healing), which she experienced through The 700 Club staff. She explained the difference between these concepts as follows:

Counseling is, for example, when you have a problem and they give you advice, they seek remedies. Let’s say, if the problem is drugs, they take you to a place where they detoxify you and all that. And if it is more marriage problems, then they start from their own experiences or on the basis of the Bible and say to them: “No, you have to forgive yourself for these things.” In contrast [...] the inner healing is very different, because things that have harmed me since I was a girl may still affect me.²²⁴

The observations that on the one hand a member of the Catholic CCCAJ declared participation in the discourse on inner healing to be a criterion of belonging to the RCC and that on the other hand a member of an Evangelical AIEC church excluded this participation for her church, show that “Pentecostal” is a category that overlaps denominational boundaries.

4.1.1.2 Counseling as a Place of Forgiveness

A counselor who belonged to the church *Iglesia Oasis Internacional de Bendición* (IOIB) explained how in counseling sessions she guided people to forgive to enable inner healing.

²²³ Interview no. 63, 06/15/2015.

²²⁴ Interview no. 71, 07/08/2015.

After the person seeking help has described the psychological injuries she has suffered, the first step is to analyze the biographical background of the person responsible for the injuries in order to understand the reasons for her actions, which are often caused by *herencia generacional* (generational heritage). The concept of generational heritage explains the observation that certain patterns of behavior or problems can be observed in several generations within one family. The counselor was convinced that knowing the reasons for a person's misconduct made it easier to forgive. Thus, when the reasons are analyzed, the counselor asks the person seeking help whether she is ready to forgive. If the person affirms this, she will recite a corresponding declaration so that the person seeking help can forgive while repeating it. If the declaration is repeated by a person who has accepted Christ and is willing to forgive out of inner conviction, the Holy Spirit reacts by eliminating all negative feelings, freeing the mind and thus creating peace for the person. She compared the effect of the Holy Spirit on a wounded heart with the extraction of a stake from a heart that had not stopped bleeding because of that stake, and with the healing effect of balm on the wound after extraction:

She must sit down with you and tell you what happened to her and you must look at her past, what she experienced, whether she was raped, drugged since childhood, whether she drinks alcohol. Then she begins to tell you what she experienced. Then you come and ask her: "Was anyone at your house alcoholic?" "Yes, my father." "Was anyone at your father's house alcoholic?" "Yes, my uncle." "And in his house?" "Yes, my grandfather." Or: "My great-grandmother." Then you understand that it is a generational heritage. Then you come and tell her: "Do you want to forgive your father?" Or: "Do you want to forgive your mother?" Or: "Do you want to forgive your friend?" [...] With whomever [...] the problem exists. But she has to decide for herself to heal and to be free. When she says with all her heart: "Yes, I want to be free, I want to forgive", [...] then you tell her to say it with you, repeat: "I forgive. I forgive the person who raped me." Or: "I forgive the person who hit me. [...] I forgive him with all my heart, Lord." [...] When she says: "I forgive her from the heart", the Holy Spirit comes immediately to begin his work in you. But she must have Christ, first she must have accepted Christ in her heart. It is like a stake that is beaten in the heart and there is blood on that stake. [...] Then the Holy Spirit comes and rips it out and [...] brings the balm to spread [on it] and brings healing to this soul. [...] And then you come and pray for her spirit. And you say [...]: "Holy Spirit, come and bring freedom to her spirit, come and take away everything that has blocked the mind, [...] Holy Spirit, come and cleanse, come and tear out, come and heal, come and bring peace." And the Holy Spirit does it.²²⁵

The pastor of the church MANAIA explained that it was important to her to confront the accused and the injured person with each other if possible. It was her experience that the accused persons were more willing to ask for forgiveness through such an encounter, and this in turn helped the injured to forgive. She explained how she proceeded with the case of a woman who had been sexually abused by her father for years:

²²⁵ Interview no. 75, 07/13/2015.

I recently treated a woman who was raped by her father between the age of nine and 13. [...] So we prayed, we fasted for a while. And I said to her, “Can we call your father to talk to him?” She told me: “It is difficult when my father comes, because I fear and despise him.” [...] We called him. [...] And the man agreed to come. He had denied everything, to everyone. [...] With me he accepted everything, he asked his daughter for forgiveness for every small thing. [...] The daughter cried a lot. [...] I gave her a ring and told him: “Put the ring on her as a sign of restitution, as a sign of her forgiving you, of you somehow to give her back her dignity.” And imagine there was forgiveness! [...] She tells me: “I can’t tell you that I’ve forgotten, but [...] every day I feel less pain.” [...] Forgiveness doesn’t happen suddenly. [...] It’s different for every person. [...] You have to treat the temperament. [...] There are people who don’t find it hard to forgive [...], there are others who find it hard. [...] What you do then you use certain therapies, writing something on paper or practicing with a person: “How would you tell the person what you would like to tell him? Practice with that person, tell him anything you want to say.” [...] Zacchaeus said, “I will return the damage I have caused four times.”²²⁶ [...] Not in all cases this is possible, because there are people who [...] don’t want to ask for forgiveness, but in the majority of cases I actually managed to get the perpetrator to come and say sorry.²²⁷

The quote suggests that this pastor appealed to a variety of methods; which one she selected depended on the situation and person, always with the aim of supporting the mentally wounded in forgiving. In the case outlined above, for example, during the personal confrontation she allowed the accused person to put on a ring as a sign of restoring dignity and making amends to the injured person, following the example of Zacchaeus. Others she let write letters or practice role-playing.

The woman pastor of the church MAR explained that she had found in the couples’ counseling that if both are *cristianos* (Christians), it is easier to forgive than other couples. Therefore, they have a greater chance of relationship healing because its most important prerequisite is forgiveness. Counseling meetings in marriage crisis are held every two weeks in order to be able to check regularly whether those involved have lived up to their intentions:

When we speak of Christians, it is easier. You work with them and you get through to these brothers and sisters, you take them with you. After 15 days we want to know: “How is it going, what has happened, how is it going?” [...] Because we never listen to just one person, because one person alone says what he wants. We listen to them both. Again and again. [...] “You promised something, did you keep it?” [...] There are many couples [...] that God heals.²²⁸

4.1.2 Context: The 700 Club

²²⁶ Cf. Bible passage Luke 19.1-10.

²²⁷ Interview no. 61, 06/04/2015.

²²⁸ Interview no. 40, 04/23/2015.

4.1.2.1 Practice

The counseling center of The 700 Club in Alajuela existed as a branch of the San José counseling center from about 1987 to 1999 and had a considerable influence on the healing and counseling discourse in Alajuela. Several informants reported on direct or indirect experiences with the counseling of The 700 Club. In order to present the working methods of the Alajuela Center, the pastor of the church CCBEDN, who in the course of her life came into contact with the counseling center of The 700 Club in different ways, is presented below. Her first contact was through her sister, with whom she participated in lectures on inner healing and deliverance ministry at the counseling center of The 700 Club in Alajuela. Following one of these events, she was healed during an individual counseling session. After moving some time later from an IDEC church, where according to her no inner healing had been practiced, to the church IM, her pastor recommended her to The 700 Club as a counselor. As a result, she was trained in the counseling center and then worked as a counselor in the center as well as in the church IM. After the Alajuela counseling Center had been abandoned, she took over its former house as a tenant and since then sold handicrafts and supplies in the front area, while in the back area of the house she set up a room for gatherings of her own new church. She led prayer and fasting meetings and worship services there, but as the center of her pastoral activities she understood counseling which she practiced in accordance with her training through The 700 Club. She explained The 700 Club's counseling practice and some of the beliefs underlying this practice:

We offered counseling from Monday to Friday. We were counselors from various churches, [...] who had received the call to counsel, and who [...] had been recommended by pastors. [...] It was open mornings and afternoons. [...] There were about five telephones, because The 700 Club gets a lot of calls. [...] Because it is open to Christians, unconverted and Catholics and every religion. [...] A lot of advice was given over the phone, but also personally. [...] Some of us counselors were always there, some were there one day, others another day, that was a time given to the Lord without financial gain. [...] I came because my sister [...] began to come, then she invited me. They gave lectures here on deliverance, [...] on inner healing. There I began to hear what healing and deliverance is, because it was not done in my church. [...] In the meetings, [...] often there were prayers for healing and deliverance. And then, when you wanted, you made an appointment for yourself alone with the counselors. [...] I made an appointment and everything, and then later I didn't come anymore. [...] Sometime later they invited me [...] if I wanted to help them with the counseling here. [...]

Inner healing is [...] a process of deliverance from all these things, [...] from pain. [...] The first step is forgiveness, [...] because if you don't forgive, you can't be free of the shackles. [...] Sometimes people need deliverance from bitterness, from fear, from idolatry, from witchcraft, from satanic covenants, because many people come to Jesus who have practiced bad things, lesbianism, homosexuality. [...] The 700 Club [...] is for everyone, [...] therefore [...] it is the first thing that was done when they were not Christians to bring them to Jesus. [...] They were first brought to accept Jesus Christ to let them receive Christ's peace. [...] And then they were given a

Christian church. [...] We had the list of churches where they could be sent. [...] And they were told [...] that they should go and join a congregation. And as far as it was possible, we went through a process with them. A process that could take weeks, months, a year. [...] There are churches that don't - that still don't believe in deliverance, so we made the process with them until we see and the Lord says, "It's enough."²²⁹

The remarks of this pastor contain some of the already presented aspects of the found healing discourse: Inner and spiritual healing are considered complementary. The prerequisites for healing are conversion and forgiveness. Inner healing serves not only pastoral and therapeutic, but also evangelistic purposes. Lay counselors are trained for this activity and assigned in such a way that the counseling center is staffed every day during the week.

A further aim of the counseling activity in the context of The 700 Club, which was also pursued by non-denominational organizations such as FGBMFI and TF, was the explicitly non-denominational promotion of the individual's relationship to Jesus. Those who were advised by The 700 Club counselors should be referred to a church, because these were considered to be the places where the relationship with God is stabilized and can be lived. The orientation toward the local churches is also shown by the fact that the recommendation of a pastor was a prerequisite for the counseling work for The 700 Club. When the pastor quoted wanted to work in the counseling center in San José after the closure of the center in Alajuela; her then responsible pastor did not release her for this counseling activity so that she was not admitted there as a counselor.

4.1.2.2 Theory

The compendium *Lo básico de la consejería cristiana* (The Foundations of Christian Counseling) is the compilation of the theory and methodology underlying the work of The 700 Club in Costa Rica. It consists of eight booklets, in which it explains how to proceed in telephone and personal counseling. The pastor of the church CCBEDN explained:

When we started here, [...] they gave a course with eight small books on how to be a counselor, an effective counselor. [...] Now also, from these books I have here, I give them to the sisters who come here to me. [...] It shows the counselor to be truly effective in all areas. In relation to family life, inner healing, deliverance, what do you do when someone calls, how you counsel the person who calls, or when it is personal counseling.²³⁰

Fundamental to the content of this compendium is the belief that faith and proper behavior will lead God to bless you financially and personally. Evangelism, prayer, biblically founded individual ethical guidelines and practical instructions for successful marriage and family life

²²⁹ Interview no. 45, 05/08/2015.

²³⁰ Interview no. 45, 05/08/2015.

belong together according to this understanding. The understanding of the person as a three-part composite of body, soul and spirit is also fundamental. Consequently, the first step in counseling is to identify the cause of the problems to be treated in order to adjust the methodology accordingly: Has the wrongdoing or suffering of a person psychological or spiritual causes? If it is psychological, the devil who causes sin has to be fought by giving the love of Jesus to the person who seeks help. If it is spiritually caused, the responsible demon must be fought through deliverance ministry. Although the devil is held responsible for both, his doings should be opposed in different ways, depending on how he works.

In the compendium it is specified what kind of relationship between married couples and between parents and children corresponds to God's will and how family members should be advised if this relationship does not work. Only the adultery of the partner and being abandoned by an unbelieving partner are considered grounds for divorce. To prevent marriage from failing, women are provided with a list of criteria for choosing partners according to which they should avoid non-Christians, alcoholics, jealous and quarrelsome men. The duties of the spouses are explained and justified biblically: The woman should be submissive, obedient, dependent, adaptable and humble, respect, admire and love the husband. The house should be the center of her world, for otherwise she would weaken her marriage, lose influence on her children, and expose herself to dangerous temptation. She should keep the house clean and dress herself beautifully. The man in his role as the woman's head is attributed great responsibility and a multitude of duties and rules for conduct: He should have good manners, be faithful, controlled, respectable, generous, exemplary, strict and loving. He should love, protect, trust, understand, respect and praise his wife. He should avoid alcohol, pay taxes and ensure the material well-being of the family. He should choose the church and guide prayer and Bible reading at home. He should subordinate his sexual desires to hers in order to give her pleasure and satisfaction. In his leisure time he should consider the wishes and needs of the family. He should communicate with his family in order to create a climate of love and mutual understanding. For both spouses, the partner should be the most important reference person. They should not allow parents or anyone else to criticize the partner. These hints aim at distancing themselves from the extended family and focusing on the nuclear family. Moreover, the center of a successful marriage is mutual forgiveness. All guidelines translate into specific behavior rules. Thus, rules for successful communication are introduced and, in order to obtain a better handling of finances, it is recommended to practice creating a cost estimate. The role of the husband as head is not questioned. At the same time, the question of how a marriage relationship can succeed and how the husband and wife can feel comfortable in it, is far more central than questions of

hierarchy and authority. The demand on the husband to show empathy and behave responsibly is addressed in rather more detail than the demand on the woman to subordinate herself to him.

It also discusses in detail how to deal with victims and perpetrators of abuse. Mistreated wives should be instructed to forgive and at the same time live four to six months apart from their husbands. During this time their husbands are to achieve change in their life with the help of counselors. In this way, the marital life together is to be made possible anew.

The final chapter is about raising children. In order to protect children from Satan, both parents are to spend time with them, to keep themselves away from sin as role models, to assert their authority and to educate the children to discipline and responsibility. They should not punish their children out of anger and too often, but should give them unconditional acceptance, praise them, encourage them, and show them their love daily through a kiss, hug, or smile. Biblically justified instructions follow, on how to deal with practical and specific problems in education.

The content of the compendium consists to a large extent of biblically based rules of conduct, which consequently constitute a central content of the consultation sessions. Although this compendium formed the basis of the counseling activities at the counseling center of The 700 Club in Alajuela, the counselors did not limit themselves to its contents, as evidenced by an informant's statement that the healing prayer, which is not mentioned in the compendium, was also practiced:

There [i.e. in the center of The 700 Club] were a woman and a young man. [...] I went. [...] It was very hard for me to forgive my mother for her behavior. It was also hard for me to forgive my father because he left me. [...] I went there and then they said to me: [...] "You have to forgive your mother for these things, and your father." [...] They say a prayer for you since you've been in your mother's womb.²³¹

The guidelines of The 700 Club were handed down orally and in writing even 16 years after the closure of the center in Alajuela and shaped widespread practice and conviction in Pentecostal churches and communities. In the course of the field research, the author repeatedly met women who had either been counselled in the center of The 700 Club or had been trained as counselors, who had been counselled by a woman who had been trained there, or who had been trained by a woman who had been trained there. Many had adopted the counseling concept on the basis of the course material *Lo básico de la consejería cristiana* (The Foundations of Christian Counseling) and had handed down not only its counseling principles but also the underlying beliefs and ethical convictions.

²³¹ Interview no. 71, 07/08/2015.

4.1.2.3 Background

Since 2005, the Evangelical television station *Enlace* has been broadcasting *El Club 700 Hoy* in Costa Rica on a weekly basis. This is the current format of The 700 Club for Latin American viewers, produced by the Christian Broadcasting Network (CBN). The program's declared aim is to motivate viewers to improve their spiritual, emotional, physical and financial quality of life by reporting on people who have overcome difficult life situations.²³² Various similar programs such as *El Club 700 Latino* have been broadcast in Costa Rica and throughout Latin America for decades.

The talk show The 700 Club started in 1966 in the USA with Jim Bakker, who interviewed pastors and celebrities about how Christ had improved their lives. Their stories showed that God blessed those who believed strongly enough in him and took their lives optimistically into their hands. Bakker shaped conservative evangelical theology with his prosperity gospel and focus on the family. The central themes of his broadcasts were life in marriage and the education of children.²³³ Together with the founder of CBN Pat Robertson, he developed the practice of placing rows of so-called counselors at tables with telephones on stage during the show. Bakker told the viewers about healings and told them that these miracles could also happen to them if they called and asked for a prayer. The people called, the counselors listened to their prayer requests and concerns, prayed for them and then asked for donations.²³⁴ The 700 Club in the USA continued to employ several counselors to maintain the telephone counseling service. In Costa Rica, a center was opened in San José and Alajuela, respectively, where The 700 Club staff was available for telephone and personal counseling.

In addition to the counseling discourse, The 700 Club has also shaped the evangelical television landscape of Costa Rica: The principle of asking viewers to call during a program to pray for them was imitated. In the meantime, *Enlace* itself has produced such prayer programs on a daily basis. The pastor of the church IM organized such a weekly program and was always accompanied by a group of women for recording to San José, who answered the calls received in the background, according to one of these women from all Spanish-speaking countries, and prayed for the concerns of the callers.

²³² Cf. www.club700hoy.com/index.php/nosotros [03/17/2016].

²³³ Cf. Weinberg 2012, 71f.

²³⁴ Cf. Weinberg 2012, 75.

4.2 Church Services

Inner healing is addressed in all phases of the worship service. However, while sermons deal not only with inner healing but also with doctrinal topics such as the return of Christ, the judgment, the power of God, the devil and sin, promises of prosperity theology and ethical requirements, the themes of inner healing dominate periods of individual prayer. People are assured of God's love and closeness here; their biography is reflected on and reinterpreted and forgiveness is given. Individual prayers often follow an implicit or explicit altar call after a sermon. Some preachers even go to individual persons in the rows of chairs or benches to pray for them before the sermon, for example during the phase of worship. The prayers are often preceded by a short exchange. They are accompanied by physical healing practices such as the laying on of hands and embracing, as well as occasionally breathing on the persons and anointing them. This often leads to physical reactions such as slaying in the Spirit, crying, shaking or jumping. The contents of the prayers are based on the one hand on the contents of the sermon, and on the other hand on the individual situation of the person being prayed for.

The pastor of the church MIB told of such a prayer in a church service, following a sermon about forgiveness; through this she had been healed, because she had been able to forgive as a result of this prayer. She understood preaching and prayer as a dialogue in which only she and God were involved. After initial inner resistance, she succeeded during the prayer in complying with God's request to visualize the experiences of abuse. Then she could let go of the pain and forgive the perpetrator. She described the healing experience in spiritual terminology as breaking the chains:

And one day, in a service, [...] they began to speak about forgiveness, and there the Lord began to touch me. [...] I saw his [i.e. the perpetrator's] face, and then I said, "Lord, what are you doing, why his face, why? Lord, I can't, Lord, don't do this to me, please don't do this to me!" [...] And it was very difficult for me. [...] I heard the voice and it told me: "You must forgive!" I said: "No. No, if he's done me so much harm." [...] "You must forgive." [...] I went forward that day, I cried, I unloaded everything, I experienced everything again, and it healed, healed, healed, healed. [...] When I said, "Yes, I forgive him," and [...] the name of the person, [...] it was as if the chains were broken.²³⁵

The pastor of the church MAR was convinced that God works through her sermon and prayers to those listening. She saw herself as a medium, to whom God let it be known what the people present were suffering from, and what she consequently should preach and pray about. Through her prayer, while laying on hands or embracing the person, God enters into the person, takes

²³⁵ Interview no. 65, 06/16/2015.

their problems out of their innermost being, and heals them when they have forgiven. This pastor regarded healing and forgiveness as being on an equal level:

I do it because God shows it to me. [...] I have the [gift of] discerning spirits. The Holy Spirit reveals it to me. I see a woman, and God starts: “She has that and that and that and that.” Then I begin to pray [...] The woman begins to cry, and then God frees her. [...] God shows it to me. [...] You haven’t told anyone, [...] not even me, it’s God who gets that out of you, because that’s what’s hurting you. [...] There are many who come wounded from the world. [...] God wants to heal wounds. God gives me a sermon and I begin to pray [...] and God begins to heal the wounds. [...] I say, “Holy Spirit, go right into the core and take it out.” [...] God begins to work [...] and then [...] comes the moment when I say/ there are many who have to forgive their mother: [...] “Forgive your mother!” [...] Then: “No, I can’t.” “My dear, try hard.” [...] Until she says: “Fine, I forgive.” And she starts crying. There are some who are hurt from the womb, others who have been hurt since childhood. [...] God is beginning to take all the pain out of her heart. [...] Then they’re free. When they rise - sometimes they fall - [...] then it’s a completely different person.²³⁶

4.3 Congresses and Lectures

The themes of inner healing dominate the majority of gender-specific as well as not gender-specific congresses and lectures; this is also addressed when seemingly down-to-earth topics such as financial or medical issues are in the foreground.

Congresos (congresses) are unique events lasting several hours that are held mainly in larger churches. Local or regionally well-known, as well as international prophets and preachers will be invited to the congress and their appearance will be advertised effectively. The congresses consist of lectures, sermons, worship and prayer. They culminate in the altar call with the call to give one’s life to Jesus, and in a multitude of individual prayers that seem to bring about collective catharsis. The participants will receive a snack and gifts ranging from decorated paper bags, professionally printed ballpoint pens and notepads, to new clothing.

The pastor of the church MAR told how she and her husband organized all-day congresses that were attended by whole families. The congresses dealt with topics of inner and spiritual healing and culminated in cathartic experiences of forgiveness and reconciliation:

We rent a [...] large hall. We start at 10:00 am. in the morning. [...] I cook for everyone, there are about 300 people coming. [...] They get lunch, and in the afternoon they get coffee. And that is where you see the deliverances that God works. How people ask for forgiveness. How children forgive their parents. How parents forgive their [...] children and husbands their wives. There is reconciliation, because we have three [...] topics: Spiritual authority to clear the air. The forgiveness, and the fullness of the Holy Spirit. And then it’s almost 6:00 pm. and nobody wants to leave. I had to tell them: “Brothers and sisters, God bless you!” [...] All are blessed with this abundance, with this fire. It is a huge fire, because it is

²³⁶ Interview no. 40, 04/23/2015.

something beautiful. God liberates there, they worship God there, they praise God there, and they dance and jump. [...] Nobody wants to leave.²³⁷

Congresses for women mainly deal with fundamental issues of female identity. This can be seen in a congress title such as *El propósito de Dios para la mujer* (God's plan for women, church IM, 02/27/2015), *La hija del rey* (The daughter of the king, church MANAIA, 09/23/2017) and *Ahora me toca a mí* (Now it is my turn, church MIB, 02/07/2018). *Charlas* (lectures) for women on the other hand tend to deal with specific topics in the area of child rearing, married life and health. Pastors or experts on specific topics, such as therapists and doctors act as lecturers. The following quote shows that forgiveness is also addressed in lectures, and that lectures also culminate in altar calls and individual prayers:

When a person comes, or the preacher himself who gives the talk [...], they call you to the altar for example, they make a call on a subject they are talking about, [...] they talk about forgiveness. [...] Then they call you: "If you have a lack of forgiveness, approach the altar and come and lay before the Lord these people and this problem." Then someone will come and pray for you.²³⁸

4.4 Groups, Courses and Meetings

Bible groups and prayer groups, cell groups and creative groups, as well as faith courses of Evangelical Pentecostal churches are predominantly gender-specific. But groups and courses are also offered for couples. The events of the Catholic-Pentecostal communities are predominantly designed to be gender-unspecified. In addition, there are several non-denominational women's organizations. Whether group or course, gender-specific or not, Evangelical or Catholic: the self-concept and forgiveness are central topics.

4.4.1 Bible groups and prayer groups, cell groups and creative groups

Compared to congresses and lectures, women's groups are characterized by the regular pattern of their meetings, by a smaller number of participants and consequently by greater intimacy. In the following, a Bible and prayer group, as well as a creative group of the church CCVN and a women's group of the church MSDJ are presented as examples.

The Bible and prayer group *Mujeres Creciendo en el Espíritu* (Women Growing in the Spirit) of the church CCVN was attended by nine to 15 participants between the ages of 30 and 85. The leader explained that the group had been founded in 2006 for educationally disadvantaged women. In the nine years that have passed since then, the women have not only developed spiritually, but some have also learned to read. Meetings took place on Thursday afternoons,

²³⁷ Interview no. 40, 04/23/2015.

²³⁸ Interview no. 44, 05/07/2015.

lasted two hours and began with coffee and individual conversations. A group discussion followed centering on individual books of the Bible, mainly the Gospels, for which the women had prepared themselves with the help of course books of the *Seminario por Extensión a las Naciones* (SEAN).²³⁹ Finally, they prayed with and for each other. Many years of continuity characterized the group in its composition and as a result, in the familiarity of the participants. The meetings focused on teaching biblical content, but in the context of common prayers, themes of inner and spiritual healing were also addressed. The existence of the community, which in between meetings also exchanged prayer requests through WhatsApp and knew themselves to be bonded in prayer, gave the women an awareness of continuous spiritual support. The education acquired in the group gave self-confidence not only to those participants who were less well educated.

The women's group of the church MSDJ was visited by about seven to eleven women between 18 and 40 years of age and had then existed for just a few months. Unlike the women's group of the church CCVN, this group was conceived as a cell group; its aim was to grow and multiply. According to the co-pastor, this church had previously worked according to the model of the G12 Vision movement, but then distanced itself from its organizational form.²⁴⁰ The church was successful in propagating cell groups for youth, while the leaders regretted that this was less successful in gender-specific groups for adults. Nevertheless, propagating the women's group was their declared aim. In contrast to the women's group of the church CCVN illustrated, new participants often joined this group, and those who attended the meetings for a few weeks were integrated into leadership training. Composition and leadership of this women's group was characterized by change. The course of the meetings of this group, on the other hand, followed a set structure: an introductory question to all participants, often aimed at each telling an anecdote from their lives, was followed by an introductory prayer and a sermon, the message of which was illustrated by an action such as acting out a scene. A period of praise, individual prayers and slaying in the Spirit followed the sermon. The meetings ended with a final prayer

²³⁹ The SEAN was founded in 1971 by the Anglican missionary Antonio Barratt to support theological education in local churches and congregations in Latin America. See www.seancostarica.org/ [04/25/2017].

²⁴⁰ Facebook message dated 05/26/2016. The G12 Vision movement has its roots in Bogotá, Colombia, where Pastor César Castellanos introduced a twelve-cell group structure in his church *Misión Carismática Internacional* in 1983, which is based on the model of the *Yoido Full Gospel Church* in South Korea, in which each and every believer is to become leader of a twelve-cell group after a so-called consolidation phase as a believer. The popularity of the G12 Vision movement declined in Costa Rica after initial dissemination and the twelve-cell structure in its original form after César Castellanos is rarely attempted anymore, but some churches modified the system and made it less authoritarian. Many other churches are organized in a cell group structure without resorting to the system of César Castellanos. It is difficult to trace which churches are inspired by G12, since their methods are controversial and pastors attribute inspiration for the organization of their churches to divine revelation rather than to earthly models.

and time for individual exchange. In contrast to the women's group of the church CCVN, this group focused on issues of inner and spiritual healing such as female identity, family and spiritual commitments, sin and the devil. According to the co-pastor, the aim of this group was to empower women.

A less common format was that of the *Tardes Creativas* (Creative Afternoons) in the church CCVN. Since being established ten years ago – in 2005 – the event has focused on creative design with materials such as cardboard and paper, fabric, papier-mâché and everyday items such as bottles and packaging material. Every week about 20 to 25 women between the age of 13 and 80 gathered, some of whom belonged to other churches, and each worked for several weeks under guidance on one of three projects available for them to select from. During breaks, lectures were given on theological, ethical and psychological issues and prayers were prayed for and with each other. The 45-year-old founder and leader of the group, who had started her own business with handicraft and craft supplies, explained that she was pursuing a missionary and a therapeutic goal with this group. Her missionary intentions were aimed at women who did not belong to a Pentecostal church, whom she wanted to help to establish a living relationship with God. She pursued her therapeutic goal with guidance on how to make handicrafts, because these would have a healing effect on the souls of women, as many experience through handicraft for the first time in their life that they are capable of accomplishing something good:

We see what it means for a woman to finish a necklace, if she is perhaps a woman who has never been able to complete anything in her whole life. The meaning it has for a woman to be able to say [...] “I could finish something”, to see her in this area totally restored. Maybe they [are] women who have been told all their lives: “You useless one”, “You are no use for anything”, “That you exist is pure coincidence”. [...] That's why we focus on the handicraft, in combination with the word.²⁴¹

This example shows that even event formats that at first glance do not appear to be related to inner healing can be linked to this aim.

4.4.2 Courses

The courses presented in the following, differ from the groups outlined above in that they run for a limited time span. There are mixed courses, women's courses and courses for married couples.

One of the mixed-gender faith courses is the course *Nueva Vida en Cristo* (New Life in Christ), conducted by the pastor of the church CCBEDN, which primarily aimed at teaching biblical-

²⁴¹ Interview no. 28, 04/08/2015.

theological topics to converts. The course was developed in Spanish by US American Mark Robinson as part of his work for CAM International, which was then renamed *Camino Global*, and in collaboration with members of the Costa Rican denomination AIEC. In doing this course, the implementation of forgiveness is guided in seven steps: 1. The participants are to become aware of their negative feelings. 2. They are to remember forgiveness received undeservedly from Jesus. 3. They should decide to forgive independently of their own will, feelings and the behavior of the other person. 4. They are to pronounce this decision in prayer, naming the person's name and their misdeed. 5. They shall decide to no longer hold the person responsible for the act. 6. They shall endeavor not to think again about the offending event. 7. They should not expect the other person to change, as the important thing is that through forgiveness one frees oneself from the consequences of the sin of the other.

Beyond these seven steps, the course material contains a suggestive query about personal decisions. The possible answers are "I will forgive" and "Peace" on the one hand, and "I will be resentful" and "Bitterness" on the other hand.²⁴² This raises the question of whether a suggested decision for forgiveness can really be effective.

One of the women's courses is *Renovada* (Renewed), which was held once again by a staff member of the church CCVN. It aims less at mediating biblical-theological issues than at self-reflection and finding identity. The central message of the written course material is that women have value because they are God's beloved daughters and Jesus' brides. Spiritual warfare and forgiveness are also addressed. The course was originally developed in English by Mary Sumner and Joyce Ter Horst. They are among the founders and leaders of Revive and Restore Ministries, based in Whitestown, Indiana, an initiative whose aim is worldwide women evangelism. Under the name of this initiative, conferences were held in Costa Rica, as in other countries, to facilitate cooperation with local church women's initiatives. In the context of such a conference, a staff member of the church CCVN met Joyce Ter Horst and learned about the course material. As a result, Joyce Ter Horst attended the courses held in Alajuela several times. In the course, following the theoretical presentation of the meaning of forgiveness, there is a practical guide to forgiveness, consisting of a prayer that corresponds to the first four steps of the guide to forgiveness in the course book *Nueva Vida en Cristo*: The participants should first confess their own sins in prayer and ask for forgiveness for them. Then they should write down the names and acts of those whom they wish to forgive, and visualize the painful events and the

²⁴² See Robinson 2001, 19; 2005, 18.

emotions caused by them. Finally, forgiveness is to be declared and the negative emotions are to be handed to Jesus.²⁴³ The option of not forgiving is not mentioned.

Courses for married couples serve to heal marital relationships. This healing needs to be preceded first by the spouses' inner healing and then by their mutual forgiveness. With these aims in mind, the *Juntos por siempre* (Forever Together) project, started by the same staff member of the church CCVN who also led the *Renovada* course, organized lectures, film evenings, dinners, courses and retreats for couples. Building on inner healing and mutual forgiveness, the couples were to be given a biblically grounded marital ethos by discussing issues such as communication, sexuality and finances. The mother of a woman who had attended several of these events with her husband explained that many marriages had been saved in this way:

They do follow-up events there, after a retreat they teach them the Bible, for three months they show couples how to become better couples. [...] They must commit themselves to attend this retreat at a weekend, then [...] to attend meetings for three months, where a leadership group will show them how to become a better couple. [...] We have seen so many restored marriages, inside and outside the church. Some take part in such a retreat, because they are about to divorce, and in the end, they do divorce, it could not be prevented. [...] It depends whether there is a willingness of the heart to accept the teachings of the Lord, to keep them, and to put them into practice.²⁴⁴

In the church MANAIA married couples gathered every two weeks for a course, during which different course materials were studied in part individually, in part as a couple. Issues of finance and sexuality were also addressed. The aim of the course, as stated by the pastor, was to prevent marital conflicts as well as to forgive and to heal:

The couples come every two weeks. We work in pairs and individually. [...] We're working with a book called "Before saying Yes". This is a book for unmarried couples, but also serves married couples. [...] Many have to be given back the time before marriage, because it was bad. In that case you have to regain each other again. [...] And heal. We're working with another book, [...] about sex in marriage [...]. [...] We're talking about finances, sexuality. [...] And we have this other book that is the model of marriage. [...] Everyone must have their own book, and they work on it together as a couple. [...] There is forgiveness, healing, there are also retreats for married couples. Lectures. [...] It's a workshop, and you don't just go to the workshop if your car is broken, [...] but it's wise to take the car to the workshop as a precaution. [...] Some couples don't go to counseling until [...] half the car is broken. But I tell them: "You don't have to wait that long. Go to a workshop for couples to learn and refresh things and renew the promise. [...] Before you [...] fall into chaos, you better take precautions." [...] Maintenance is better than repair.²⁴⁵

²⁴³ Cf. Sumner 2010, 54f.

²⁴⁴ Interview no. 44, 05/07/2015.

²⁴⁵ Interview no. 61, 06/04/2015.

As part of the *Juntos por siempre* project, a course on money management was also offered, based on documents from the organizations *El Instituto para la Cultura Financiera* and Crown Financial Ministries, which stated that the aim was to teach viable economical behavior based on biblical convictions.²⁴⁶ One participant summed up what she had learned by reporting that it was crucial for the handling of goods, to be aware that you are not the owner, but have been appointed by God as administrator in all areas of life. Out of the responsibility toward God grows the obligation to deal with property wisely. Essential principles for this are self-control, renunciation, patience and compassion. She also stressed the link between financial well-being and mental well-being. Because many people try to compensate their mental injuries by purchasing goods, inner healing is also a prerequisite for the responsible handling of money:

I think [...] that the financial area is strongly affected when a person is not healthy; it can even be that the person wants to buy more and more to feel emotional relief and happiness when he buys things that cause pleasure. In this way, people try to compensate feelings like a low self-esteem, and to enhance themselves through the material things they have, house, car, jewelry, travel, and so on.²⁴⁷

In the CCCAJ, mixed-gender initiation courses were offered as retreats, followed by a total of eight weekly mixed-gender *Cursos de Crecimiento* (growth courses), each lasting several weeks, advancing from one to the next and dealing with dogmatic, liturgical, ethical and psychological topics. In addition, there was a weekly mixed-gender training event called *Escuela de Formación* (Training School) for those who had been members of the CCCAJ for some time and were considered leaders with the aim of conveying theological and psychological contents. Lectures were given on questions of self-knowledge, emotional and spiritual deliverance, but also on practical life issues such as dealing with money or unemployment.

4.4.3 Meetings of non-denominational women's organizations

In Alajuela, several women's groups called chapters, belonging to the non-denominational organizations FGBMFI, TF and Aglow, met regularly. What these organizations have in common is that their aim is to build or intensify the individual relationship with God. They intend to achieve this above all through sharing testimonies of faith in connection with having meals together. They emphasize their being non-denominational and do not allow talking about the own church membership or promoting the own church during meetings. People who do not belong to a church should be encouraged to join a church, because churches are understood as the places where the relationship with God is lived in a community. The procedure of the

²⁴⁶ Cf. www.culturafinanciera.org and www.crown.org [04/26/2017].

²⁴⁷ E-mail dated 17.4.2017.

meetings of the chapters of these three organizations is similar and follows a fixed pattern. In the following, the order of the meetings of the chapters of TF is presented.

For the weekly meetings of the 52 Costa Rican TF chapters, which took place in hotels or restaurants, six different women were assigned each time to the podium. One of these women was responsible as moderator. After the opening greeting, another one outlined each week anew the vision of TF, which is based on the legend connected with its establishment. According to this, in the early days of the organization some women were cured of sterility. From this, it is deduced that its mission is to contribute to transforming women's lives and bearing fruit in all respects. The vision was always followed by the so-called bear hug. The third woman interpreted a passage from the Bible. The fourth woman explained the theological significance of the collection, which was then collected. The fifth presented a song by explaining what it meant to her personally, then singing it together. Already in presenting the vision, interpreting the Bible passage and in the explanation of the song, the women included their personal testimony. But all these brief testimonies culminated after a pause during which food was shared, in the testimony of the sixth woman - who in presenting her biography, worked out her suffering and her guilt and showed how God had transformed her life by healing her from all the pain that had resulted from suffering and guilt. These testimonies illustrate that the greater the suffering and guilt of human beings, the more God's grace to them becomes evident, and that individuals are not alone in their destiny. The meetings ended with the *anillo de oración* (prayer ring), for which about five women standing in a circle embraced each other, shared actual concerns and prayed for each other. Meetings of the chapter *Iztarú* in Alajuela, named after the restaurant where the meetings were held, were attended by between 30 and 40 women aged between 20 and 70. 2000 women, who belonged to chapters all over the country, gathered once a year for a congress in San José at the Hotel Herradura. Several participants reported about the cathartic experiences during this congress, which was one of the highlights of the year for them.

4.5 Retreats

Retiros (retreats) are part of the standard repertoire in many Evangelical Pentecostal churches as well as in communities of the RCC. There are retreats for women, for men, for couples, for teenagers and for children. For women in particular, retreats are often the only way to spend a kind of short holiday without the family. Some churches design retreats that advance from one to another, in order to offer continuous company to the faithful, from conversion onwards. These retreats can be visited just once. Other churches design retreats that do not follow on.

These each emphasize a different content, and so can be visited repeatedly. Still other churches combine both concepts. The frequency of retreats exclusively aiming at converts is an indicator of the growth orientation of a church. The church MJV, for example, organized the *Encuentro con Dios* (Meeting with God) four times a year for female converts with 50 to 60 participants, as well as corresponding retreats for men and children. The church MSDJ held at least two retreats for converts per year with about 20 to 30 female and male participants. The church CCVN, on the other hand, only organized one women's retreat every one to two years, in which many took part several times. Forgiveness is addressed in a special way during retreats for converts, but issues of inner healing are part of all retreats. They always lasted from Friday or Saturday to Sunday and mostly took place in hostels or hotels around Alajuela. A similar event format is the *campamento* (camp). The camps differ from the retreats in that the community experience of the participants has a stronger focus and topics of inner or spiritual healing are less central. They mainly aim at young people and families.

The MSDJ church's retreats, which were designed for female and male converts and in which predominantly young people took part, always followed the same schedule. Topics were the own childhood, relationship with parents, emotional wounds, forgiveness, the work of the Holy Spirit and deliverance from the consequences of emotional wounds. Times of worship repeatedly alternated with times of preaching and prayer, games were played, and in addition the use of various methods made the content to be conveyed tangible. As an example, the informant quoted below reported that during her retreat, scenes were played out, the participants were asked to embrace a pillow and imagine it was the mother, to write a letter to the father, and to nail this letter to a cross. Next day they would receive the letter back, dyed with red ink symbolizing the blood of Jesus, and be provided with a personal sentence of promise of individual salvation:

There are about nine meetings [...] like services. [...] There is praise, worship, then preaching and prayers. [...] There are the "Being children again", [...] those of forgiveness, [...] those of the mother, [...] there they gave us a pillow, and we embraced it. It was nice for me, because [...] while you are praying, they give you the pillow, and [...] my mother was dead, [...] and I felt the embrace. You cry with a pillow, you let it all out. [...] And then comes "The fullness of the Holy Spirit". That's usually the last one where the Holy Spirit moves. [...] There are nine sermons. [...] There are also plays. [...] And there are also games. [...] A cross is taken. And for example, to forgive your father, you write him a letter saying what you want. [...] Then you go and nail [the letter] to the cross. [...] Then [...] the next day, the "We are cleansed by the blood of Christ", [...] somehow so the sermon is called, [...] what we have nailed down, we receive with a [...] written word. With the notes, they dye it with ink, something red, [...] that symbolizes the blood of Christ, and that the blood

of Christ has taken it all away. [...] One word, “God has changed your life” or “God has forgiven you”, “God has saved you”.²⁴⁸

The retreats of the church MJV took place at the Martino Hotel, about seven kilometers from the center of Alajuela, and cost the participants 40,000 colons each. Those participating in the retreats for the converted had to pledge not to tell anything about the contents and the procedures of these retreats. The need for this was justified in that future participants should have an open mind in order to be able to make their own surprising experiences. The pastor explained that the retreat was for cleansing and deliverance. The physical effects of the retreat were perceptible from the outside, when the participants returned in several buses during the Sunday afternoon service, got out one after the other and went to the stage through the jubilant, applauding and singing church members. In this way some of the participants were supported and others carried, as otherwise they threatened to fall; others jumped, laughed ecstatically, screamed or cried. The participants then gave testimony of their experiences with God they had had during the retreat, declared that they were new people, asked the relatives present for forgiveness and affirmed their love for them. Some cried or laughed so much that they could not speak, others spoke in tongues, and God’s work on them was always praised by the moderators. At the end of the service they were allowed to go to their relatives, who greeted them with balloons, flowers and placards. Just like the outlined return of women from women’s retreats, the return of children from children’s retreat and the return of men from men’s retreat took place. Not only, but especially with regard to children, the question of manipulation arises.

Participation in a retreat for this church was suggested to people who had been attending worship services and meetings of one of the cell groups for several weeks. The retreat was regarded as initiation into firm affiliation to the church. When the informant quoted below took part in one of these retreats, she had already taken part in retreats of other churches, but according to her, this retreat had fundamentally transformed her relationship with God. She also explained the evangelism concept of this church: The retreat is followed by the *Academia de Transformación* (Transformation Academy), which consists of weekly sessions and lasts for about a year. The participants would be introduced here to the Bible and to essential faith issues. During this time, they should be baptized and take on an initial role in the church, for instance in the greeting service or in child care. The transformation academy ends again with a retreat, which was called *Lanzamiento de Discípulos* (Commissioning the Disciples). Those who have

²⁴⁸ Interview no. 50, 05/15/2015.

taken part in it are allowed to take on bigger tasks, such as participation in worship services and the management of retreats:

It was the best retreat [...] of my life. It's really the three best days, even though you have to pay a lot of money. [...] On the day I first went at *Misión to* worship, the men were received from their retreat. They were very different from what I had experienced before. They bounced and jumped, others wept, some had to be pulled because they were completely absorbed [...] in the presence of God. [...] It is forbidden to tell what happens during a retreat and the experiences you have, so that when someone rides along, that person is really surprised. [...] It's a pact you make before you go to the retreat. [...] You're taking part in a retreat and you're overwhelmed. So, God speaks to you. [...] After the retreat, you go to the transformation academy. [...] One learns [...] that one must forgive. [...] It'll take about a year. [...] It is very exhausting to receive the people who are just coming back from their retreat, because you have to carry them, [...] perhaps they pull you by the hair when they are full of the Holy Spirit.²⁴⁹

Reports on the retreats of churches practicing the G12 structure suggest that the retreats of the church MJV are also designed according to this model, and the succession of a first retreat, Transformation Academy and a second retreat as well as gradually increasing responsibilities in the church are reminiscent of G12. The pastor of this church did not deny this connection when approached, but merely pointed out that his model had a biblical foundation.²⁵⁰

Perhaps some of the secret methods of the MJV church's retreats resembled those described by an informant who participated in a retreat for female youths of the church *Visión de Multitudes* in Cartago. She stated the aim of this retreat to be promotion of inner healing through the attainment of forgiveness and transformation of the self-concept. She stressed that it is important not to have a mobile phone or a watch with you during the retreat in order to be isolated from any everyday context and to be able to devote yourself completely to God. She described a similar routine like the informant of the church MSDJ, as far as sermons, Bible studies, prayer, worship, times of individual reflection and group-dynamic games alternated. She was to write down who had hurt her and what emotions this had triggered. She was also asked to write down her own sins. This text was subsequently burned as a sign of deliverance. The same issues were also covered when instructing her in a lonely place to call out who was hurting her and what sins she had committed herself, and to add which person she forgave for which acts. She described this as an overwhelming experience of deliverance. The women were individually promised God's love, on the basis of which they were to accept themselves as they were. In addition, prohibition of premarital sexual intercourse was emphasized. The informant described the preparation for returning from the retreat just like the participants of other retreats:

²⁴⁹ Interview no. 13, 03/19/2015.

²⁵⁰ Facebook message dated 05/26/2016.

They had received letters from family members, friends and church members who had been asked to write them beforehand. After all, they had been received in a divine service during which film footage and photos from the retreat had been shown and the participants had given testimony of what they had experienced, similar to the way they had been received with cheers and applause in the church MJV:

It's a meeting with God. [...] You isolate yourself completely. [...] It's almost always Friday, Saturday and Sunday. On Sunday one comes back to the service and is received. The retreat is about having a more personal community. [...] Your watch is taken from you, the cell phone. [...] You're dedicated to God. [...] There's singing, dancing, praying, crying. [...] Some people are praying especially for you. Lectures are given [...] about sexuality, that one should not have premarital sexual intercourse. [...] We got a ring as a pact not to have sex before we get married. [...] Bible studies, but also worship, praise, maybe there are some games. [...] Groups are divided, [...] and they prepare a choreography or something else that they perform. [...] You spend time with the people, but when it's time for prayer/ [...] Sometimes the retreat take place in places like the mountains, they tell you: "Go a little further away so you can be with God." [...] It's always either women or men. Some people want you to write down who hurt you. [...] Everything you felt. The bad things you did. The sins. [...] They make a fire, and you throw everything into it and burn it, in order to live. [...] Sometimes you have to scream [...] to let it all out. [...] They take you somewhere where no one hears you and you scream: "Why did that person do this to me, why did that happen?" Or: "Why did I commit that sin?" [...] That will set you free. [...] You should write down on a piece of paper all the sins you have committed. [...] And on another piece of paper, name any person who has harmed you in any way. Who you hold grudges against and who you don't [...] Sometimes you suppress a lot of things. We should all scream: [...] "I forgive that person because he did this and that and that and that to me." Although nobody hears it, [...] it feels like you're being liberated. [...] Then [...] they say, "Scream as loud as you can", to free yourself, and we all screamed. [...] The deliverance [was so strong], some even fell over, cried. Then [...] they tell you: [...] "Kneel. [...] No one must open their eyes." [...] Then they asked, "Who had sex before marriage?" Then you had to raise your hand. "Who committed that sin?" Nobody saw anything. [...] And [...] they gave you [...] something like a box [...] and said, "Open it, but nobody else is to see it." [...] Everyone had to close their eyes, and you could open it when the box came to you. In the little box was a mirror, and it said, [...] "Accept yourself as you are, for God loves you." [...] Everyone was crying. [...] You usually get letters. The family members are asked to do so. [...] The leader [...] says to your mother or to whomever: "Write her a letter." And so, at the end [...] comes the moment when you read the letters. [...] Also the leaders write letters to you, all those there, your acquaintances, [...] family members, friends [...] write letters. [...] Sometimes there are people to whom family members don't write letters. Then the people from the church also write [...] letters. [...] And at a certain time, just before you come back, you read them. You have some time to yourself. [...] During the last retreat [...] [I received] about 30 letters. [...] And the family members, when it is Sunday, come to receive you. [...] Then the photos are shown. Of everything you've experienced, movies and testimonies.²⁵¹

In the church MANAIA too, retreats for converts were held and there also forgiveness was raised as the central issue, and was turned into a physical experience. Those participating

²⁵¹ Interview no. 48, 05/13/2015.

received letters too from their relatives, and the retreat culminated in being received during the service. The pastor explained that this reception often leads to forgiveness and reconciliation between the converts and their relatives. To illustrate how relationships are transformed by forgiveness, she told of a woman who participated in a retreat for converted. The husband had tried with threats to prevent her from taking part, she had stood up to him, the pastor had spoken with him and prayed for the couple. In the end, he had asked them for forgiveness in a letter and had come to the reception with the children:

The conference ends in the church. We invite their family members, Christians or not, to come here to receive [them]. They send them [...] letters and [...] they come here to receive them and there is much forgiveness between family members. Because maybe they didn't expect the aunt to come. [...] Or they had not expected the husband to write them a letter, because he had been rather angry because she was participating in the retreat. [...] I had a student who cried a lot when she attended the retreat; her husband told her that if she attended, he would beat her up and take her children away. And yet she went. Then I talked to the man [...] and I prayed a lot. [...] He had written a letter asking her to forgive him. [...] The greatest surprise was when she saw him here with [...] the bunch of children, [...] who received them, and there was forgiveness.²⁵²

The son of an informant explained the necessity of a step by step sequence of retreats for people of different spiritual maturity. Thus, the retreats for converts were about personal conversion, forgiveness and healing, while mentally and spiritually more mature people, such as those leading groups, must already have forgiven. The retreats for those who had belonged to the church for a long time were therefore

not so much focused on forgiveness because it is assumed that these people have already reached it.²⁵³

The RCC also pursued a step by step concept. For example, several weekends a year the CCCAJ held initiation courses to which people who had only recently started attending events were invited. In contrast to the Evangelical Pentecostal churches, whose retreats took place in hostels or hotels in the vicinity of Alajuela, these retreats took place in the CCCAJ itself without overnight accommodation. They also differed in that they were not gender-specific. However, they were similar in terms of content and methodology. The topics were the love of God, the sin of humans, God's forgiveness, Jesus' dominion and individual conversion. The informant quoted in the following explained that it was crucial to convey these dogmatic issues to the participants in a personal way, so that they would be overwhelmed by the immeasurable love of God, saddened by their own sin and grateful for God's forgiveness; they would also willingly

²⁵² Interview no. 61, 06/04/2015.

²⁵³ Interview no. 62, 06/05/2015.

recognize Jesus' dominion over their own lives and convert with conviction by promising individually to recognize Jesus as Lord and Savior. An integral part of these retreats was the personal testimony of a person that was about the transformation of his life as a result of conversion. For the sake of the emotional experience of the forgiveness of one's own guilt, notes on which the participants had previously noted their sins would be nailed on crosses or burned. The retreat culminated on Sunday afternoons in the Eucharist, for which a priest joined in:

A topic is covered, that is God's love, and this God is introduced to you, how much he loves you. [...] Then the second topic is about sin. You realize you're a sinner. That you have failed God, that you must meet Jesus to forgive you. [...] Then it's about forgiveness. And then comes the next lecture, which deals with the fact that we have to convert, that we have to change our way of life. [...] For example, we begin on Friday [...] at six o'clock in the afternoon, dealing with two topics, the love of God and [...] salvation. The next day faith and conversion are treated, then another topic is dealt with, that is like a testimony [...] of someone, of a changed life. [...] And then forgiveness is looked at. The person is confronted with the fact that we need Jesus to forgive us. [...] This is done with various games, sometimes we take a cross and nail a nail [to it] or we write our sins on small pieces of paper and later we burn them. Prayers are prayed and forgiveness is asked for, and it is acknowledged that Jesus came to forgive us. [...] And then [...] comes a theme, that is, the dominion of Jesus. [...] I am told that I am not my owner, but that it is Jesus. [...] Because he sacrificed his life for me. [...] He demands of me [...] that I accept salvation. [...] The subject is dealt with. And then the people are called individually so that they accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. [...] Then we, two persons, go with them and explain to them: "Will you accept Jesus as Lord and Savior?" We give them the text from the Epistle to the Romans: "If you confess with your mouth and believe in your heart that Jesus is Lord, you will be saved."²⁵⁴

One informant, who had taken part in such a retreat, said that she had been overwhelmed then by the knowledge of the love of God:

I arrived, and the first topic was: God's love. [...] The subject has got into me. [...] I began to cry. I think I cried for three days at that class. [...] There is someone who loves me so much that he has given his life for me, despite everything. [...] They told me: "Come to the meetings!" And I started.²⁵⁵

In addition to these initiation retreats the CCCAJ occasionally organized other retreats for people who had already completed them and felt they belonged to the RCC for some time. As topics of these retreats, inner healing and spiritual healing were named.

The church CCVN did not organize any retreats which aimed specifically at converts, but retreats for women, independent of the time elapsed since their conversion. In August 2015, 190 women took part in the retreat "*Del Desierto al Oasis*" (From Desert to Oasis). It lasted

²⁵⁴ Interview no. 52_1, 05/21/2015; cf. the Bible verse Romans 10.9.

²⁵⁵ Interview no. 63, 06/15/2015.

from Saturday morning to Sunday afternoon and took place for the first time in the same hotel as the retreats of the church MJV. During their course, times of group work in small groups alternated with plenary meetings. In the small groups, selected Bible passages would be discussed by the leaders contextualizing them historically for the participants and then challenging the participants about their spiritual significance and their significance for personal questions and needs. Alexandra Quesada, a prophetess known throughout the country in Evangelical Pentecostal circles who belonged to the church *Iglesia Manantial de Vida* in San José, was invited to preach on the topic and pray for the participants. There was also a phase of creative design. A member of the organizing team reported on the preparations for the retreat and stated about its aim that the women heal inwardly:

We do it [i.e. the retreat] [...] in a hotel. [...] The method is to invite a preacher who is responsible for the strong spiritual part of the prayer. [...] On Saturday morning she will preach in the morning and then pray for the people, so they go forward and she prays for them, we eat lunch, rest a bit, in the afternoon [...] we meet to do other things [...] In the evening she preaches again, prays again for the people, and that's the end of Saturday. [...] On Sunday [...] we have [...] a prayer time in the morning. We get up early, invite for intercession, [...] then comes her sermon, and she prays again for the people. [...] The Bible study [...] takes place two or three times. [...] We, the leaders, [...] meet with the seven people for whom we are responsible, we read the passage, [...] we discuss it among the eight of us. [...] We explain the historical context of the section to them. [...] Everyone answers the questions here on the piece of paper. [...] For example, first we explain to them what a desert is. [...] The physical aspect of a desert, that nothing grows, that there is no water, that one is thirsty, that the sun burns down, [...] all that. Then to bring them to the fact that there are spiritual deserts in our lives. Then the physical aspect is connected with the spiritual aspect. [...] To see that we have all crossed deserts in our lives. And that my desert is not the same as yours. That my desert was violence, or there are problems with children not going to church, whatever. [...] to bring them, through this Bible passage, to understand that there is hope in God that this desert will turn into an oasis. Then comes the explanation of what an oasis is. [...] That there's finally water there and that our Lord is the oasis, and all that. We also have a theme song from the group Hillsong, [...] which is about the desert. [...] Before that we do and experience everything, we work through with them, ourselves as a group. [...] We train the leaders and prepare them for what they pass on to the women. [In the leadership team] [...] there are six of us. [...] Each group has two leaders. [...] The first [...] has a little more authority and the second [...] helps her. [...] There is much healing.²⁵⁶

In terms of content and methodology, decisive differences between retreats were not found between Evangelical Pentecostal churches and Catholic Pentecostal communities, but within the Evangelical Pentecostal spectrum.

²⁵⁶ Interview no. 44, 05/07/2015.

5. Methods of Healing

Concrete methods of physical, spiritual and inner healing cannot be clearly separated from each other in practice due to the conviction of pneumo-psychosomatic links. The methods are applied in different contexts as outlined above, and will be analyzed and contextualized below, investigating their diachronous and synchronous relationships within the global Pentecostal healing discourse. First of all, some physical healing methods such as hugs, laying on of hands and anointing will be presented, as well as their effects which serve not only physical healing, but also inner healing and spiritual healing. As methods of spiritual healing, some methods of the individualistic practice of deliverance ministry and the corporate practice of spiritual warfare will be explained. Three exemplary methods of inner healing follow this. Of these, healing and substitution prayer were particularly widespread, while the Theophostic Prayer Ministry was limited to a smaller group of people since it was a relatively young method that had not yet spread widely in Costa Rica.

5.1 Methods of physical healing and physical healing methods

Physical healing was prayed for in all the contexts described. There was consensus that God responded to prayers by healing physical suffering. However, the meaning given to physical healing varied. The topic took a central position in the church MSDJ and in the church MJV. These conducted events that explicitly referred to physical healing, with titles like *Recibe tu Milagro!* (Receive your miracle!) or *Congreso de milagros y sanaciones* (Miracle and Healing Congress). In the sermons preached there, healing from physical suffering was often spoken about and promised in street campaigns. The reality of such miracles was demonstrated by people publicly testifying to the healing of their ailments, through reports and demonstrations, such as walking without pain after overcoming a leg disease.

When praying for physical healing, this was usually linked to the laying on of hands. However, like other physical healing methods, this served not just to heal specific physical suffering, but also to convey in general the Holy Spirit and the love and power of God. It symbolizes intimacy and protection on the one hand, and control and power on the part of the person laying on one or both hands on the other. It is an imitation of the healing touch of Jesus; and at the same time it symbolizes the solidarity of the Christian community.²⁵⁷ Following the meeting of a non-denominational women's prayer group in the suburb of La Guácima de Alajuela, two participants reported that a strong feeling of warmth had developed in the part of the body on

²⁵⁷ Cf. Csordas 2002, 30.

which the preacher who had been invited had placed her hand. Others said they felt the same after being breathed upon. Breathing on people is another way of providing a sensory effect of the Holy Spirit. During the said meeting, the preacher had asked a participant to lie down so that she could demonstrate how Jesus had awakened people from death through his breath. She prayed over the woman lying on the ground and finally blew hard on her chest. The woman sobbed: “I got burned.” The preacher explained: “This is the fire of the Spirit.”²⁵⁸ The experience of warmth as a reaction to the laying on of hands or blowing is called *unción* (anointing) and is interpreted as a manifestation of divine power. Such anointings are supposed to activate endogenous opioids that suppress anxiety and the sensation of pain.²⁵⁹ The experience of the author, who had the pastor of the church MSDJ lay her hands on her to heal a ligament stretching in the ankle joint, corresponds to this. A feeling of warmth developed under the hands, which covered the pain. After the warmth had subsided, however, the pain was felt again.

A third method of physically conveying the power of the Holy Spirit and the love and power of God are embraces. Thus, a singer who during a women’s congress of the church IM had asked all those present to embrace each other, explained this sign of physical affection as God’s affection:

How long has it been since your husband embraced you? How long has it been since your son hugged you? This woman who embraces you and you embrace is God!²⁶⁰

Hugs were an integral part of the meetings of both the chapters of the women’s organization TF and the women’s group PAF. During chapter meetings, five minutes were always set aside for an *abrazo del oso* (bear hug) as a part of the procedure: All women walked around the hall greeting each other with firm hugs. These embraces were also interpreted as embraces of God, as the announcement of the moderator of a chapter Iztarú meeting shows:

Now comes this special part, the bear hug. For the women who aren’t used to being hugged: This is a hug by God that we share among ourselves. [...] We have five minutes to receive the blessing.²⁶¹

The leader of the PAF women's group explained that the embraces she received when she first attended a meeting of this group made her feel a love she had not felt for years. God himself embraced her in those moments and thereby transformed her perspective on herself and her life.

²⁵⁸ Research diary 04/13/2015.

²⁵⁹ Cf. Kane 1982.

²⁶⁰ Research Diary 02/27/2015.

²⁶¹ Sound recording dated 05/20/2015.

As a result of this experience, it was important to her that women who visited the group also convey God's love through embraces:

The first thing I felt in this group when I arrived, [...] when they hugged me, [...] I felt the greatest love you can receive when you need it. And in fact, I remember saying that day: "God, [...] you really live and have been with me and have kept me [...]" Since that day [...] God [...] has changed my heart. [...] When I received this contact at that moment, this embrace they gave me, I could receive what I had not felt for many years. I know that the moment they embraced me, it wasn't them who embraced me, it was the Lord who embraced you. And I know that if we hug the women who come, [...] who perhaps are devastated because of a difficult situation/ because it is the truth, many women who come, come like me. They come to the group because they are going through a difficult situation. [...] The embrace is above all to make them feel loved. That they feel that there is someone who [...] loves them, that it is God who embraces them, because they even say to me: "Jeanette, your embraces!" "No, it is not me, it is the Lord who embraces you through me."²⁶²

A fourth method of physically showing the work of the Holy Spirit and the love and power of God is the anointing with oil, which is less common than the other methods. While in the discourses of a few churches such as the church MSDJ and the church MJV the healing of specific physical ailments played a central role, in most churches the sensory experience of the Holy Spirit acting, and the love and power of God in general was more focused upon. The methods mentioned convey the feeling of being cared for and enable relaxing. They embody a divine, intimate presence that surpasses human companionship in being linked to the absolute. They can become a substitute source or a prototype of intimacy.²⁶³ Just as the methods are physical, so are their effects, which besides observing the healing of a specific physical suffering, can also be slaying in the Spirit, crying, laughing or jumping.

The *reposito en el espíritu* or *descanso en el espíritu* (slaying in the Spirit) is a spontaneous experience in which a person, overwhelmed by divine power, falls over, lies on the ground and feels peace and relaxation. It took place during church services, congresses, women's groups, prayer meetings and retreats when individuals or prayer teams prayed for others. Hands were placed on the forehead, chest, back or shoulder or raised above or in front of the receiving person. Sometimes these were breathed on, or air was fanned on them, to make them experience the Holy Spirit. Others stood behind them, caught them if they fell backwards, laid them on the ground and sometimes covered them up. The people usually lay there for several minutes. Csordas sums up the feeling of slaying in the Spirit on the part of members of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the USA, in a way that generally corresponds with statements of the informants in Alajuela: In motoric terms, physical relaxation is described by some as a feeling

²⁶² Interview no. 55, 05/27/2015.

²⁶³ Cf. Csordas 1994, 246.

of lightness and buoyancy, by others as a feeling of heaviness. From a sensory point of view, it is reported that you feel waves of love flowing up and down your arms, warmth or dizziness. One is conscious, but without any perception of the environment and the body. In affective terms it is said that one feels reassured, loved, purified, relieved, free and happy. Spiritually, it means feeling surrounded by God's presence.²⁶⁴ Slaying in the Spirit makes God's closeness physically tangible and demonstrates God's power as well as the faith of the falling person. It is assumed that it supports any kind of healing process, because God directly works in it on human beings. An informant who belonged to the church CCVN described her feelings while she was slaying in the Spirit as follows:

I have experienced it as a strong feeling of peace, a moment in which God takes away all sadness, burdens, pain; for me it is a moment in which God frees us from our body [...] and one enjoys his presence, his fullness, his Spirit in oneself. It's a time when I cry, or I say thank you to God and thank you. [...] It's a moment when what's around me doesn't matter, so to speak. [...] It's like a meeting with God, and you don't want it to end.²⁶⁵

Similarly, an informant who belonged to the CCCAJ described how she felt while she was slaying in the Spirit. She had been carried when falling, had not been unconscious, felt weightless and recovered afterwards. She reported that during the initiation courses, following the healing prayer the Holy Spirit was requested to fill the participants by laying on hands. When this comes on to the persons, some of them slain in the Spirit:

[After the healing prayer] then follows the invocation of the Holy Spirit. [...] This is done in small groups, for example ten to 15 people [...] and three or four people go with them and lay hands on them. [...] There are people who slay in the Spirit. [...] The person lays hands on her and she falls to the ground. [...] Slaying in the Spirit, [...] you lose all heaviness. You fall and you can't hold on. You fall like someone's carrying you. You don't believe how wonderful this is! You fall and fall and become like a feather. And you fall to the ground. [...] You don't lose consciousness, you hear everything. [...] You're resting. And the Lord is with you and resting you. You keep listening to the music, you keep listening to everything. You're not passing out. [...] You get up totally rested.²⁶⁶

Slaying in the Spirit presupposes a relationship based on trust between the falling and the catching person. Dropping and being caught can be interpreted both as a symbol of trusting and surrendering your life to God and as a symbol of the trusting community of believers. It was important for an informant to emphasize that slaying in the Spirit does not depend on the work of other people, but is caused exclusively by God. To prove this, she said that she had twice slayed in the Spirit without others praying for her and catching her:

²⁶⁴ Cf. Csordas 1994, 241f.

²⁶⁵ E-mail dated 04/06/2017.

²⁶⁶ Interview no. 52_2, 05/21/2015.

Once it happened to me that I went forward in the church, and the presence of God was so strong that I better kneel down, and then the presence became even stronger, and I fell on my side and lay on the ground. Another time [...] there was in a church [...] something like a Christian concert, and it was the same, we sang and prayed, and I ended up on the floor, pretty long, and nobody prayed for me except God. [...] Others have prayed for me on other occasions, but it is nothing that has happened often. I only know that it's super good when you experience it, because it's like a very deep peace.²⁶⁷

Slaying in the Spirit is known among Evangelical as well as Catholic Pentecostals. How often believers experience it varies less from person to person than from church to church. While slaying in the Spirit was rare for members of the churches CCVN and CCCAJ, in the church MSDJ it was part of the ritual of weekly women's meetings. In this church the thematic input was always followed by a prayer time during which all participants were led one after the other by those leading the meeting to the pastor or co-pastor, who inquired about their personal circumstances, prayed according to the specific situation and concrete concerns for the person, laid hands on her, breathed and fanned air on her. Several participants fell over at each of the weekly meetings and were caught, laid down and covered. As soon as they awoke from this state, they were helped up, led to their place and, after they had sat down, anointed. In other churches, such as the churches MJV and MAR, on the other hand, it was more common for the experience of God's presence to be expressed in weeping, laughing and jumping than in slaying in the Spirit.

5.2 Methods of spiritual healing

Spiritual healing is accompanied by deliverance from demonic distress or obsession. The *ministerio de liberación* (deliverance ministry) is part of the spiritual struggle against evil powers, which is commonly referred to as spiritual warfare, and which, in addition to the individualistic practice of the deliverance ministry also includes the corporate practice of *guerra espiritual* (spiritual warfare). Through deliverance ministry individual need is fought, while the goal of spiritual warfare is to counteract social and political problems.²⁶⁸

5.2.1 Deliverance Ministry

Deliverance ministry is practiced when there is a chronic problem that is interpreted as a symptom of demonic presence. A difference is made between demonic distress and demonic possession. Converted Christians can be considered distressed or influenced by demons, but usually not possessed by them. Heterogeneous answers are provided to the question whether the inner precedes the spiritual or the spiritual precedes the inner healing. There is consensus,

²⁶⁷ E-mail dated 03/03/2017.

²⁶⁸ Cf. Währisch-Oblau 2012, 63.

however, that spiritual and inner healing are interrelated and that their genuine but not their only possible time is conversion, since they are prerequisites for ending the old life and beginning a new one.

The pastor of the church MANAIA quoted in the following, took the position that inner healing must precede deliverance in order to close the gateways for demonic entrance, opened as a result of emotional problems. For example, if forgiveness heals an emotional injury, the gates of resentment, bitterness, and vengeance would be closed, so that demons using those gates would no longer have access:

I will first discuss the subject of inner healing, then deliverance. [...] The spirits cannot overpower a Christian. [...] They influence you, but they cannot subdue you. [...] But [...] there are people who actually suffer from demonic influences because they have an injury. They have not forgiven, they have not healed at all, they resent, they are bitter, they long for revenge. There can actually be access for demons who can harm the person. Therefore, I will first discuss how to heal injuries, how to forgive. [...] And then comes deliverance.²⁶⁹

Turning it the other way around, a counselor of the church CCVN emphasized that emotional suffering is often caused by demons. She therefore described the sequence of spiritual and inner healing in contrast to the pastor just quoted, and explained that in her counseling sessions she first searched for spiritual causes of problems of those seeking help, by questioning them on various spiritually relevant aspects of family history, their own biography and current faith practices. As an example, she told of a woman who since her conversion was affected by an increasing number of events with negative consequences. Her husband had left her, her car had been hit and her house had been broken into. In order to fathom possible spiritual causes of this accumulation, the counselor had first checked whether the woman had disobeyed God. In the end however, she had found out that the cause of these events had been a pact with the devil, which the mother of this woman had made and which had caused curse chains up to the daughter. The terms *cadena generacional* (generational chains), *cadena espiritual* (spiritual chains) or *cadena de maldición* (curse chains) are used when several generations within a family are harassed by the same demons. The existence of these chains is based on the Biblical quote of Exodus 34.7b. When in the case sketched, the devil noticed that he would not succeed in dissuading the convert from God, even though he had a claim to her by the pact of the mother, he had begun to punish her. The counselor explained that she used combat and command prayers to destroy the generational chains and deliver the woman seeking help from

²⁶⁹ Interview no. 61, 06/04/2015.

the devil. Combat and command prayers are performative acts of deliverance in which the order to the devil to disappear is regarded as equal to his expulsion:

The counseling has to do with spiritual warfare. [...] A person [...] many bad things had happened, [...] and she said to me: “I give the tithe, I fast, I pray, I go to church, I worship”, and you ask yourself: What’s going on [...]? [...] That she was broken into, that her car was hit, the husband left her, a lot of things, aren’t they, and you say: Okay, either she’s lying about her relationship with the Lord or there’s something wrong, [...] and it comes out that her mother was a witch. That’s where it all came from, isn’t it? When she converted to the Lord, the devil began to make demands. And because he did not succeed in getting her out of the church, it started with the accidents and the burglary. [...] And what the devil wants least, is that you find the key to the problems, [...] that would be a series of combat prayers, to command the devil: “You get out, you let go this life!”²⁷⁰

The pastor of the church ICC told of a family in which all women had become pregnant while not married and explained this with spiritual chains that had originally been the result of sexual offenses by the ancestors. She also spoke of another family in which the sons had abused several girls, and attributed this to a generational chain caused by the father’s consumption of pornography. She explained that suffering sexual violence opens gates through which the demons of homosexuality, adultery, incest and rape, as well as the demons of unforgiveness, hatred, revenge, bitterness, shame, shyness and self-denial, could penetrate:

There’s a family where all the girls got pregnant unmarried. [...] If we look at the story of the aunts, all aunts became pregnant unmarried. The mother got pregnant unmarried. [...] If we start to work with this person who suffers because she has two or three daughters who are five, nine years old, she suffers already because the pattern says that when they are older, they become pregnant, because that is the generational curse. [...]

This goes hand in hand, [...] the spiritual and the emotional. [...] A father, [...] who always had to watch porn movies. [...] When he went out, he didn’t realize that his [...] two grown-up sons [...] watched all their father’s movies. [...] These boys wanted to copy with female classmates and friends what they saw in their father’s movies. So, they abused some girls, [...] they impregnated some. [...] Because the father had opened a gateway and his sons followed him. [...] A sexually abused boy will potentially abuse. And if that person is not healed, if he is not treated in all those things that have opened up in his life, [...] then that person will abuse someone, and that is a chain.²⁷¹

The pastor of the church CCFB told that her husband had mistreated her and that as a result her personality had changed, because the demons of revenge and jealousy had been able to capture her through the mistreatment. She was also filled with hatred, anger, bitterness, unforgiveness, pride, vanity, selfishness, fitness and shopping addiction. Demons are named after the destructive emotions and behaviors attributed to them. As in this case, the presence of several

²⁷⁰ Interview no. 73_2, 07/10/2015.

²⁷¹ Interview no. 26, 04/07/2015.

demons is usually assumed, which shows that the cognitive and affective consequences of inflicting and experiencing suffering are perceived as complex:²⁷²

After all this time, this maltreatment, [...] a demon of vindictiveness seized me. I started to hate him. [...] I was full of anger, full of bitterness, [...] full of hate, full of unforgiveness. [...] I became proud and vain. [...] An addiction to fitness, to beauty, to buying myself [things]. [...] My heart began to hate. [...] I became selfish. [...] With a demon of terrible jealousy.²⁷³

In Costa Rica, it is a common custom to dedicate newborns to the Virgin Mary, to a saint, or to the mythical Doctor Ricardo Moreno Cañas, in the hope that this connection will benefit the child. In Pentecostal usage, this practice is called *pactar alguien* (to make a pact about someone). One informant said that it was only after her conversion that she understood that a pact had been concluded about her when she was dedicated as a newborn to the *Virgen del Carmen* (Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel). In the retrospective, she interpreted many moments of her life before the conversion as an experience of demonic harassment, which she now attributed to the fact that a demon made a claim on her as a result of the pact. She often felt observed and suffered from visual and auditory perceptions as well as psychosomatic complaints such as sleep disorders and shortness of breath:

Before I met the Lord, [...] I was often harassed. [...] To feel, [...] that you are observed, [...] that suddenly a vision of someone appears to you and disappears. They disturb your sleep, [...] I felt like I was suffocating, I felt like I had a cat up here, and I couldn't breathe. [...] In my sleep I felt pressure that took my breath away. [...] Harassment, [...] hearing voices, seeing things, [...] appearances. Suddenly I heard or felt something, or I saw something in the mirror. [...] I had that as long as I can remember, until that day [i.e. until conversion]. From then on, thank God, no more.²⁷⁴

The informant further reported that the demon did not disappear immediately after her conversion, because even afterwards a small sculpture of the Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel stood on an altar next to her bed. Finally, she had realized that this sculpture had been the gateway for the demon to her. It was therefore necessary to create the largest possible spatial distance to the sculpture, so that she would no longer be within reach of the demon. So, she drove into the mountains and threw the sculpture into a valley. The following night she physically experienced in a feeling of cold how the demon came close to her once more and said goodbye. She described the experience of demonic action as physical discomfort, while the deliverance from the demon had led to a positive physical feeling of lightness:

²⁷² Cf. Csordas 2002, 39.

²⁷³ Interview no. 77, 07/15/2015.

²⁷⁴ Interview no. 74, 07/13/2015.

In my bedroom, next to my bed [...], I had an altar [...] for the Virgin Mary of Mount Carmel. [...] When I had met the Lord, every time I came into my room, I felt uncomfortable with the Virgin Mary. [...] I didn't kneel down anymore, I didn't pray to her anymore, I didn't put any flowers there and I didn't light a candle anymore. But I was still uncomfortable. [...] I dismantled the altar, I wrapped the Virgin Mary, [...] I stowed it. [...] I was still uncomfortable. [...] I wanted to get rid of this. [...] We drove the car to the mountains of Heredia, where we threw it away. [...] I had the feeling that something was being taken from me like a weight lying on top of me. [...] At night [...] I felt a cold [...] like a refrigerator. [...] I felt a presence [...] that stayed there for a while [...] and observed me. [...] I couldn't move. [...] Inside me, I said: "My God, help me!" [...] This presence [...] moved [...] up to my feet, it stopped, [...] stopped, [...] returned [...] to the head end, [...] lingered once more, [...] returned to my feet, [...] disappeared. And at the same moment, the cold disappeared. [...] I felt light. [...] To this day [...] I have never been visited again. [...] I interpret it [...] that it was the demon, the spirit to whom I had been surrendered. [...] When I accepted the Lord, this pact was dissolved, annulled, [...] he had no [...] claim on me anymore. [...] I interpret it this way, [...] that spirit came to say goodbye, so to speak. [...] It was his last intervention, so to speak.²⁷⁵

The prerequisite for the deliverance from demons is their identification. For this purpose, the person's biography is analyzed as well as biographies of the ancestors, because gates for demons are attributed to one's own misconduct or suffering, as well as to the misconduct or suffering of the ancestors. The pastor of the church CCBEDN told how two The 700 Club staff members, in a counseling session, had drawn up a list of possible reasons for demonic gates to her. It was supposed to be particularly serious that her mother had dedicated her to Moreno Cañas. Following this spiritual inventory, she was instructed how to cancel the identified pacts and tear or cut the chains. Rejecting pacts and tearing or cutting chains are performative acts of deliverance, as pronouncing the intention of detachment from the pacts and of tearing or cutting the chains are part and parcel of its execution. Cutting chains is often accompanied by a corresponding imaginary act. All this is done in the name of Jesus, in the conviction that demons cannot withstand him:

My mother dedicated me to Moreno Cañas. [...] When I came here [i.e. to the counseling session at The 700 Club counseling center], they began to cancel all these pacts. [...] Usually, in deliverance, [...] while questioning the person, you make a small list. Whether you were dedicated to someone as a little girl, whether you were abused, [...] or just grabbed, or whether you suffered great violence, or whether your parents practiced witchcraft, because these are chains that have to be torn, even if you didn't practice it yourself. So you start cutting [them] up. That's exactly how they did it to me. They began to write everything down, [...] and when they were finished, they began to cancel [...] all pacts, the sorceries. [...] In the name of Jesus, you have to cancel [all this]. So, for example, I revoked: "I am breaking the pact that my mother made about my life with this doctor Moreno Cañas, with the devil it is, in the name of Jesus." [...] So I dissolved this pact and all the things I [...] knew. [...] And done.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁵ Interview no. 74, 07/13/2015.

²⁷⁶ Interview no. 45, 05/08/2015.

The idea of the emergence of chains is figurative: As a result of an initial sin, a spiritual gate opens through which various demons can penetrate and thus initiate a generational chain. In order to close spiritual gates and thus deny the demons access to your own person, there are two methods. On the one hand, forgiveness of the sins of the ancestors, of one's own sins and of the sins of others against one should be asked for,

for the only thing that holds them [i.e. the demons] there is sin. The moment I ask for forgiveness, sin disappears.²⁷⁷

In this perspective, the request for forgiveness is a weapon of spiritual warfare. On the other hand, the gateways for demonic entrance are closed by a performative act of deliverance, in which the expression of the intention of closing it is accompanied by the corresponding imaginary act. After closing the gates, demons are sometimes sent to the cross of Christ to be rendered harmless. This is a precaution to prevent demons from being in the environment or infecting other people after they have left a person:

One must begin to break the spiritual chains that have to do with generational curses. [...] Then we must come and pray and cut it all up, bring it to the cross of Christ, for he has taken upon himself all our curses and condemnations, so that people may close gateways for demonic entrance.²⁷⁸

The deliverance ministry first became popular in Evangelical and later in Catholic Pentecostalism.²⁷⁹ In 2015, the fight against demons was an integral part of the healing of the entire, three-part person for members of the CCCAJ. An informant who worked there as a counselor explained that she was capable of identifying demons because she had the gift of discerning spirits as outlined in the Bible in 1 Corinthians 12.10. The deliverance ministry techniques she described were directed less against demonic distress than against demonic possession. In order to identify a demon whose presence she suspected, she provoked him by prayer in which she mentioned Jesus' name. Demons react to it and to other Christian practices such as evangelism and healing, as according to her can be seen in the physical reactions of the people they torment. These begin to breathe deeply, to bend, to stammer incomprehensible words, to distort the face, to twist the eyes, to speak with a changed voice of the demon in the first person singular, to behave aggressively or to mock the believers. Following the identification of the demon, the counselor practiced the binding of spirits with reference to Bible verses Matthew 16.19 and 18.18. This is a verbal technique which the Catholic-Pentecostal side claims to be different from the Evangelical Pentecostal deliverance practice. It is also a

²⁷⁷ Interview no. 73_2, 07/10/2015.

²⁷⁸ Interview no. 26, 04/07/2015.

²⁷⁹ Cf. Csordas 1994, 166.

performative act, in which the binding of the demon in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ is declared in order to weaken the demon and to keep it from manifesting itself in physical violence, screaming or insults. Work then can be done undisturbed with the person affected by the demon, such as delivering him through prayer. Transition between binding and expelling a spirit is not always clearly defined:²⁸⁰

I have experienced [...] stories of people who had severe traumas, Satanism, and prayed for these people, and I have seen them adopting strange postures. [...] When I pray for a person who is [...] dealing with a difficult situation, [...] I say: [...] “Jesus Christ is our Lord. Jesus Christ has power. He has defeated Satan, death.” [...] People who come and say: “I come to make you pray because [...] my daughter-in-law is evil.” [...] You have to find the root of things, [...] to know in which direction the prayer will work. [...] I say to her: “You know that Jesus Christ lives.” Immediately, if I just said that, and the person makes/ [the informant makes heavy breathing noises], then I say to her: “Yes, Jesus Christ lives and has power.” And already I hear her [...] stammering strange things, then I tell her: “In the name of Jesus Christ we will pray for you and not for your daughter-in-law.” And then we pray and the person is freed. [...] A [...] man, [...] who [...] starts making fun of you, and you pray and he makes fun of you. [...] He makes fists, is aggressive. [...] I have seen a person who has clenched his hands to fists and wants to throw himself against us, and [...] we say to him: “In the name of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns, do not touch me! I’ll tie you up and I’ll gag you and you won’t touch me! [...] I am a daughter of God in the name of Jesus Christ.” [...] And a prayer, another one, and the person has already freed himself and tells later, [...] that he was never happy [...], but now he is ready to forgive. For what binds us to many things is sin, these traumas [...] through hatred, through revenge. It makes the person sick. It can even lead to cancer.²⁸¹

Many women practiced the deliverance ministry on their husbands or children in secret because they suffered or were worried about them. Prayers were common at the bed of the sleeping, drunken husband to drive out the demon of alcoholism. An informant spoke about the concerns about her son, who had been anorexic, isolated, and finally been a victim of attempted murder. She saw in his own destructive behavior, as well as in the attack on him, the work of the devil, which she deduced from the fact that the devil had fought for her son, as he had a divine call which the devil had wanted to prevent him from exercising. By fasting and praying she finally succeeded in freeing her son from the demons:

For this child [...] I fought. [...] For [...] Satan fights for him, but I know that he belongs to Christ and [Satan] cannot harm him. He was attacked, he was attacked with knives and was supposed to be killed, but nothing happened to him. A spirit of death tried to kill him. Anorexic. He locked himself in his room for a month, but nothing happened to him. The Lord has revealed it to me, I have fasted, I have set him free. [...] I fought for him, and I saw the power of God working in him. [...] I had to fight for him [...] by fasting and praying.²⁸²

²⁸⁰ Cf. Csordas 1994, 175-177.

²⁸¹ Interview No. 54, 05/27/2015.

²⁸² Interview no. 75, 07/13/2015.

A variety of physical signs are interpreted as a manifestation of the demon exiting. Csordas notes that especially in the 1970s in the context of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in the US it was reported that in the moment of deliverance the possessed cried out, crouched on the ground, vomited or spat out snakes, but that since the 1980s, also in view of the external perception, the practice of expulsion was domesticated, and lost considerably in ferocity.²⁸³ This development is reflected in the reports of Pentecostal women in Alajuela. One informant who belonged to the church IOIB told how she was freed from the demon of unforgiveness lying on the ground, crying and crying:

In a fasting meeting of the church, God came and acted on me for two hours, people did not know what was the matter with me. It lasted two hours, there were screams in the presence of God, I lay on the floor and I cried and wept [...] and he said to me: “Forgive your father.” [...] And I said to him: “Lord, I forgive him with all my heart.” [...] God acted directly on me [...] regarding forgiveness. [...] I cried snot and water [...] in the presence of God. [...] It was two hours, and I came out of there with my eyes all swollen from the deliverance from unforgiveness he had effected in me.²⁸⁴

However, this report is an exception in relation to statements made by other informants and to field research observations. Only the pastor of the church CE spoke of similarly pronounced physical signs of the exorcism of demons when she reported on the beginnings of her church in the 1970s. During that time her husband and she healed many people and cast out many demons. The highlight of her stories about that time was the story of a woman who had been infertile due to a curse, had spat out the demon of infertility in the form of a lizard following a deliverance prayer, and had become pregnant shortly afterwards. As proof of the credibility of the events described, the pastor added that the healed woman had shown the lizard in a glass jar, soaked in alcohol, during a meeting and had now given birth to a large number of children:

Witchcraft had been imposed on this woman so that she could not have children. And as we prayed, [...] she began to feel something coming up from her stomach. [...] She felt like she was suffocating. [...] The prayer led to the magic she had rising ever higher, and it was a living lizard. [...] And she herself caught it with a cloth, and she took it and put it in a glass jar, and she brought it along as a testimony, in some alcohol, [...] so that they might see it. A month later, the woman was pregnant. And she’s even had to use contraception ever since, because she’s got a bunch of kids. And in this way, we have seen cases of people who have vomited, witchcraft from which they have been delivered.²⁸⁵

Since several informants reported about the amazing miracles and healings that took place in Alajuela as well as the strong spirit that worked at that time, it can be assumed that Pentecostalism in Alajuela was also wilder in its deliverance practices in the 1970s. Physical

²⁸³ Cf. Csordas 1994, 173-175.

²⁸⁴ Interview no. 75, 07/13/2015.

²⁸⁵ Interview no. 32, 04/14/2015.

manifestations of demonic presence, such as distortion of the face or speaking with a changed voice, were still reported in 2015, but a demon's exit usually became apparent when a problem or symptom was suddenly not there anymore.

Finally, two Evangelical deliverance prayers and one Catholic deliverance prayer are quoted and summarized. The Evangelical prayers were used by an informant who belonged to the church CCVN. The first prayer is:

I am strengthened by the great power of the Lord Jesus Christ. I put on the armor of God and resist all the tricks of the devil, and when the day of disaster comes, I will stand firm and resist until the fight is over. I gird myself with the belt of truth and I protect myself with the armor of justice, and as shoes I put on the readiness to proclaim the gospel of peace. Now I will take the shield of faith with which I will extinguish the fiery projectiles of evil. I put the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. As a fighter I pray every day and remain vigilant and persevere in prayer of one for the other.²⁸⁶

The second prayer is:

In the powerful name of Christ and with the shed blood of the Holy Lamb, I cut all the generational chains coming from the ancestors that have brought to my life curses, injustices, [...] sins, bonds of spirit, soul and body, the products of family traumas, beliefs, slander, veneration of saints, witchcraft, sorcery, superstition, Pocomía, Voodoo, Umbanda, Candomblé, etc., which are the products of family traumas.²⁸⁷

The first prayer is a declaration consisting of quotations from the Bible in Ephesians 6.10-18, which describes the imaginary putting on of spiritual armor to be prepared for spiritual warfare. The second prayer is also a declaration, which however serves the performative cutting of generational chains. With this aim, the blood of the lamb is invoked to gain protection and to mobilize the divine power in Jesus' blood. Demons are identified as the cause of negative experiences, bad qualities, behaviors and actions, and spiritual, psychological, and physical problems. Family traumas, false beliefs of the ancestors, bad behavior like slander and any kind of religious misconduct like veneration of saints, witchcraft, sorcery, superstition, the practice of the Afro-Caribbean Costa-Rican religion Pocomía as well as the religions of Voodoo, Umbanda and Candomblé are named as causes for the influence of demons. The family traumas mentioned usually include alcoholism, sexual violence suffered or committed by ancestors and fatal accidents. In addition to a hedonistic lifestyle in general, false convictions are understood to include sexual misconduct such as pre- and extramarital sex, non-heterosexual orientation,

²⁸⁶ From personal notes of the informant who had taken these prayer wordings and changed them slightly from www.oraciones-intercesion.blogspot.de/2009/09/oracion-para-pedir-un-milagro.html [03/07/2016].

²⁸⁷ From the informant's personal documents.

the support of non-heterosexual orientation of children by their parents, pornography and incestuous practices.

The wording of a Catholic variant of a deliverance prayer was available in writing in the CCCAJ, including the quotation marks and the details of the Bible passages mentioned in brackets. As author the US-American charismatic priest Robert de Grandis is named:

Prayer for healing and intergenerational deliverance

I enter into the presence of Jesus Christ and submit to his reign. I am steadfast, upright, “girded at the waist with truth and clothed with the armor of righteousness” (Ephesians 6.14), “always taking up the shield of faith to be able to extinguish with it all the fiery arrows of the villain” (Ephesians 6.16). I also take “the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Ephesians 6.17).

In the name of the crucified, dead and risen Jesus Christ, I bind all the spirits of the air: the atmosphere, the water, the fire, the wind, the earth, the abysses and hell. I also bind the influence of any erring or lost soul that might be present and any envoy of the devil or any gathering of witches, sorcerers or devil worshippers that might be present in any pre-natural way.

I claim the blood of Jesus in the air, in the atmosphere, in the water, in the fire, in the wind, in the earth and its fruits that surround us; in the abysses and in hell. [...]

In the name of Jesus, I seal this place and all those present and the whole family and all friends of those present here and their houses and their possessions and their sources of income with his blood. [...]

In the name of Jesus Christ, I forbid all lost spirits, sorcerers, satanic groups or envoys or collaborators [of the devil], lower or higher, to harm me or take revenge on me, my family or my friends, or [...] to damage anything we possess.

In the name of Jesus Christ and by the merit of his precious blood, I tear and loosen every curse, witchcraft, sealing, [...] trap, bondage, cunning, lie, [...] obstacle, disappointment, derailment or distraction, spiritual influence or chain, including any disease of our body, soul or mind, which can reach us present here or any of the aforementioned persons, things or places, by any spirit which can make itself present in us by reason of our own sins and mistakes, [...]

I now place the cross of Jesus Christ between myself and all generations of my family tree and claim in the name of Jesus Christ that there is no direct communication between any of these generations. All communication is filtered through the precious blood of Jesus.

Immaculate Mary, clothe me with light, power and energy of your faith. Father, please order the angels and the saints to help me. Thank you, Lord, for being my wisdom, my righteousness, my sanctification, my salvation.

I surrender before your Holy Spirit and I receive with respect and gratitude your true sanctification and intergenerational deliverance.

An Our Father, an Avemaria and a Gloria.

These prayer wordings show that Catholic Pentecostals use the same biblical motives and expressions to prepare themselves for the deliverance from demons and the struggle against

them as Evangelical Pentecostals do. Jesus' blood also has a powerful protective function here. In addition, the typical Catholic-Pentecostal practice of binding spirits is taught, and Mary also has a function in spiritual warfare. The prayer is concluded by recourse to classical expressions of the Catholic liturgy.

5.2.2 Spiritual Warfare

The aim of the corporate practice of spiritual warfare is the fight against demons that negatively influence politics and society. The focus is in particular on *espíritus territoriales* (territorial demons), which would have acquired *derechos legales* (legal rights) to the country, society and politics due to specific sins of Costa Ricans or members of other nationalities in the national territory of Costa Rica. Thus, one informant explained that alcoholism and prostitution were Latin America's main sins, which not only caused individual spiritual chains and thus led individuals into poverty and homosexuality, but which, as collective sins, gave territorial demons the right to dominate Latin America in general, and Costa Rica in particular, with poverty and homosexuality. The existence of demons who have rights to a province or a city is also assumed. Wherever events with grave negative consequences accumulate, this is attributed to territorial demons who were wreaking havoc because of the specific sins of the population. For example, territorial demons in the province of Limón are assumed to be responsible for the high number of fatal traffic accidents occurring there:

There are demons assigned to certain areas. [...] For example, [...] in the province of Limón [...] many accidents occur. [...] There is a power. They're demons, so people die in accidents, tragic deaths.²⁸⁸

In order to combat such territorial demons, there were groups in many churches specifically entrusted with this ministry. In the church CCVN two such groups gathered weekly to pray for Alajuela, Costa Rica, individual politicians, for Israel, for other countries, for the whole world, but also for their own pastor and family. The spiritual struggle is pictured as a struggle between two worlds that takes place simultaneously on earth and in heaven. The combat prayers on earth are to stimulate the angels and strengthen them in their heavenly battle against the demons.

In addition to groups for spiritual warfare in the churches, non-denominational groups consisting mainly of women also existed, which often gathered in private houses for spiritual warfare. The group *Mujeres sin fronteras* (Women without borders) gathered monthly at the Parliament building in San José to pray for Costa Rican politics and society. The forerunner of this group had been initiated in 1980 by a woman who belonged to the church CMA in San José

²⁸⁸ Interview no. 77, 07/15/2015.

and ran in the 2014 parliamentary elections for the decidedly Evangelical *Partido Renovación Costarricense* (PRC). In 2012, she had access to the Parliament building for the group through personal contacts with members of Parliament. Sometimes the group also gathered in other places, such as the Supreme Court building, to pray for those working there. The participants claimed to provide an important contribution to the sociopolitical development of the country.

The members of this women's group rated legislative liberalizations regarding sexual and reproductive ethics as works of the devil. The informant quoted below, who belonged both to this group and to one of the groups for spiritual warfare in the church CCVN, referred in her prayer during a meeting of the latter group to sociopolitical efforts to legalize in-vitro fertilization, liberalize legislation on abortion, and introduce legal recognition for homosexual couples. From their perspective, the spiritual struggle against the demons who seek liberalization and at the same time gain power through it, strengthens the corresponding political struggle. In addition to these legislative efforts, she identified some collective sins as the cause that territorial demons have rights to Costa Rica and especially to the province of Guanacaste. She prayed:

Forgive the sins of this nation that wants to change the divine laws, that wants to change the laws on homosexuality, abortion, in-vitro fertilization. [...] Enemy, disappear from those who are caught up in drinking, lesbianism, abortion, abuse. [...] I renounce all Satan's intentions. We free and heal the nation. [...] I see a container filled with those that are in the fog. Get them out, get them out! We break the chains of this nation. Forgive the sins of Guanacaste, the witchcraft and the alcoholism on the beaches. Free Guanacaste! Forgive the Catholics! Bless the priests who believe that they are priests of God even though they are not. Destroy all the lies of the enemy!²⁸⁹

In the consumption of alcohol on the beaches of Guanacaste and in witchcraft, this informant saw the reasons for the power of the territorial demons in this province, who were responsible for its misfortune consisting in poverty and drought. As religious misconduct she also named Catholicism, which she counted among the lies of the devil. As victims of this deception, the priests mistakenly considered themselves priests of God. She asked God for deliverance for those who advocated the liberalization of these laws, and forgiveness for those who consumed alcohol and fell into the misconception of witchcraft or Catholicism. Despite all criticism of the behavior of domestic and foreign tourists, of politicians, of witchcraft practitioners, of Catholics, of homosexuals and of others, she did not in the end give responsibility to all of them

²⁸⁹ Research Diary 05/28/2015.

for their misconduct, because she identified the devil as the instigator of all mistakes, who ultimately needed to be defeated by God.

5.3. Methods of Inner Healing

In the following, methods of inner healing and their discursive contexts will be analyzed. Central elements of the healing discourse were shaped predominantly, but not exclusively, by influence of US American origin. In order to understand why the corresponding slogans and convictions were received in Alajuela and how they were transformed, three methods of inner healing shall be explained, genealogically contextualized, examined for appropriation strategies and transformations, and questioned with regard to their meaning and effects in the specific context.

5.3.1 The Healing Prayer

5.3.1.1 Practice

The *oración de sanación* (healing prayer) consists of a recapitulation of a person's biography from conception to the present. God is praised and thanked for the creation of this person and for all his work on him or her, and the person will in retrospect be assured of God's closeness and love, especially in the context of painful experiences explicitly named. The past is reinterpreted as part of God's plan, the aim of which was to lead the person to God through the individual biography. The person is promised God's forgiveness for guilt and is called upon to forgive himself. The main purpose is to heal injuries resulting from conscious and unconscious experiences of rejection and humiliation, which are identified as the cause of a self-understanding of having no value whatsoever. A considerable proportion of these injuries is attributed to prenatal experiences of rejection, for example on account of being born of an unwanted pregnancy or after an attempted abortion. The purpose of the prayer is to transform the meaning of life and to construct a new past, so that the construction of a new life on this basis can be achieved.²⁹⁰ A counselor of the church CCVN explained how she used the healing prayer in the counseling sessions:

In general, it is done when there was rejection, rejection from the womb onwards. [...] We ask the Lord to help this person feel like being in the womb. Then we say, "At this moment the egg is fertilized by the sperm." [...] You have to keep telling her that she's a winner. [...] Then, after one month, one and a half months, the mother may notice that she is pregnant, and she did not want to be pregnant at all. [...] Then we reaffirm, "It's not because there's something bad about you, because you did something bad, but because she was afraid." Afraid to have another child. [...] This also happens frequently to single women. Afraid to say it at home. So we heal, [...]

²⁹⁰ See also Csordas 2002, 34-37.

and work with Psalm 139: “Your eyes saw how I came into being.” [...] “Well, Lord, thank you, because you liked making Marianela the way she is, giving her that color of hair. [...] At the age of six months, Lord, you make her nails, you shape her toes, [...] Lord, you make her feel the warmth of your love God, and the seventh month, and the eighth, and the ninth, and then the birth.”²⁹¹

Like this counselor, an informant who belonged to the CCCAJ also referred to Psalm 139 to prove the conviction underlying the healing prayer, that God had initiated the conception of each individual on the basis of a plan, and had accompanied him or her from that moment on. This informant also explained that prenatal conditions such as the thoughts and feelings of the mother during pregnancy had a lasting effect on a person. She described how during a healing prayer publicly prayed for a large group of people during an RCC evangelism campaign, participants were led to review their own lives month after month since conception, and year after year since birth, to identify possible causes of formative emotional injuries. She herself had found out that her bitterness and aggressiveness had been caused at the age of four, by her misinterpreting her parents’ grief for her deceased brother, as an expression of a lack of love for her and her siblings. God had given her a vision in the healing prayer, as a result of which she had recognized and overcome this misinterpretation. In this way she was cured from bitterness and aggression:

And they tell us, [...] that I was born because God allowed it. That it was not because father and mother had united, but that God is the owner of my life, as Psalm 139 says. [...] When they begin to talk about [...] that we were born because God brought us into life, and that we are so special that we are unique, [...] when they say all this prayer from the moment of conception, when you came into being, the first month, the second month, what did your mother do, she was abused, whether your mother was very worried, because she already had many children, and this was already number nine or number four or number seven, and whether [...] she was very worried, because what should she feed her with? You get all that. I didn’t know you get absolutely everything. And then comes the moment of birth, how they receive you, and it is God who receives you, and he raises you up and tells you: “Irene, I have given you life, be happy!” [...] It’s beautiful. [...] Then they already begin with the first year, [...] where you begin to [...] perceive the things around you, two years, three years. When they get to their fourth year, I start crying. [...] The Lord gave me a vision in which I saw my brother on a table, when they had not yet brought the coffin, and I brought him a *bizcocho* [i.e. a cake] [...] I didn’t know my brother was dead. [...] This loss was terrible for me. [...] I was very hurt. And I told my mother: [...] “Because of this event you had to leave us alone. And you must have suffered a lot, and so must my father.” [...] We felt as if they didn’t love us, because the one they loved was Luis and not us. Because they cried a lot for this son. It must be terrible losing a child. For me it was a healing process, so I came back from there changed. [...] I lost [...] this bitterness, this [...] aggression.²⁹²

²⁹¹ Interview no. 73_2, 07/10/2015.

²⁹² Interview no. 52_2, 05/21/2015.

The pastor of the CCFB reported that after her conversion she had been healed with the help of the healing prayer, which she now applied to heal others. She stressed that the circumstances of the birth could also leave lasting emotional damage that could be cured:

What we become as adults is linked to what happened to us as children, and through conception. I'm a twin and I wasn't meant to be. [...] I practice inner healing from conception. Childhood, then, isn't it? When you're born. [...] If it's a cesarean, they'll inject you with that injection [...] and it'll affect the child emotionally, won't it, with fears, with trauma. [...] I received this prayer from conception to adulthood.²⁹³

The importance of the healing prayer, as the beginning of a process of healing and sanctification that follows conversion, is illustrated by the conversion report of an informant. She had converted in the context of a conversation she had had with her landlady in a personal crisis situation. The landlady let her speak the *oración de aceptación* (acceptance prayer), which consists in the convert being introduced to Jesus by the guiding person, in proclaiming Jesus as Lord, and in the request for forgiveness of sins. Afterwards the landlady invited her to her home. During this visit she prayed together with others for the convert. According to the informant, this prayer contained both elements of healing prayer and spiritual deliverance and served to initiate her comprehensively. It was a prayer of

forgiveness, healing, and in the end, I asked for my miracle. We prayed for more than half an hour because I told them many things about my life. [...] I had told her, we had written down the things that hurt in my heart, [...] there were childhood situations. [...] We asked the Lord to heal this part. [...] We spoke a deliverance prayer, ten generations back, that the chains would be cut, spiritual shackles, all these things. [...] They led me to forgive my sister.²⁹⁴

While among Evangelical Pentecostals the healing prayer was one healing method among others, among Catholic Pentecostals it was the most frequently practiced method, so that the terms *sanación* (healing), *sanación interior* (inner healing) and *oración de sanación* (healing prayer) were often used synonymously here. The following quote shows that a member of the CCCAJ understood the healing prayer as a distinguishing feature between the RCC on the one hand, and the Catholic official Church and other Catholic movements on the other hand:

The strength of the Renewal [i.e. the RCC] is healing, joy. We are the movement of the joy of the Church. And one of the characteristics of the RCC is the inner healing, which the other movements do not have. Neither the *cursillistas*, nor the *jornadas*, nor the *catecúmenos*, nobody but the Renewal has the inner healing.²⁹⁵

²⁹³ Interview no. 77, 07/15/2015.

²⁹⁴ Interview no. 67, 06/17/2015.

²⁹⁵ Interview no. 52_1, 05/21/2015. *Cursillistas* refers to followers of the Cursillo Movement. *Jornadas* is the abbreviation of evangelization events called *jornadas de evangelización*. *Catecúmenos* refers to the followers of the Neocatechumenal Way. While the former and the latter are Catholic movements with missionary

Another informant who belonged to the CCCAJ supplemented this statement:

Prayer and acceptance and healing are the center of the [...] reality of any Christian.²⁹⁶

This informant understood *oración* (prayer) as the individual prayer, *aceptación* (acceptance) as personal acceptance of Jesus as Lord and *sanación* (healing) as inner healing through the healing prayer. She described these three elements as specifics of the RCC, whose members she called *crístianos* (Christians). The procedure and content of the healing prayer in Catholic Pentecostal practice corresponds to that of Evangelical Pentecostal practice. Here as there, prayer is based on the conviction that the Holy Spirit gives the praying person insights into the life and problems of the person seeking help, so that known and unknown emotional wounds can be dealt with, and here as there it is the promise of God's plan, love and closeness, which will enable a reinterpretation of the biography and grant forgiveness. One informant said that she had been plagued throughout her life by an unfounded fear. As a result of a revelation to the woman praying for her, she had understood that the prenatal cause of her fear had been that her mother had had considerable worries at that time which had spread to her:

When I received the healing prayer, I cried a lot. I said, "Why did I cry so much?" [...] The person who had said the prayer [...] told me: "Ask your mother what happened when you were supposed to be born." [...] My mother [...] tells me: [...] "In the week when you were to be born, [...] your father [...] fell ill with a fever. [...] At that time there was a revolution here in Costa Rica, 1948, and therefore medicine could not be fetched from abroad to fight his fever. Your sister was sick with [...] tetanus. Imagine that: I in those days just before the birth and with two people sick [...], one in the hospital, I was [...] very scared. I believe that was the reason why it was also difficult for you to be born." [...] I told it to the one who said the healing prayer, and she told me, "Yes, the fear your mother suffered, you received it, and that's why it's in your life." Therefore, the Lord healed it [i.e., fear] at the moment of the healing prayer.²⁹⁷

In contrast to the Evangelical practice, the healing prayer in the Catholic practice was also prayed in a more general, more public and consequently more anonymous form. While private prayer was always preceded by an intimate counseling session, which enabled people to specifically deal with individual suffering, this was not possible in public prayer. However, the boundaries between private and public prayer are blurred, as it makes a difference whether a priest prays a public healing prayer for a group of parishioners known to him, or in front of hundreds or thousands of people at an evangelistic event. In the first case it is quite possible for

objectives, the *jornadas de evangelización* are a form of event practiced by various Catholic movements and parishes.

²⁹⁶ Interview no. 54, 05/27/2015.

²⁹⁷ Interview no. 54, 05/27/2015.

him to address personal background. This is how the former charismatic priest of the parish of *La Agonía*, who held a *hora santa* (holy hour) every Thursday in the church, practiced it, when he prayed a healing prayer for those present. A leader of the CCCAJ reported that she herself had repeatedly spoken the healing prayer for young people in the plenary during retreats for confirmation. In the context of the initiation courses the healing prayer had a central meaning, which resembled its meaning in the context of the Evangelical Pentecostal conversion, insofar as these courses served to support the participants, to leave the old life behind and to begin a new life. One informant reported about her experience with the healing prayer during her initiation course, that the prayer in this context was initially kept general in content, but the Holy Spirit revealed details about the participants to the praying person, so that injury and guilt were named, healed and forgiven:

It starts at the moment of conception. And you go step by step. [...] One prays: “Lord, we ask in case [...] anyone, brother, sister, was abused or raped as a child. [...]” What the Lord puts in people’s minds. For in former times a prayer was read, but now [...] spontaneity has been allowed. And the Lord [...] bestows gifts and often provides a vision. And someone says, for example, “There is a person here who has consulted psychics, who has read cards [...] and that keeps him captive. [...] And in his wallet he has [...] a red cloth with a coin, [...] because he believes that if he carries it in his wallet, he will never have too little money.” [...] Or the Lord reveals to us that a person was mistreated by her father or mother and [...] that she could not forgive it. [...] It’s a word of wisdom. [...] This person does not say it publicly, but goes and says: [...] “What the Lord has revealed to you, refers to me.” [...] Prayers are prayed covering most periods, [...] as a child, when one went to school, the insecurity it causes to go to school. [...] If the teachers [...] ill-treated you, [...] then they pray for that too. When your father or mother compared you with your brothers and sisters when you were a teenager and told you that you were of no use [...], you are prayed over. And that’s how you go through all the stages until marriage. [...] Some people cry terribly because they’re so hurt. They carry so many things in their hearts. Because the father left her, because the mother gave her away. [...] In the end, when a testimony is asked for, some people speak up. [Someone] says, “The Lord healed me because I was forsaken.”²⁹⁸

Practitioners of inner healing considered the healing prayer and other methods of inner healing superior to secular psychotherapy methods, as the following quotation illustrates. The co-pastor of the church MSDJ justified this conviction by saying that psychotherapy always revolves around the same topics and does not change anything, while the Holy Spirit can eliminate pain and renew the heart.²⁹⁹

When you go to a psychologist, the psychologist stirs up everything that’s there. But he’s not healing. The psychologist comes and says, “Come back in a week, then we’ll talk.” But everything stays there and goes round in circles. In contrast, the Holy Spirit has the power to go in and take out all the pain, all the lack of forgiveness,

²⁹⁸ Interview no. 52_2, 05/21/2015.

²⁹⁹ See the Bible verse Ezekiel 36.26.

and all that he sees, all that has to be removed. And when the Holy Spirit wants to put in a new heart, the Bible states [...], “The Holy Spirit has the power to do it.”³⁰⁰

5.3.1.2 Context

The healing prayer is the central method for inner healing in the CCCAJ counseling ministry. The theoretical basis of training for this ministry consisted primarily in some writings of the Jesuit priest Benigno Juanes. The contents of two of his books were taught in seminars for counselors, which dealt exclusively and extensively with the healing prayer, which he also calls *sanación de recuerdos* (healing of memories).³⁰¹ Juanes emphasizes that psychological and physical healing is not possible without belief in it, so that conversion first has to be identified or induced.³⁰² He distinguishes three types of prayer for inner healing and refers to the Chilean RCC author Nelly Astelli Hidalgo.³⁰³ These are *la oración de paz* (prayer of peace), which is meant to serve inner peace in general, *la oración puntual* (punctual prayer), which is meant to heal the consequences of individual traumatic experiences, and *la oración de curación cronológica* (prayer of chronological healing) or *la oración por la historia de una persona* (prayer for the history of a person).³⁰⁴ Juanes’s description of the prayer of chronological healing or for the history of a person corresponds to the practice found in Alajuela under the name of the healing prayer. Juanes explains this prayer as follows: “Chronological prayer records the history of a person from the moment of conception to now. We know that the Lord will touch all events that can be healed at this moment.”³⁰⁵ The healing process can take up to a year, because a one-time prayer is usually not the end of the healing process. Special attention should be given to the timespan from conception to the age of seven to ten years. For orientation, Juanes recommends that Barbara Shlemon Ryan’s description of the seven phases of life should be used as a guide.³⁰⁶ These should be examined during prayer for traumatic events, in order to heal injuries caused by them. The aim of prayer is not to forget events, but to reconcile with the memories.³⁰⁷ Juanes specifies how problems such as lack of forgiveness or a negative self-concept can be addressed in the context of this prayer, and explains how it can be achieved, that the person seeking help can see painful memories in the light of Christ and replace them with his love: The first approach is to thank the Lord for all the gifts of the person seeking help. Then this person should emotionally put herself back in the painful situation, and tell God how she

³⁰⁰ Interview no. 58, 06/01/201.

³⁰¹ Cf. Juanes 1994a, 1994b.

³⁰² Cf. Juanes 1994a, 55f.

³⁰³ Cf. Astelli 1987.

³⁰⁴ Cf. Juanes 1994a, 65-74.

³⁰⁵ Astelli 1987, quoted by Juanes 1994a, 72.

³⁰⁶ Cf. Shlemon Ryan 1982.

³⁰⁷ Cf. Juanes 1994b, 15.

feels in it. Christ will now appear in the mind, speak to the person, comfort and reconcile. The Holy Spirit is now asked to heal and transform all negative feelings into the love of Christ. All those who have contributed to painful memories should be forgiven. If this is not possible at first, according to Juanes it is necessary to pray for more love for the person seeking help. It also helps to repeat words, to pray the Lord's Prayer or to imagine a scene in which Jesus forgave, in order to be able to forgive yourself.³⁰⁸

Juanes's reflections, just as those of Astelli Hidalgo and Shlemon Ryan quoted by him, are part of a relatively uniform, international healing discourse within the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, within which suppressed, especially prenatal, but also other subconscious and conscious memories are regarded as significant components of the person, and are given much attention in the context of inner healing, such as in the healing prayer. The discourse is based on a combination of psychological insights into trauma and deprivation, with theological concepts of sin and the demonic. The relative uniformity of the discourse is due to the fact that from 1974 onwards, when Francis MacNutt published a book entitled "Healing", numerous books and audio cassettes were published in the USA within a few years, and healing seminars were offered, which found a broad public reception. The writings of MacNutt, the Jesuits Dennis and Matthew Linn, Shlemon Ryan and others became classics within the US movement and contributed, together with organizations such as the Christian Healing Ministries to the emergence of a consistent system of ritual healing and a relatively uniform repertoire of healing practices with an impact beyond the US and Catholic Charismatic Renewal.³⁰⁹ The authors of the classical writings of charismatic healing in turn developed their systems in the tradition of the Methodist Agnes Sanford, who first described the divine healing of psychological problems in her book "The healing light" in 1947 and is called the Mother of Inner Healing.

The healing prayer had initially been shaped in particular by Catholic practitioners and teachers of inner healing as show three indications: The first, healing prayer was regarded as the exemplary cure in the counseling service of the CCCAJ, whereas in Evangelical Pentecostal churches it was only one healing method among others. The second, authors of fundamental literature concerning the healing prayer belonged to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. This applies not only to the classics and organizations mentioned above,³¹⁰ but also to the known

³⁰⁸ Cf. Juanes 1994b, 71-78.

³⁰⁹ Cf. Csordas 1994, 25.110; cf. also Garzon 2005, 149.

³¹⁰ The wording of the healing prayer found on the homepage of the *Christian Healing Ministries* are similar to those of the practice found in Alajuela.

Cf. christianhealingmin.org/images/CHM/downloads/Conception%20to%20Birth%20Prayer%20Updated.pdf [09/21/2018].

literature that was made use of in Alajuela. And the third, Evangelical Pentecostal usage speaks of *sanidad interior* (inner healing) with just a few exceptions, whereas the RCC uses the phrase *sanación interior* (inner healing). The terms are used synonymously, although from a semantic perspective *sanidad* denotes the state of being healed and *sanación* the process of becoming healed. The healing prayer, on the other hand, is named by members of all denominations with the Catholic-charismatically coined term *oración de sanación*. The spread of the healing prayer beyond denominational borders can probably be dated to the time of the so-called charismatic spring between 1965 and 1980.

5.3.2 The Standing in Place Prayer

5.3.2.1 Practice

The healing method referred to here as the standing in place prayer was used in almost all contexts referred to as places of healing. The prayer process is as follows: The praying person asks the person seeking help to imagine that the praying person is an absent third person, who has emotionally injured the person seeking help during his or her biography. Then she asks the person seeking help to describe the painful events and the emotions triggered by them. When this is done, the praying person confesses the guilt on behalf of the absent third person, asks for forgiveness on his/her behalf and also confirms the love for the person seeking help, whom he/she calls upon to forgive. This conversation is understood as prayer, because it is interpreted as a conversation in the presence of God who works on the person seeking help. One informant said that the standing in place prayer was the first opportunity in her life to put into words her negative experiences and the emotions they caused. Several informants explained that this experience helped them to forgive and heal. A counselor who belonged to the church CCVN reported how she had used the method in her counseling work as a result of divine inspiration:

I told her, “We’re going to do something different now from what we’ve done before. I am your mother and I will ask your forgiveness.” [...] So I asked her for forgiveness as if I were her mother, and I asked her for forgiveness for the things, for everything she had told me, leaving the family, and how the mother made differences in the treatment of the children. [...] She always wanted to take revenge on her mother. [...] And when I asked her for forgiveness, it was a technique God provided to me at that moment.³¹¹

The pastor of the church MAR explained that she practiced the standing in place prayer during church services in individual prayers. As she prayed, she embraced the person seeking help:

Perhaps the mother lives somewhere else, then the prayer will be made for her, [...] that she can forgive the mother. I embrace her and I say, “Think I am your mother” and I tell her, “Daughter, I love you.” [...] And then she starts to say, “Mommy, why

³¹¹ Interview no. 73_2, 07/10/2015.

did you do that? Why, Mommy?” Because right now, she feels her mom talking to her. And then God begins to work and he frees and heals them.³¹²

The co-pastor of the church MSDJ reported that she herself and other leaders of her church were healed by the pastor through the standing in place prayer. Meanwhile, they practiced this method themselves in church services, to help emotionally wounded people to forgive. She explained that the Holy Spirit led her to the persons who were in need of this method:

Sometimes the Holy Spirit sends you: “Go, for there is someone who must forgive”, and then he sends you, and you say: “You must forgive, you lack forgiveness. Well, if you want”, because nobody is obliged [...] “Tell this person what you have to tell him and forgive him. Loosen the ties on him and also untie yourself”, for he who does not forgive/ [...] Sometimes during the time of prayer in worship one feels in the Spirit that one should go to a person and talk to him/her about things that only the Spirit and they themselves know. That helps a lot to forgive.³¹³

The pastor of the church CCSR also stated that while she prayed for others, she took on the roles of third parties who had inflicted suffering on them, in the way described above. While others made no distinction between representing the living and the deceased, it was important for this pastor to emphasize that she only took on the roles of living persons. To enter into the roles of dead people would mean calling the spirits of the dead, and this would be spiritually dangerous:

We shall not fetch the spirits of the dead, we shall not call them.³¹⁴

An informant reported that the standing in place prayer was an integral part of the program of women’s retreats in the church IM in which she had participated. Standing in place prayer had been effectively organized for the large number of participants by several leaders each representing a mother, a father, a brother or a sister. The participants were asked to associate with those leaders, who represented family members against whom they felt destructive emotions. The leaders then prayed for all the participants who had assigned themselves to them, assuming the roles of those who had hurt them, so that God could heal the emotional wounds. The informant reported how she chose the leader who represented a father and put her charges against her father in words. As a result of this experience she was able to forgive him and heal in her soul:

The sisters who speak in the assembly begin to talk about the subject. Then you start crying. And then sometimes they come and pray for you. Each one separately. [...] With me, it was the absence of my father, who was not with us. One time the nurse said, “Come and imagine me being your father.” [...] I didn’t even know her. [...] She told me, “Imagine me being your father and tell me what you would have liked

³¹² Interview no. 40, 04/23/2015.

³¹³ Interview no. 50, 05/15/2015.

³¹⁴ Interview no. 68, 06/18/2015.

to say to me.” And then you say things like why he wasn’t there and all that. And then God comes and heals you, because afterwards, when someone talks to you about it, you no longer feel this pain or this resentment that you felt. [...] We all got there, we were in a row, four or five. [...] The same was done with one that represented the mother. And after that, one represented the brother or sister. [...] The sister said, “I want you to forgive me for what I’ve done. [...] I’m sorry I didn’t take care of you, I’m sorry I didn’t help you.” [...] I just so to speak went and talked to my father. [...] And so many of these wounds of the past were healed.³¹⁵

An informant reported that the pastor of the church MANAIA asked her for forgiveness on behalf of her father, and that she felt the remorse of her father in the embrace. Her son explained that the method helps to express hidden emotions and thus free yourself from biographical injuries:

He comes and asks you, “How do you feel about your father? If you wanted to tell him anything, what would you tell him?” And then you can get rid of it, you tell him the things you want to say. That frees you, because when you talk and say it, you get rid of it, it helps you to forgive. Because keeping quiet and keeping everything to yourself is worse.³¹⁶

The quoted statements show that the standing in place prayer can have a cathartic effect by stimulating and expressing emotions such as grief, pain, anger and disgust in the biographical context. The embraces associated with prayer may help to compensate for a lack of fulfilment that a person has suffered.

5.3.2.2 Context

The practice shown resembles prayers called A father’s blessing or A mother’s blessing that are practiced and taught by charismatic organizations such as the Christian Healing Ministries. On their homepage you can find corresponding formulations that begin with a list made by the praying person of possible wrongdoings of the father or mother, who then first speaks of him or her in the third person singular, and then takes on his or her role with the following words:

If you are willing to hear the words of a broken father/wounded mother speaking to you, please close your eyes for a few minutes. I realize I am not your father/mother, but please allow me to stand in for him/her.³¹⁷

God is then asked to free the person seeking help from bitterness and to communicate to him the awareness of the love of the father or mother. Speaking in the first person singular, the praying person lists misconduct, repeats repeatedly that he or she is sorry, and asks God to free the person seeking help from all pain resulting from this misconduct. This method is based on

³¹⁵ Interview no. 39, 04/23/2015.

³¹⁶ Interview no. 62, 06/05/2015.

³¹⁷ www.christianhealingmin.org/images/CHM/downloads/FathersBlessing2.pdf [05/22/2020];
www.christianhealingmin.org/images/CHM/downloads/Mothers%20Blessing.pdf [05/22/2020].

the conviction that, first of all, the reasons for human misconduct lie in harmful childhood experiences and, secondly it helps those who have suffered from the misconduct, to understand these reasons in order to forgive and heal. Therefore, the following is said:

I pray that God will help you to see that the hurt and pain I caused you came from my own childhood. It limited me, and I am so sorry if it has limited you.³¹⁸

A request for forgiveness follows. The prayer ends:

My precious daughter – I love you. I am so proud of you. I am so glad you were born. Be released now to be the person that God created you to be. Be free, my love, and live!³¹⁹

The use of role-playing in healing sessions, in which the praying person assumes the role of an absent person as a representative, can be assumed at the latest since 1976, when the US-American Baptist preacher Ruth Carter Stapleton described this procedure.³²⁰ The method spread among Catholics and Evangelicals as is shown by the fact that both the Christian Healing Ministries and the G12 Vision Movement refer to it.³²¹ However, in Alajuela the method seemed to be practiced exclusively in Evangelical Pentecostal churches and not in the communities of the RCC. Although it was practiced in several churches in Alajuela, the author did not find any training material for the practice of standing in place prayer. It seems that the method has been handed down through practice and experience.

5.3.3 The Theophostic Prayer Ministry

5.3.3.1 Practice

El Ministerio de Oración Teofóstic (The Theophostic Prayer Ministry) in Costa Rica is closely linked to a woman born in Alajuela, a pharmacist who shall be called Marta here, whose aim is to ensure the propagation of this ministry. She defines its purpose as healing people from negative emotions and thoughts, which result from psychological injuries inflicted on them in the course of their biography. Using special questioning techniques, the method serves to penetrate currently perceived personally or socially destructive emotions to their root cause, which consists of a false self-concept resulting from emotional injuries. The individual aspects

³¹⁸ www.christianhealingmin.org/images/CHM/downloads/FathersBlessing2.pdf [05/22/2020];
www.christianhealingmin.org/images/CHM/downloads/Mothers%20Blessing.pdf [05/22/2020].

³¹⁹ www.christianhealingmin.org/images/CHM/downloads/FathersBlessing2.pdf [05/22/2020];
www.christianhealingmin.org/images/CHM/downloads/Mothers%20Blessing.pdf [05/22/2020]. See also Althouse 2016, 378f.

³²⁰ See Stapleton 1977, 21f. See also Harrison 1989, 125f.

³²¹ Role-playing is practiced in prayers for inner healing during retreats according to the concept of the G12 vision movement; information from Kimberley Alexander, professor at the Regent University School of Divinity, e-mail dated 05/25/2016.

of a false self-concept are called *mentiras* (lies), and these lies are presented to Jesus in prayer, who through visions, auditions, or the feeling of peace, reveals his truth to those seeking help, which is to refute and replace the lies so that the self-concept is transformed.

Marta converted from Catholicism to the *Iglesia Unidos por Cristo* in San José in 1997. In about 1999 she met Andrea Panozzo, a co-worker of Edward Smith, the founder of the Theophostic Prayer Ministry, when she accompanied her husband on a business trip to Costa Rica. Panozzo and her husband prayed for Marta's terminally ill brother, who did not experience physical, but spiritual healing:

In 1997, I very successfully sold medical devices. [...] But I had lost two husbands, drank a lot of alcohol and smoked, and despite the success [...] I was on the wrong track. I felt more and more pain, more and more suffering. [...] Difficult moments in life, which became even more difficult when my brother, who was my best friend, [...] fell ill with AIDS. [...] He fell into a depression, and he didn't take the medication. So, his condition worsened. [...] And then came North Americans, [...] they were the right hand of Doctor Edward Smith. [...] The man was the boss of my brother-in-law in Chicago. [...] They had come to supervise a company project in Costa Rica, and my [other] brother told them about my burden. [...] They came to see me at the pharmacy. And they told me about all this [...] and they decided [...] to give me all the materials, [...] in about 1999. And they decided to pray for my brother. [...] I saw God's glory. Not only was my brother redeemed, but he also received a great healing and his lamenting turned into joy. [...] He died, but he left behind the Theophostic Prayer Ministry.³²²

Marta explained that it had been her wish to have the method officially vetted by church authority before devoting herself to it in more detail. She therefore presented the relevant materials to Juan Kessler, a theologian and writer renowned in Costa Rica's Evangelical circles, and he approved of them. He also recommended her to the church CCVN and to its pastor, who from then on supported her in all her projects. She now belonged to this church, although her activities in connection with the Theophostic Prayer Ministry were not officially regarded as a ministry of this church, but took place within the framework of the foundation *Fundación Raphá*³²³ which she established. Nevertheless, the majority of those whom she treated and trained belonged to the church CCVN and in its rooms she conducted most of the training. In some churches, however, some people reacted suspiciously to the Theophostic Prayer Ministry:

With much suspicion from the churches, they saw it as New Age, it was satanic, it was hypnotic regression. [...] Much resistance to the introduction of the Theophostic Prayer Ministry in Costa Rica.³²⁴

³²² Interview no. 53, 05/26/2015.

³²³ Cf. www.facebook.com/fundacion.rapha [02/26/2016].

³²⁴ Interview no. 53, 05/26/2015.

After further trips to Costa Rica by Panozzo, in 2001 Marta organized a seminar for training in Theophostic Prayer Ministry, which Panozzo and Smith conducted in the *Iglesia Vida Abundante* (IVA) in San Antonio de Coronado. Marta told how she volunteered to Smith's presentation of the method during the seminar:

We conducted a first event [...] in 2001. People came from Europe, from Chile, from Venezuela, [...] from Panama, from the USA and so on, we were about 300 people. [...] He was a nice person, because in a large hall, after explaining the method, he said: "Well, now I need a person." Me first, I didn't care, I wanted to heal my soul. In front of the audience, no matter: "That's me, get to know me." [...] He often prayed for me.³²⁵

Smith had been to Costa Rica five times before the time of the quoted conversation, to run seminars on training in Theophostic Prayer Ministry. Marta had travelled to the US five times in order to be trained for the Theophostic Prayer Ministry. In 2005 she started translating the teaching materials into Spanish:

It was very hard, because Doctor Smith's first published book was from the year 2000. In 2005 we started to translate it, with all the materials, the training program for 16 weeks. [...] We translated everything into Spanish. We were ready for using it in training, and Andrea Panozzo called me and told me: "Don't start the training, because Doctor Smith just released the book from 2007." And so we started translating that and the whole training program. The DVDs we had to add subtitles to, and everything, everything.³²⁶

The original purpose of the *Fundación Raphá* was to be the institutional framework for training courses in Theophostic Prayer Ministry in various churches. However, Marta explained that the foundation's activities were not limited to the Theophostic Prayer Ministry, but were aimed at healing body and soul as a whole. In order to be able to help people to heal better, she was now studying psychology. She was also interested in different medical and spiritual procedures:

Since I am a pharmacist, I am very interested in holistic health. [...] We're interested in alternative medicine. I just came from a gathering of Herbalife to get to know something about their products, natural medicine. Also, to offer a healthy diet, because there is ignorance. [...] To talk on the radio about the problems of suicide, [...] to be the bearer of truth and the meaning of healing. [...] Purity of the soul and the heart are very important. [...] We are very interested in inner healing in Theophostics.³²⁷

In August 2012, announcing a lecture planned by the *Fundación Raphá* entitled *Cómo prevenir la homosexualidad* (How to prevent homosexuality) provoked a media outcry.³²⁸ As a result of

³²⁵ Interview no. 53, 05/26/2015.

³²⁶ Interview no. 53, 05/26/2015.

³²⁷ Interview no. 53, 05/26/2015.

³²⁸ See www.youtube.com/watch?v=ooGfWkcnQ-g; www.lomioes.com/recomendaciones/fundacion-rapha-te-dice-como-prevenir-la-homosexualidad [01/25/2019]; www.ladetestable.wordpress.com/tag/fundacion-rapha/ [01/25/2019].

threats, the event was finally cancelled. Nevertheless, Marta was convinced that homosexuality needed healing:

It is important for me to accompany people who need it because of [...] circumstances of sexual identity, [...] we help everyone here if possible.³²⁹

Furthermore, she explained that the foundation and the Theophostic Prayer Ministry were so important to her that she had given up her work as a pharmacist and was now mainly financed by donations, for her almost daily prayer therapy work and by course fees:

I have seen the Lord work so many miracles on so many people that I decided to stay with this. It's been difficult because I don't have the income I used to have. Sometimes I get [...] donations. [...] There are people who can't pay. I won't charge them anything. [...] There are people who make a voluntary donation. From the people who come from San José, I always [...] ask that they give me a donation of 12,000 colons per hour. [...] I don't want to work in a pharmacy. I beg God: I want to do this. [...] There are 1000 pharmacists trained to be in a pharmacy, but [but] very few people know this.³³⁰

From the very beginning Marta cooperated with various churches in order to conduct training seminars for the Theophostic Prayer Ministry. In several churches, in particular in the church IVA in San Antonio de Coronado, this had led to the methods of Theophostic Prayer Ministry being practiced in regular counseling sessions. The seminars lasted three to four months with weekly meetings of about two and a half hours.³³¹ In addition to the church IVA in San Antonio de Coronado, Marta held courses in the church IVA in Cariari, in the Methodist church *El Mesías* in the center of Alajuela, in the church CCVN, in another church of the AD in the Barrio San José district of Alajuela, and at the ESEPA Bible School in San José. To give a course in Liberia in the north-west of the country, she had travelled about 200 km every week for four months, but the result had been frustrating because the training had been successful for just five or six people in the end. On the other hand, she said of the course she gave at the ESEPA Bible School:

That was the most important one. 80 people enrolled and 70 people completed successfully. But it was a different level. There were many theologians, [...] psychologists, counselors. [...] This must be the aim of the next training courses. People who already have a call to act, to heal, to give freedom to the prisoners.³³²

She estimated that about 250 people in Costa Rica had completed their training, some of them Catholics, but most of them belonging to different Evangelical churches. Some are psychologists, some pastors, but the majority are lay people. They practiced Theophostic Prayer

³²⁹ Interview no. 53, 05/26/2015.

³³⁰ Interview no. 53, 05/26/2015.

³³¹ Cf. Panozzo/Smith 2007; Valverde 2015.

³³² Interview no. 53, 05/26/2015.

Ministry both in their ecclesiastical and professional contexts, such as the Children's Hospital in San José, the Hospital *Clínica Bíblica*, and in working for the non-governmental organization *Fundación Rahab*, which works for victims of trafficking of women and sex trade. A prison chaplain had also completed the seminar, using the method in caring for prisoners. One seminar participant, who worked as a Herbalife representative, said she had chosen this training to help her customers not only in health matters, but in a more comprehensive way.

At the time of the quoted conversation Marta prepared a lecture about the Theophostic Prayer Ministry for the staff of the hospital in Alajuela. Her contact with the hospital was established through a supporter who worked there as a medical laboratory assistant. She told:

I've committed to helping Marta with Theophostics. [...] Right now I'm advertising this in the hospital, I'm telling all the people [...], who are interested in things from God to come to the July meeting. [...] For example, the people who work in palliative care. [...] With cancer patients. Patients transported in the ambulance. Bring the patients from one place to another, they talk a lot with the patients, then the patients sometimes become agitated, sad. [...] They need tools for this. There are also many mystical nurses. [...] The lady from the human resources department, who is a Christian, the one who is from social work, mental health, psychology, the hospital director, I promote and do advertising, [...] so that they can come to the Theophostic assembly, which will take place here in this church [i.e. the church CCVN], so that they participate in the course. [...] I will serve the Lord [...] in the church and in the hospital.³³³

A Catholic psychologist, who was vice-president of the *Fundación Raphá*, had taught the methods of Theophostic Prayer Ministry in the context of a psychology seminar at the Evangelical University *Universidad Cristiana del Sur*. Although psychologists in Costa Rica were officially forbidden to use religious practices in therapy, there was widespread practice of it, and according to Marta, several professional psychologists practiced the methods of Theophostic Prayer Ministry in their therapeutic practice. She regretted that the rate of those who practiced what they had learned after the seminars was low. She therefore welcomed Smith's idea to simplify the methods under the new name *Ministerio de Oración Transformación* (Transformation Prayer Ministry) and to shorten training accordingly. A seminar with Smith was planned for November 2015 in the church IVA in San Antonio de Coronado, with the aim of presenting the simpler format. In addition, Marta herself also planned a change of strategy: She wanted to concentrate the courses mainly in the church CCVN in order to be able to guarantee additional practical meetings and retreats for in-depth and further training and supervision. She also wanted to encourage course participants to watch her practice Theophostic Prayer Ministry herself in sessions.

³³³ Interview no. 67, 06/17/2015.

5.3.3.2 Context

The name Theophostic Prayer Ministry is composed of the terms *theos* (God) and *phos* (light). It designates a pastoral approach that was presented in 1995 in the USA by Edward Smith, a pastor of the Southern Baptist Church. He explained that he had worked for years with women who had been sexually abused during childhood. He had experienced that he could not heal their pain in the end by accompanying and counseling them. When he asked God for help, he learned that as a counselor he had to take himself back and invite Christ instead to heal. From then on, he began to develop the Theophostic Prayer Ministry. He defines this method as “deliberate, purposeful prayer that leads to an authentic encounter with the presence of Christ, which results in renewed thinking and subsequently a transformed life”.³³⁴ The change of name to *Transformation Prayer Ministry* in 2015 is intended to simplify the prayer ministry and training of this method.³³⁵ Nevertheless, it is called Theophostic Prayer Ministry here, because this corresponds to the name used at the time of the research in Costa Rica.

Like healing prayer and standing in place prayer, Theophostic Prayer Ministry is based on the assumption, derived from psychoanalysis, that the present emotional pain of a person to be healed through prayer, is usually not a result of his present situation, but has its roots in childhood experiences. The aim of the Theophostic Prayer Ministry, as well as that of the healing prayer and the Standing in place prayer, is to heal socially and personally destructive emotions. In order to achieve this, all three prayer methods work on realizing the painful memories and requesting God to heal the associated mental pain. The theoretical specifics of the Theophostic Prayer Ministry consist in defining the possible different convictions that can form the basis of a negative self-concept. Smith describes these beliefs as lies, and he attributes them to childhood psychological wounds, which gave the wounded child a negative interpretation of himself or herself. The resulting negative self-concept has an effect in later life in conflict situations.³³⁶ Smith distinguishes between lies stemming from fear, such as “If I trust, I’ll get hurt again”, from a stained self-image like “I’m dirty”, a feeling of devaluation like “I’m worth nothing” and others.³³⁷ In order to uncover these lies, the person to be healed is asked to remember a situation in the past when this present emotion was felt for the first time. At this point of treatment, the practical specific of the Theophostic Prayer Ministry comes to bear, namely special questioning techniques concerning the emotion felt, in order to identify the lie

³³⁴ Smith 2007, 11; retranslation from the Spanish manual.

³³⁵ Cf. www.transformationprayer.org/ [03/03/2016].

³³⁶ Cf. Smith 2007, 23-30.

³³⁷ Cf. Smith 2007, 55-75.

at its place of origin in the situation remembered. When the lie is pronounced, Jesus is asked for his truth to replace the lie. People report to have perceived in this moment a sentence that refutes the lie, of having seen inner images, of having felt Jesus' closeness or just inner peace. In order to check the success of the treatment, people are then asked to recall the memory they previously felt to be painful. If they no longer feel pain, the treatment is considered successful. If they feel the pain again, it is assumed that there are more lies regarding their self-concept that also need to be treated.³³⁸

Even though Marta presented herself as a convinced follower of the Theophostic Prayer Ministry and supporter of its founder Smith, she also went her own way in the context of teaching and practicing the Theophostic Prayer Ministry, by integrating methods of spiritual deliverance into the Theophostic Prayer Ministry and thus transforming it. Smith's position on spiritual warfare had changed between 1999, when the first manual on Theophostic Prayer Ministry was published, and 2007, when the last was published. While first he had endorsed the practice of spiritual deliverance in the context of Theophostic Prayer Ministry,³³⁹ in 2007 he advised against this, except in rare exceptional cases. Smith dissociating himself from spiritual warfare reflects the discussion that took place in those years within the Southern Baptist Church to which he belonged: Its missionary organization International Mission Board and its university Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary rejected glossolalia and practices of the charismatic movement in general in 2005 and 2006.³⁴⁰ Charles E. Lawless, Professor of that seminary, wrote about spiritual warfare in 2001, saying that the devil is threatened not by this, but only by the powerful presence of believing Christians, and that focusing on the devil hinders the growth of powerful churches. Christians need not fear the devil because God is more powerful.³⁴¹ Similarly, Smith also justifies distancing himself from spiritual warfare: Since Jesus' death on the cross, the devil and the demons have no longer had any power of their own, but only the power that humans grant them. The devil can only gain power over a person by implanting false beliefs or lies about that person's self-concept.³⁴² So demons were not to be defeated by spiritual warfare, but by replacing lies with God's truth. Smith does not distinguish between spiritual problems caused by demons that need to be fought spiritually, and mental

³³⁸ Cf. Smith 2007, 101-125.

³³⁹ Cf. Smith 2007, 140f. Because previous editions are not available, this information is taken from what Smith 2007 explains about his previous understanding.

³⁴⁰ See www.imb.org/updates/storyview.aspx?StoryID=3834#.Vz6_nvmlTtQ [05/20/2016];
www.imb.org/updates/storyview.aspx?StoryID=3839#.Vz6_xfmlTtQ [05/20/2016];
www.swbts.edu/news/releases/wrap-seminary-trustees-fall-2006-meeting [05/20/2016].

³⁴¹ Cf. Lawless 2001, 40f.

³⁴² Cf. Smith 2007, 53f.

problems to be treated by counseling, but he distinguishes between demons who have spiritual power and can be easily and quickly expelled with reference to Jesus Christ, and demons whose power is psychologically based, as it is based upon a lie. Such demons are to be expelled in pastoral care, by replacing the lie with Jesus' truth. When in the course of a Theophostic Prayer session a demon of the first kind speaks or acts through the person seeking help, or that person hears or sees him, it is not the theophostic companion who must fight him, but the person himself must command him to disappear, because the free will of a person has power over demons. Only in rare cases can such manifestations not be ended in this way, so that spiritual combat guidance by the companion is necessary. In this case, the companion shall proceed as follows: "First, look the person in the eye and speak to him by name, [...] second, ask permission to speak directly to the demon. [...] Say: 'I command you in the name of Jesus that you remain silent and stop acting in any way. Otherwise you deliberately challenge the Lord Jesus. Gina has said that she does not want this manifestation to continue.'"³⁴³ The spiritual power of a demon is defeated with these sentences. If the manifestation does not end now, the problem lies in a wrong conviction of the person, that is, in a lie that has to be unmasked in order to deprive the demon of his power. In reality, people do not usually have problems with demons, but with their own belief and decisions.³⁴⁴

Marta knew Smith's older and newer statements about the practice of deliverance ministry in the context of Theophostic Prayer Ministry. She explained the change in his position as follows:

It used to be a lot of spiritual warfare. [...] But Doctor Smith has recognized the importance of conviction and decision, of free will. [...] The [book of] 2007³⁴⁵ is full of spiritual warfare, it dealt much with demons, not now. Now it is/ it can happen, but it is only seen as an obstacle, why is he [i.e. the demon] there? [...] He clings to lies, to false convictions. So, we learn how to [drive him away] without screaming. [...] We know our authority in Christ Jesus.³⁴⁶

Marta described her acting in the case of a woman through whom a demon had spoken, as Smith had recommended: She looked her firmly in the eye and asked if she wanted the demon to disappear. The woman affirmed this and ordered him to disappear, and it had happened. Marta knew Smith's line of argument and agreed with him that Christian free will was stronger than a demon. At the same time, she continued to supplement the Theophostic Prayer Ministry with deliverance ministry:

³⁴³ Smith 2007, 142.

³⁴⁴ Cf. Smith 2007, 140-145.

³⁴⁵ Regarding the publication year she seems to be mistaken and to refer to Smith's book from 1999.

³⁴⁶ Interview no. 53, 05/26/2015.

We have also been trained in another ministry called Freedom Encounters, which is spiritual warfare, and I have used it here with authority. There were manifestations and everything. [...] I will not just cling to Theophostics.³⁴⁷

Freedom Encounters was founded by Ken and Sylvia Thornberg and propagated a combination of deliverance ministry and inner healing. According to their homepage, the couple has trained teams in many places in the United States and 13 other countries to run seminars aimed at revealing the shackles of the supernatural world to participants, who have so far disregarded this in their struggles for a successful life, and teaching them methods and strategies to confront the demonic powers.³⁴⁸ The Costa Rican team was based in San Isidro de Heredia, and Marta attended a seminar led by this team. Some prayers that she used originated from this seminar, and she used them, when she suspected a demonic cause behind a person's problems during a Theophostic session. The wording of the prayer aimed to establish, by proclamation, protective coverings and barriers through which no enemy could penetrate, to cancel curses and witchcraft, to cut generational chains, to cover, purify and protect another person or themselves with the blood of Jesus and the fire of the Holy Spirit. Further prayers from Marta's prayer compilation came from the homepage of Cristina Blanc-Ramirez from Paraguay, who lived in Memphis, Tennessee and referred to Jim Staley, a preacher who is considered part of the Hebrew Roots Movement.³⁴⁹ Marta used Blanc-Ramirez' words with slight modifications to have her clients cut generational chains. The author was asked by Marta during a prayer session to visualize an image of the chain of pain holding the heart captive, in order to let it be torn apart by Jesus. In this way, emotions caused by demonic lies such as anger or pain were to be eliminated:

Now we do something that is not Theophostics but spiritual warfare. Think of the pain as a chain. What color is the necklace? Is it long or short? Heavy or light? Imagine that this chain is tied around your heart. We ask Jesus to tear it apart.³⁵⁰

Following this act of spiritual deliverance, Marta returned to the regular methodology of Theophostic Prayer Ministry. She explained that behind each pain she saw a spiritual and a mental cause and treated both with the appropriate means, i.e. the mental problems with the methods of the Theophostic Prayer Ministry and the spiritual problems with the methods of spiritual warfare.

Marta's ambivalent handling of Smith's instructions for dealing with demons becomes clear in her presentation of a session with a client in which she had identified generational chains of

³⁴⁷ Interview no. 53, 05/26/2015.

³⁴⁸ Cf. www.encuentrosdelibertad.com [03/04/2016].

³⁴⁹ See www.misionavivamiento.blogspot.de/ [4.3.2016]; www.cris-videos.blogspot.de/ [05/19/2016].

³⁵⁰ Research Diary 06/22/2015.

curses due to serious sins of the ancestors. She had put on Christ's armor and cut the curse chains. This provoked the devil, who then revealed himself and asserted his claims over the client: With wild head movements, hair on his face and a man's voice, he said through the woman: "She belongs to me." Marta reacted according to Smith's instructions by saying to the client: "Look me in the eye. Do you want this to go on?" The client denied this. Marta then stated the victory of the client's will over the devil: "Then it's already over, because without your will he can't." Here, on the one hand, she drew on the methods of deliverance ministry and thus disregarded Smith's instructions, and on the other, she followed them by declaring the devil defeated by the will of the afflicted woman alone. Asked about this transformation of the Theophostic Prayer Ministry in favor of an integration of deliverance ministry, Marta distanced herself from Smith:

Doctor Smith wants it all pure, but I don't feel it that way. I do it because it works.³⁵¹

Theophostic Prayer Ministry practitioners' use of methods of deliverance ministry differed. This is shown by explanations of an informant, who had participated in several seminars led by Marta and Smith, who practiced Theophostic Prayer Ministry herself, and supported Marta in her seminars as co-leader. She was part of the CCVN spiritual warfare ministry, but knew Smith's instructions for dealing with demons. In contrast to Smith, she considered deliverance ministry to be an important means of driving out demons and cutting generational chains. But unlike Marta, she did not mix Theophostic Prayer Ministry and spiritual warfare, but regarded them as separate methods of healing different problems: Demons that remain in a person because the devil has implanted a lie can be fought with the methods of Theophostic Prayer Ministry. Demons resulting from generational chains, on the other hand, are to be fought with spiritual warfare apart from the Theophostic Prayer Ministry:

With regard to Theophostics [...] and spiritual warfare, there is no connection I feel, because Doctor Smith believes that demons only control people because they have a false belief, and that if you treat them with Theophostics and destroy the belief, you also destroy the control that that demon has over that person. [...] They believe that after Jesus' resurrection, there was no prayer to liberate anyone from demons. I don't believe that, even when Doctor Smith once said in a seminar that after his [i.e. Jesus'] resurrection no one was liberated any more. I had doubts, so I met with my pastor [...] and I asked him, and he showed me several passages from the Bible where there was indeed deliverance from demons.

My position is that I believe God does a perfect deed on people, when I pray for someone over whom a demon has control, be it because of a lie the devil has put into his head, be it because I treat him with Theophostics or pray in spiritual warfare and instruct him [i.e. the demon] to leave the person, or that I pray and ask God to heal

³⁵¹ Research Diary 07/01/2015.

his heart, remove all anger, guilt and so on, God will liberate the person with one method or another. [...]

God heals and liberates people as he pleases. [...] There are demons and curses that the person is afflicted with because of wrong beliefs, lies that the devil has put in his head, anger and so on; this can be treated with Theophostics; but I also believe that there are curses for which the person cannot do anything, but which come from our ancestors, from before, they are generational chains, the Bible says that this reaches up to the third and fourth generation. In these cases, I don't think Theophostics can help the person, because what he experiences is not the result of something from himself, it's not a lie planted directly into him, but it's from his ancestors. In this case I think you have to cut up that curse, pray in spiritual warfare and that the person will continue to pray to God and ask forgiveness for what the ancestors may have done, by asking God to annul every pact they may have made, by asking God to rip out everything that is there, for the Holy Spirit to bring to light on what has been practiced, so that forgiveness can be asked for it. That's why I don't think there's a connection between the two methods.³⁵²

Marta herself shared her convictions and experiences regarding the combination of deliverance ministry and Theophostic Prayer Ministry in her seminars. Thus, in June 2015, she offered the participants of her seminar the opportunity to participate in a weekend seminar that went beyond this, which focused on spiritual deliverance. One informant, who had attended both the Theophostic Prayer Ministry training seminar and the Deliverance Ministry seminar at the weekend, reported that during the latter she had learned how to cut chains. This she found helpful in her handling of the spiritual heritage of her ancestors, as she attributed a number of accidents and violent deaths in her family to her grandmother and mother being involved in practices of so-called witchcraft and lay Catholic religiosity. Although she had previously participated in a seminar on spiritual warfare of the church CCVN, negative spiritual influences had remained. The aim of her participating in the weekend seminar was to liberate herself from them:

Now, when we had the seminar with Theophostics, there was also talk of breaking chains and all those shackles, and I said, they are already torn, but to be on the safe side, I'm annulling everything for myself and my generation. [...] That was [...] in [...] a common worship time, [...] in the whole group. [...] Everyone [...] should write down such chains, sorceries, from the past, adulteries or violent deaths. [...] I actually have a history of many violent deaths in my family. [...] I [...] have already cancelled it. [...] My dad, who had this accident, we have suffered several violent accidents, but thank God the Lord has saved us. My brother, on the day he turned 16, a car hit him and killed him, [...] my mother died when my two brothers also suffered an accident with a bus and [...] had serious consequences although [...] they survived. But that led to her having a heart attack. [...] It's like a chain of violent things. [...] I have already cut it up, [...] I feel that I have been liberated since that moment [i.e. since her first seminar on spiritual warfare in the church CCVN], but for safety sake I have also said this prayer.³⁵³

³⁵² E-mail dated 03/02/2016.

³⁵³ Interview no. 74, 07/13/2015.

It can be assumed that the fact that Marta, the most influential representative of the Theophostic Prayer Ministry in Costa Rica, represented and practiced the combination of the Theophostic Prayer Ministry with spiritual deliverance, will result in this combination prevailing among practitioners of the Theophostic Prayer Ministry in Costa Rica.

6. Reports on Healing

Several informants reported on the positive effects of inner healing on their emotions, behavior and relationships. They said that socially and personally destructive emotions such as hatred, revenge, envy and impatience had been replaced by love, mercy, benevolence and patience as a result of forgiveness. Thus, an informant, who had separated from her husband a few months earlier, explained that forgiveness enabled her to enjoy life instead of being dominated by resentment:

I forgave him. [...] I will not give up experiencing all the beautiful things that God has given us, our children, everything, [...] too many things to live with resentment.³⁵⁴

An informant who belonged to the church CCVN explained how inner healing had changed her emotions and her relationship with her husband and others:

I was very arrogant, very arrogant, and God gave me mercy, so to speak. [...] I was also very perfectionist and I wanted it all right away. [...] But God came and began to [...] heal my soul and give me rest. The first thing I learned from God was peace. [...] This has transformed my life. [...] One also begins to empower oneself. [...] Setting limits, [...] for example in the house I did all [...] the work. I've studied, worked, brought money home. [...] I always did the housework, and meanwhile my husband [...] read the newspaper. Him in the car and me on foot. Me with the kids, to the doctor, [...] where it was necessary. And me on foot, and him in the car. So, that kind of empowerment. [...] My self-esteem [changed]. But also, to set limits. "I'm not gonna do that anymore. This [...] house belongs to two people, or four, so we're going to split." [...] I felt safe. I wasn't depressed anymore. I've become more patient. [...] I stopped being a perfectionist.³⁵⁵

While this informant described her behavior toward others before her healing as arrogant, she described it toward her husband as submissive and resigned. While her behavior toward others had become more generous through the healing process, she had felt empowered toward her husband, so that she had begun to demand a balanced distribution of rights and duties and to show him limits in his behavior toward her. The empowerment was preceded by a strengthening of self-esteem, which also led to her abandoning her need for perfection and her impatience, which were replaced by serenity.

An informant from the CCCAJ said that inner healing had transformed her from being shy and bitter to becoming an open-minded, confident person, and that this change had also affected her appearance. In addition, she had been able to overcome conflicts with several family members:

I've seen fantastic changes because [...] you're really [...] reborn. Because [...] I felt bitter, desperate, [...] practically dead. [...] But then you come to the moment when

³⁵⁴ Interview no. 46, 05/11/2015.

³⁵⁵ Interview no. 22, 03/30/2015.

Jesus comes into your life. [...] It is an incredible change, even physically it is noticed. [...] Even outwardly. [...] There are people [...] who knew me for a long time, but they probably perceived me as very sad. [...] And then they see me being different, changed. [...] I hardly talked before. [...] All this is wonderful. [...] Overcoming shyness. [...] There's a lot of peace. [...] Also [...] with my mother, with the sisters, after all there are problems like in all families. [...] You overcome that.³⁵⁶

Several informants said that as a result of the inner healing their behavior toward their own children and their relationship with them had changed. An informant who belonged to the church CCVN confessed to having abused her children. As a result of the inner healing, she succeeded in overcoming her destructive behavior patterns:

You change little by little. Because I was so mad with my kids. Because I had problems with my husband, it's the children who took the blame. [...] Terrible. [...] I treated them badly. [...] The children pay for the problems you have. Well, I was angry all the time. I knew he would come home drunk; he was with women. [...] I've changed my character little by little. [...] The poor little ones, they have bad memories of the insane mother they had.³⁵⁷

A similar experience had been made by another informant who belonged to the CCCAJ. Because marital conflicts and financial problems burdened her, she abused her children. Since she herself had been healed inwardly, she had asked her children for forgiveness many times, so that her relationship with them was also healed:

The worst part is, I passed it on to my kids. When one is depressed, and in a bad mood, with difficult situations at home, financial problems, bad marital relations, who pays? The children do. [...] And I treated my children very badly when they grew up because of all those things I had. [...] When I was liberated, I went and asked them for forgiveness. And whenever I can, I keep asking their forgiveness. [...] That's why we have such a good relationship now. But we didn't have a good relationship before, because I lived a very bitter life.³⁵⁸

The last two reports correspond to the explanations of the pastor of the church ICC, who attributed the destructive behavior of women toward their children to the fact that they themselves had been abused. She supported the women in overcoming acquired behavior patterns, by helping them to heal internally and by working out practical options with them how to act when faced with actual problem constellations:

These women raise daughters and treat them the way they were treated. The violence they received they reproduce it. It's a vicious circle that repeats itself from generation to generation. [...] The women become aggressive, because they have an aggressive husband; they cannot take it out on anyone, and when they explode, [...] they take it out on their children. They beat the children, abuse them, yell at them, and treat them badly. [...] They reproduce the same pattern of behavior they have experienced. [...] I can't give someone what I don't have. [...] Many mothers have

³⁵⁶ Interview no. 3, 03/10/2015.

³⁵⁷ Interview no. 43_1, 04/28/2015.

³⁵⁸ Interview no. 63, 06/15/2015.

said to me in tears, “I want to behave differently toward my children, but I don’t know how to do it.” It’s orientation you give them.³⁵⁹

The pastor of the church *Comunidad Cristiana La Casa de mi Padre* also described the phenomenon of violence learned, and said that his wife healed other women so that they can overcome their aggressive behavior toward their own children:

Years ago, we learned that the injured person metes out injury. If the mother is hurt, her behavior toward the children is unkind. But in this process [...], which we call the healing of the soul, in which God heals the inner damage, [...] when there are no more wounds, the women’s behavior toward the children is different. [...] It’s an atmosphere that’s beginning to change.³⁶⁰

However, relationships between mothers and children did not change solely as a result of the healing of mothers. Thus, the pastor of the church CCBEDN, who will be called Claudia in the following, reported how her behavior toward her mother had changed as a result of her healing, and consequently also the behavior of her mother toward her. The disputes between them had always escalated before her conversion, because she had fought back against provocation. As a result of her conversion and healing, she changed her conflict behavior to retreating in response to her mother’s attacks. When her mother finally noticed that she could no longer argue with her daughter, she stopped attacking her. In this way, her changed behavior had led to the violent clashes disappearing:

The relationship with my mother changed completely when I met the Lord. [...] When she saw the change in me, that I no longer let myself be provoked/ I was no longer the badly brought up, quarreling girl. [...] She also saw the change in me and that was very nice. [...] Then I forgive, then my heart is cleansed of all rebellion, of all bad behavior, [...] so the Claudia, who formerly said something to Mommy and then got very angry no longer existed. And when Mommy told me something, or for example when she burned my writings that were so precious to me, Claudia was very still, I just went into the room to pray and said nothing.³⁶¹

The leader of the women’s group PAF, who will be called Gloria in the following, said that her behavior toward her husband changed because of her healing, and that their relationship had changed fundamentally as a result. She had previously acted impatiently and been unfair, and he had reacted to it impulsively. There had been a permanent atmosphere of conflict between them, until she had forgiven him and thereby had become more lenient toward him. As a result, he had also shown more cooperation, so that now there is much more harmony in their relationship:

³⁵⁹ Interview no. 26, 04/07/2015.

³⁶⁰ Interview no. 23, 03/31/2015.

³⁶¹ Interview no. 45, 05/08/2015.

I believe marriage problems always arise because of a lack of forgiveness. If I forgive today, the Bible itself says that we [...] should not sleep with our anger. [...] We will all always make mistakes. [...] The problem is [...] that we have the habit of only seeing the mistakes of others and not [...] our own. [...] When I was already the other Gloria, who wasn't the previous Gloria, my husband had changed in a way/ I can't tell you that nothing bothers him, [...] but he's completely different. For he himself has seen/ [...] I could show what kind of person I am, unlike before.³⁶²

The co-pastor of the church MSDJ said that she behaved differently toward her ex-husband as a result of her forgiveness. After their separation, they had often argued during telephone conversations, but since she had forgiven him, she felt such inner peace that she no longer let herself be provoked. Unlike before, it was now possible to have constructive talks:

He is sometimes very angry, when he rings up, [...] and I tell him, "Okay, we'll talk another day, not like this." [...] He now has no one to argue with, because it takes two people to argue. And he won't fight alone. [...] Two days later he calls, already in a different tone.³⁶³

Several informants said that God had cured them of serious mental illness. For example, an informant who belonged to the church CCVN reported that traumatic childhood experiences had led her to suffer from depression and panic attacks following the births of her children. Although she had been treated by a psychiatrist, it was God who had healed her when she forgave those who had hurt her:

I began to suffer from [...] illness [...] because of all those things. [...] I had a very troubled childhood. My mother left us, my father suffered an attempted murder, and my sister and I were raped. That was dreadful. Apart from that, my mother [...] ill-treated us a lot in the short time she was with us. [...] [After the birth of my first daughter] I started to become mentally ill, [...] I felt a terrible despair. [...] Later [...] my second daughter was born. [...] Then it got really bad, [...] I got a depression. [...] I said: "No. I'm going to find a church." [...] So I began to get involved there, to seek the Lord, and I already came to the church where I am now. [...] For a while the depression calmed down and then, when I had my third child, it struck terribly. [...] I went to [...] fasting and prayer, [...] spiritual warfare. [...] I was prayed for in church. [...] Because it was a terrible depression and I no longer felt like myself. I had such a panic, [...] because [...] twice I had been followed to [...] be raped, [...] apart from that other time. [...] When I went out on the street, I was afraid of panic. I looked people in the face. [...] Their face looked yellow-green to me, with spots on their faces. And so [...] I saw the face in the street [...] of the men. [...] And when I went into the street, because I had no strength to walk, [...] I said: "In the name of Jesus, I will go." [...] I sought God more and more, I went to meetings, and so the Lord slowly helped me to get out of it. [...] It was a [...] long process, it took years. [...] Psychiatrists are only there to prescribe drugs. [...] They don't do anything by themselves. They only listen to you when you tell them something, and what they then do is to send you a prescription. [...] I've been to Doña Carla's a few times [i.e. a lay counselor]. [...] My psychologist is God. [...] I took the medication. I took Fluoxetine for four years. [...] For a while I took [...] Amitriptyline. [...] As for the psychiatrists, [...] do they help you? [...] No. It was God who did it. [...] Little by

³⁶² Interview no. 55, 05/27/2015.

³⁶³ Interview no. 58, 06/01/2015.

little, I got better. [...] First, forgive the people who hurt you, forgive them, and bless them. [...] Then go on and hold fast to God's hand.³⁶⁴

According to the greater importance given to physical healing in the church MSDJ in relation to most other churches in Alajuela, reports of healing from physical suffering were increasingly encountered here. The co-pastor said that she had been cured of uterine cancer during her first visit to a prayer meeting:

The first time I went [to the prayer meeting], the Lord [...] healed me from uterine cancer. Because I had a process behind me [...] in which I received one treatment after another and nothing helped. And part of my history was that at the age of 32 my mother had had everything taken out because of cancer. So, the doctor said, "Okay, we're doing this treatment. [...] If that doesn't help, you'll have to have surgery like your mother." And the Lord said to me, "I will heal you. And your body will never have anything to do with cancer again." And I believed the Lord and said, [...] "I will be examined and do everything to show the others that I am well. For I know that the Lord has healed me." And they actually came to my house, [...] to tell me it was not possible that [...] I was completely healed. And that this was not possible, because no matter how much they had treated me, something would have had to be found in the investigation. They repeated it two more times, and then I was released. I was considered healthy. [...] The Lord had performed a miracle.³⁶⁵

Although the conviction that God heals physical suffering seemed to be the basis of the faith of this co-pastor and of the proclamation in her church, she was also able to integrate unresolved healing into her faith. Her son was deaf from birth, and she was convinced that God would heal him in his time. She saw the meaning of his deafness in the fact that through this experience God had enabled her to deal with women whose children had disabilities:

The Lord gave me a son with a disability. And I know that at some point the Lord will lead such women in my direction. And I'll be able to understand them. Because [...] it's very hard, [...] the discrimination. To feel/ [...] my son does not hear, but he is not retarded and nothing, he is super-intelligent. [...] But people [...] exclude him. So, when a woman comes who has a handicapped child, I will be able to understand what she may be suffering from. Well, I know it is God's plan that he lets me experience it. Someday the Lord will send such women to me.³⁶⁶

How unresolved healing is integrated into the faith in the healing power of God, is also shown by the example of the pastor of the same church, whose sight increasingly diminished. She was almost blind during the research period, but insisted that God would heal her in his time. The members of her church did not seem to be irritated by her healing not being resolved. Rather, her firm belief in future healing seemed to be convincing to church members.

³⁶⁴ Interview no. 14, 03/23/2015.

³⁶⁵ Interview no. 58, 06/01/2015.

³⁶⁶ Interview no. 58, 06/01/2015.

7. Conclusions

Researching the Pentecostal healing discourse in Alajuela, with regard to its significance for women, has shown that healing mental and emotional suffering is the central aspect. Due to pneumo-psychosomatic etiologies of various types of suffering however, the so-called inner healing cannot be strictly separated from physical and from spiritual healing. Furthermore, it has been shown that the suffering many women long to be healed from is largely caused by having experienced violence. This consists of physical, psychological and sexual violence experienced in childhood, mainly caused by fathers, mothers and other male family members, and in adulthood, mainly caused by their own partners. Cordero and Calderón are therefore right to say that there is a connection between Pentecostalism and domestic violence in Costa Rica.³⁶⁷ However, their conclusion that Pentecostalism contributes to its legitimization and continuance, regarding it as a natural phenomenon and accepting domestic violence, must be contradicted. While it is true that Pentecostal counselors and pastors are reluctant to support women in breaking off relationships with people who inflict or have inflicted suffering on them, counselors do not refrain from pleading in favor of that in individual cases. Their primary objective is neither to change concrete conditions nor to overcome fundamental structures. Nevertheless, accusing Pentecostalism of promoting domestic violence is to mistake the cause of conversions with their consequences. Many of the informants stated that mental-emotional crisis situations due to violence were the reason for them seeking help, which had led them to Pentecostal churches and communities.

There, in different contexts, people are available who are trained to listen to the women seeking help, so that many can put into words and reflect their personal experiences and emotions for the first time. Helping these women to forgive the wrongdoings of others, to forgive themselves and to transform their self-concept by using a variety of methods, pastors, counselors and others try to open up new options for action to women. These experience an understanding of healing that is shaped by the conviction that individuals must first reconcile with themselves and experience a change in themselves, in order to reconcile with others and change a problematic system. This approach provides pragmatic guidance on how to deal with the conditions and lets women become independent from the possibly lacking willingness of others to change. The healing experience results in overcoming destructive emotions, in acquiring constructive

³⁶⁷ Cf. Cordero 2003; Calderón 2015.

behaviors towards their own children, husbands, parents and others, and finally in changing relationships.

Forgiveness is regarded as a necessary prerequisite for inner healing and eschatological salvation, and is therefore the focus of pastoral practice as well as pastoral preaching. The convictions that God provides justice in this world and in the hereafter, and that it is the devil who causes wrongdoing, help to forgive. Both convictions help emotionally traumatized people to overcome their need for revenge. Moreover, forgiveness is regarded as an obligation of the converted, because it is understood as an expression of love for their neighbor and for God, as well as of obedience to God. Therefore, non-forgiveness implies a lack of spiritual healing and implies a threatening eschatological perspective for the individual. Non-forgiveness is interpreted as an expression of a lack of love for God, of a lack of obedience to God, and of the victory of the devil in the struggle for dominion over the life of the person concerned. Undoubtedly, the threat of the consequences for not forgiving can lead to fears and can therefore contribute to a homogenous discourse of forgiveness. Where forgiveness succeeds, the experience of being able to actively liberate yourself from emotional suffering through the decision to forgive is an experience of self-efficacy and control that helps to overcome a self-concept of helplessness.

While forgiving the wrongdoing of others is seen as central to dealing with injuries suffered, being forgiven by others, by yourself and by God is seen as crucial to finding a constructive way to deal with your own guilt. Belief differs, whether God forgives misconduct on condition of repentance, or whether guilt must be atoned for in this world.

Apart from the fact that forgiveness is also considered necessary for spiritual healing, women who at present are under threat of abuse are supported by pastors and counselors in deciding which strategy of action is right for them. By referring to the Bible and using their own intellect they consider their specific situation and individual needs. A common strategy is a combination of subordination and spiritual authority. The spiritual authority of women is based on the fact that even non-Pentecostal husbands do not doubt the basic convictions of the existence and power of God and the devil as a result of the Catholic tradition of authority. This strengthens women in defending and asserting their own interests against their husbands. There are differences in interpreting, assessing and dealing with the question of the legitimacy and usefulness of divorce. Pastors justify their counseling approaches both with biblical-theological and with pastoral-therapeutic arguments.

The promise of God's love and the experience of this love in a community shaped by mutual responsibility, are regarded as essential for transforming the self-concept. Successful implementation of challenging tasks also contributes to the transformation of the self-concept. This goes hand in hand with conveying a specific, but not uniform image of women. Both the appropriation of a Marianist ideal of self-sacrifice by women for their children and husbands, leading to appreciating traditional female household and family activities, and achieving a consciousness as having valuable spiritual gifts which loosen the fixation on traditional female roles, have been described by women as empowering. The Marianist ideal described above implies that the behavior of men who disparage their wives will not be questioned, as long as they do not physically abuse them or behave promiscuously. At the same time, it was observed that domestic and family activities, interpreted theologically as valuable, were upgraded not only for women but also for men.

The importance of physical healing varied between the churches and communities studied, but all churches and communities refer to physical healing methods such as hugs and laying on of hands, because these are intended not only for physical healing, but also for conveying the Holy Spirit, the love and power of God in general, and thus for inner and spiritual healing. Spiritual healing in the form of deliverance is practiced when there is a chronic problem that is interpreted as a symptom of demonic presence. While the connection between spiritual and inner healing is undisputed, the assessment of the correct order of these two types of healing differs. In order to liberate a person from demons, it is first necessary to identify them. The identification requires naming the actual problem and its causes, which can be one's own wrongdoing or suffering, or the misconduct or suffering of the ancestors. These are regarded as entrance gates for demons. In order to identify these causes, at the beginning of a deliverance ministry the biography of the person is analyzed, as well as the biographies of the ancestors. Failed relationships and emotional wounds are attributed to the devil and the demons. Misconduct, whether by men or women, is seen as part of a satanic strategy to destroy marriages and families. Women are made responsible for saving their husbands through religious practice and spiritual warfare. They are to direct their anger at the devil and fight him in prayer instead of directing their anger at their husbands, because it is considered the devil's strategy to first cause misconduct and then prevent forgiveness of misconduct.

There is nothing to suggest that attributing problems to evil forces inhibits the commitment for individual or social welfare. Rather, it can be assumed that the call to identify specific demons contributes to the fact that those seeking help actively deal with their problems, solve them and open up to interpretation and counseling from healing persons. Attributing evil to the devil

allows a positive image of humankind to be created without qualifying the seriousness of misconduct.³⁶⁸ Women who practice deliverance ministry or spiritual warfare experience spiritual power in areas where they otherwise often feel powerless. Trust in their own power to act, gives them strength and patience. The statements of the informants indicate that they felt strengthened by spiritual warfare for confronting private problems, and that they gained more sensitivity toward sociopolitical issues. Through this it became possible that the sociopolitical interest and self-confidence aroused by spiritual warfare, motivated the founder of the spiritual warfare group *Mujeres sin fronteras* to run for office in 2014 in the context of the parliamentary elections. It also motivated many other women to engage sociopolitically, by taking part in demonstrations against legal liberalization of in-vitro fertilization, abortion and homosexuality.³⁶⁹ Spiritual warfare does not diminish commitment to individual and social concerns, but possibly even promotes it. This can be acknowledged even if the specific aims of this commitment in a second step need to be critically considered concerning the question which subjects are produced by the norms underlying these aims and which are excluded and rejected.³⁷⁰

The historical contextualization of contemporary pastoral-therapeutic practice has shown that it is the result of interactions between members of diverse denominational backgrounds at local and global level. Pastoral-therapeutic practitioners in Alajuela participate in an international healing discourse, within which suppressed, prenatal, but also other unconscious and conscious memories are regarded as relevant components in healing the person whose present emotional pain is attributed to them. In order to achieve the aim of healing socially and personally destructive emotions, specific methods are used to visualize painful memories and reinterpret them in the light of God's experience. The counseling approaches and methods of healing share the central importance of conversation, prayer and applying the Word of God to the specific situation. One root of the counseling practice found, is the counseling practice established in connection with the television program *The 700 Club*, including its methods of conversation and prayer and the doctrinal and ethical convictions on which they are based. Other roots of the applied counseling practice can be traced back by means of specific methods. The method of healing prayer, which concentrates on stressing the importance of prenatal and unconscious memories, initially found particular acceptance among Catholic practitioners of inner healing, but spread beyond denominational borders in the context of the charismatic movement. In the

³⁶⁸ Cf. Csordas 2002, 35.55.

³⁶⁹ Cf. also Steigenga 2001, 122f.

³⁷⁰ Cf. Butler 1993, 122-133; 2002, 249-265.

context researched, the healing prayer was common among Evangelical and Catholic practitioners of inner healing and was combined here and there with deliverance prayers. The specifics of standing in place prayer lie in the practice of role-playing; its use can be traced back to the Baptist preacher Ruth Carter Stapleton. This method also spread internationally among Catholics and Evangelicals, but in Alajuela was practiced exclusively by Evangelical healers. The relatively recent method of Theophostic Prayer Ministry, whose specifics consist in directly addressing Jesus, in an elaborate questioning technique, and in a classification of lies that damage the self-concept, was developed by the Baptist pastor Smith. At the time of the research period, the practice of Theophostic Prayer Ministry was concentrated among members of the church CCVN and began to spread from there beyond denominational borders. In connection with this method, adaptation and transformation processes were observed, which were accompanied by negotiation processes between Smith and Costa Rican practitioners. Smith had tried to cut links of the Theophostic Prayer Ministry to the Charismatic Movement, by distancing himself from spiritual warfare. However, when in Alajuela it was integrated into a context in which casting out demons through spiritual warfare and deliverance ministry was given considerable importance, these links were reforged: Its most influential Costa Rican representative combined the Theophostic Prayer with methods of deliverance ministry which she considered helpful. The question of purity of teaching did not seem to her to be conducive to the aim of comprehensive healing. Since she played a major role in the dissemination of the Theophostic Prayer Ministry, its practice in Costa Rica was marked from the outset by adaptations and transformations. In addition to the methods mentioned above, other inputs such as individual prayer forms or entire faith courses were taken up, predominantly from the US and of unlimited denominational origin, and combined by practitioners of inner healing in Alajuela, and thus became part of a healing discourse that gave Pentecostalism its transformative power in this specific context.

Part Three: Healing Discourse in Context

8. The Official Catholic Church

Following the investigation of the Pentecostal healing discourse, this shall be placed within the religious context which is dominated by the official Catholic Church and lay religiosity. These shaped the lives of many informants before their conversion. Continuity and discontinuity between the healing discourses of Pentecostalism, the Catholic Church and lay religiosity will be discussed, as well as interactions between those who represent them. The comparison also serves to elaborate on the specific details of the Pentecostal healing discourse.

Following his field research in Brazil and Chile, Willems states that Pentecostalism shares the expectation of intervening supernatural powers and the ritual defense against demonic threats both with Catholic lay religiosity and with spiritualism and Umbanda.³⁷¹ Bastian confirms the theory of continuity between lay religiosity and Pentecostalism with regard to Costa Rica: “In certain respects the Pentecostal movement was able to tie in with popular Catholicism and religious syncretism”³⁷², as both developed outside the structures of the official Church, assumed the concept of religious independence of the people, and shared the meaning of miracle healings and mystical experiences. Elsewhere Bastian describes Latin American Pentecostalism as a popular religious form of “Catholicism without priests”³⁷³. Actually, it seems that the opposites of the first two characteristics mentioned by Bastian describe the official Catholic Church rather than a continuity between those who differ from the official Catholic Church can be assumed. But the theory that Pentecostalism and lay religiosity coincide in the central importance of healing will be examined.³⁷⁴ This part of the study looks at the relationship between the Catholic Church beyond the RCC, lay Catholic religiosity including practices not officially recognized by the Church, and Pentecostalism with regard to the discourse of healing. How do those who represent the official Church perceive the Pentecostal healing discourse, and what meaning do they give to the healing of emotional wounds? Is the Pentecostal healing discourse taken up in the Catholic Church? Which topics dominate lay religiosity? How do Pentecostals position themselves in view of the healing approaches of the official Church and lay religiosity? In what way do the discourses resemble each other and what are their specifics?

³⁷¹ Cf. Willems 1967, 36f. 133.

³⁷² Bastian/Fanger/Wehr/Werz 2000, 69.

³⁷³ Bastian 1993, 35.

³⁷⁴ Similarly, with regard to the relationship between the RCC and lay religiosity in Latin America, Egeris Thorsen notes that the connecting element, besides ecstasy, is healing, and that these elements distinguish both currents from a Catholic theology that “de facto adheres to a disenchanting modern worldview”, Egeris Thorsen 2015, 56.

A priest from the community of *La Agonía* concluded from statistical findings that women in Costa Rica suffer less abuse than in other Central American countries,³⁷⁵ and that they have no significant need for inner healing. He cited this assessment, as well as the conviction that doctrinal issues and occasionally sociopolitical issues should be the focus of proclamation, as the reason why he did not explicitly address emotional wounds, their healing, or other contents that particularly affect women:

We don't emphasize that very much. [...] We concentrate on the kerygmatic dimension, on the gospel, on the word and on the doctrinal situation. And sometimes we address socio-economic issues. [...] Because we believe that the women here are not maltreated so much. It's a different reality here. In contrast to this in other countries at least. [...] I have the feeling that women are more courageous. They have developed more power, they bring charges.³⁷⁶

A priest from the neighboring parish of *Corazón de Jesús* saw pastoral needs of women in a different way than the priest just quoted. When he spoke about dealing with people in marriage crisis, he stressed how important it is that those affected heal emotionally. However, he considered his possibilities to contribute to the healing as limited to confessional conversation. If he noticed a greater need for counseling among confessors, he passed them on to a group of lay counselors from his parish, some of whom were RCC members:

There are many injuries. Adultery, abuse, [...] there is much loneliness in the lives of married couples. [...] They are helped a little bit to heal the wounds, to liberate the heart, to set the feelings in order, [...] from the experience of God, because if I do not heal, [...] I will not be able to have the clarity to make the best decision. [...] There will be much injury, much pain, much disappointment, and I will not be able to see clearly. [...] A wounded woman, with a lot of pain, if she doesn't heal, [...] it won't work. [...] The injury that is not healed will surface at some other point in time.³⁷⁷

An indication that the *Cursillos in Christianity* movement in Costa Rica took up elements of the Pentecostal healing discourse, was an event organized by this movement with the title *Familia: Primera escuela del perdón* (Family: First School of Forgiveness) in May 2018 in San José. And in Alajuela a Catholic woman attempted to introduce central contents of the Pentecostal healing discourse into the Women's Pastoral Ministry in the Catholic Church. She was its national leader and called herself a converted Catholic. She had got to know the RCC, but distanced herself from it. She had studied advertising, worked as a coach, consultant and speaker, and founded the *Isha Mujer* institution in the center of Alajuela, where she endeavored to support women comprehensively through counseling and courses. She also presented a

³⁷⁵ Cf. Martínez Rocha 2006; Carcedo Cabañas 2010, 34.

³⁷⁶ Interview no. 64, 06/16/2015.

³⁷⁷ Interview no. 70, 07/02/2015.

weekly program for women for the Catholic radio station *Radio María*. She said that, as a result of her own conversion and healing experiences with priests, psychologists and counselors, she wanted to pass it on. Therefore she had learned the basics of inner healing and spiritual warfare, and in 2004 with the permission of the Costa Rican Bishops' Conference, had drawn up a plan to implement her ideas of a Women's Pastoral Ministry.³⁷⁸ She criticized that the Catholic Church's support for women usually neglected psychological and spiritual needs, because it sought exclusively to improve the economic situation of women through social welfare measures, by providing them with material support and offering them courses such as crafts training. She was convinced that psychological and spiritual education was more effective. When women became aware of God's love, they would develop a strong self-esteem. By learning to forgive, they healed inwardly. Through both, they became aware of their dignity and vocation in Church and society and would be able to face the challenges of life with strength and courage.

She spoke about her difficult journey through the hierarchic structures of the Catholic Church, about her appointment as National Director of Women's Pastoral Ministry, about her detailed preparation for the tasks involved, and about the establishment of an experimental group in the community of *La Agonía* in 2010, where since then every week a topic has been dealt with from areas of spirituality, psychology, inner healing and theology, according to the plan mentioned. In the meantime, she had found some potential leaders for women's groups in different parts of the country, who were waiting to be trained as group leaders. Shortly after the interview took place, from which the following quote is taken, she initiated a second women's group in a neighboring community.

I am the National Coordinator of Women's Pastoral Ministry in the Catholic Church throughout Costa Rica. This is a project God gave me many years ago. The intention to join a group where I can learn as a woman, where I can understand what is going on with me, how I can heal, how I can grow. And I had [...] this need and before I knew it, I ended up in the Bishops' Conference of Costa Rica and asked whether there is a women's group here in Costa Rica that does something like this. And the priest who was the Director of the [...] National Committee for Women's Work told me: "It doesn't exist. But there can be. Because in the Church we can do anything. [...] Write a project proposal." [...] I wrote the project proposal [...] 2004. [...] At that time there was a lot of turmoil in the country because there were many abused women, many problems, and then in the [...] newspaper *La Nación* there was a much noticed criticism of the Church, which said: "The women are abused [...] and what does the Catholic Church do for them?" Exactly at that time I presented my project proposal. [...] The leading priest [of the National Committee for the Women's Pastoral Ministry] [...] took care to present [the project] to the bishops. At the General Assembly in February 2004, the project was presented as the origin of a

³⁷⁸ Cf. Salas Torres 2016.

Women's Pastoral Ministry in the Catholic Church, with the aim of trying to enable women to discover their dignity and vocation within the Church and society. By learning to be trained through various texts. The topics of spirituality, psychology, the teachings of the Church, theology [...] were to be treated [...] so that there was a possibility which was not typical of what the Church had done, which was the advancement of women by [...] helping them just materially. [...] They were shown how to make bread or they were shown how to sew, or they were given things for daily use, but the inside, which leads this woman to say, "I can go on, I will come out [here], the husband has left me, but I'm going on, I'm going to school again", what comes from meeting myself and knowing the truth, that's what you only get [...] from such an education. [...] At first, I thought it would be very easy, but then I noticed that everything is difficult in the Church. [...] And that every priest has his head and says "yes" or "no". [...] And you also have to find the right women to lead the groups. [...] Since I belong to this diocese of Alajuela, we have decided to make a pilot project here in *La Agonía*, since it is a very large parish where many women go. [...] But the first group was only opened in 2010. Many years passed during which I had trained and prepared myself. And now [...] there are four years, the method has been tested and confirmed. [...] [It contains] training to sit in a circle and look at ourselves, in order to do some therapy on a psychological level, learn to read texts, move them [i.e. the women], [...] by giving testimony, [...] every week a different topic. The first week on Spirituality, the second week on Psychology, the third week on inner Healing, [...] the fourth week on Theology or the Bible, [...] any particular theme, a text from the teachings of the Church, we vary and have special events, prayer afternoons, films or celebrations or lectures by people who speak to us about something specific, and [...] now we are already working on the second phase, which is to start and expand the groups [...] throughout the country. We already have a list of women in Guápiles, in Limón, in Atenas, in different places who want to lead [groups]. Now we are trying to organize ourselves to give them this training, and to enable them to start with the groups. [...] The group itself, including about 100 women. Usually 40, 45. [...] [We grow] constantly. [...] And the subject of inner healing [...] is something you already know in the Church, which mixes a little psychology with the spiritual. But after what I found out in my ten years as a spiritual counselor, it's a basic method of healing the soul, the heart, the areas psychology doesn't get to. And neither is psychiatry. [...] It's about [...] discovering these traumata in order to present them to the perfect healer, and through constant prayer and going to him, this inner healing comes about. But it's also a process that helps me in my conversion, because ultimately that's what Jesus wants, me to be converted. But I can't convert if I'm sick inside. [...] That belongs together. Inner healing is to pray for life. It is a faith process, active, I talk to him and he talks to me about what is in me. [...] And the spiritual warfare in the sense that not everything is done by the devil, because we think that it is as bad to see the devil everywhere, as to see him nowhere. With a balance, because I can give you a psychological explanation for what is happening, and I can give you a spiritual explanation. And the word in Ephesians says that we do not fight against men in the flesh, but against evil spiritual forces. [...] So I'm trying to explain this, so that they don't focus too much on it [...], because there are brothers and sisters in other religions, there are always devils, devils and demons, you have all the demons in the world. And it's not like that. [...] I have an independent institution that is mine, but I work there in cooperation with the Church. It is an institution for the holistic care of women. Its name is *Isha Mujer*. I'm the Director and I'm doing psychotherapy. The costs amount to 50 percent of what it normally costs to help people, and in special cases, we also try to help free of charge. And there, yes, through counseling, I lead them to a healing process. How's that? By learning about forgiveness, [...] discovering the topics of God's love, self-esteem, fundamental things that are

fundamental to resetting me when I have lost myself, or when I do not know myself, do I? That's how I work.³⁷⁹

The understanding of healing articulated in this quote agrees with the Pentecostal discourse, insofar as forgiveness and spiritual warfare are given central importance for psychological and spiritual healing, and are named as the aim to strengthen the self-esteem of women through conveying God's love. At the same time, this quote defines clear demarcations from Pentecostalism. The leader of the Women's Pastoral Ministry accused it of attributing too much power to the devil. Although she agreed that humans must fight against his influence, she refused to attribute all negative events to his deeds, for many problems can be explained psychologically, and ultimately the power of the devil is limited by Christ. In addition, she distanced herself from Evangelical Pentecostalism by stating that the goal of inner healing is that women should become aware of their vocation in Church and society. This statement expresses an appreciation of a universal Catholic concept of the Church, a conscious appreciation of the institutionalized Church, and a positive understanding of society, which is reminiscent of the results of the Second Vatican Council.³⁸⁰ The ecclesiological differences also become clear in the organizational structure of her project, where she always had in mind not just the local congregation but the Catholic Church throughout Costa Rica.

The following incident illustrates that the discourse, which the leader of the Women's Pastoral Ministry tried to implement, was still mostly unknown to Catholic women who turned to the Catholic Church seeking help, and also irritated them: During a meeting of the Women's group in *La Agonía*, the leader spoke about inner healing, self-esteem and spiritual warfare and explained that it is good to pray the rosary, but there also has to be personal dialogue with God. These remarks were followed by a period of open prayer in which, unlike Pentecostal events, just a few of those present actively participated. After the leader had closed the meeting, using the same words used at the meetings of the chapters of TF and other events of Pentecostal churches and communities for women – “May no woman who comes in through this door go out as the same”³⁸¹ – three participants approached her to ask her for financial support. She replied that they would have to turn to the Social Pastoral Ministry, because she herself did not offer financial support, just advice. The petitioners departed after that. It remains to be seen whether efforts like those of the head of the Women's Pastoral Ministry will lead to

³⁷⁹ Interview no. 79, 07/16/2015.

³⁸⁰ Cf. *Lumen gentium* 36.

³⁸¹ Research Diary 16.7.2015.

Pentecostalizing the Catholic Church in Costa Rica, just as Jakob Egeris Thorsen describes it regarding the Catholic Church in Guatemala.³⁸²

³⁸² Cf. Egeris Thorsen 2015, 2016.

9. Lay Religiosity

Catholic lay religiosity is marked by the celebration of numerous patron saints and by pilgrimages, above all the pilgrimage to Cartago to the basilica of Costa Rica's patron saint *Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles*. The small black Madonna statue *La Negrita*, which embodies the patron saint, is said to have strong healing powers. To ask her for healing, or to thank her for healing that has occurred, hundreds of thousands of people come to Cartago as pilgrims every year on August 2nd. Some move on their knees for part of the way and some present metal votive offerings, depicting mainly body parts, but also animals, tools, weapons and musical instruments. Under a rock next to the cathedral, on which the statue is said to have been discovered in 1635, a spring flows and believing in the healing properties of water, people wash themselves with it, drink it, and fill bottles with it to take it back to sick relatives. Other saints are also asked for help in emotional, health, financial, and everyday issues, in line with their responsibilities, and vows are made to motivate them to intercede or heal. In addition, people are venerated who have not yet been recognized as saints by the Catholic Church, such as María Isabel Acuña and the doctor Ricardo Moreno Cañas. María Isabel Acuña, known as *la niña Marisa* (the girl Marisa), died in 1954 at the age of 14 and became famous for her firm belief and her devotion to the poor. Soon after her death various miracles were attributed to her intercession, and to this day people bring letters with requests for help and offerings to her grave in Heredia. In 2018 the process of her beatification began and many people hope that she will become the first Costa Rican saint. Moreno Cañas is also venerated and worshipped like a saint. The doctor and politician was known for his medical success and for his devotion to the poor. He was murdered in 1938. The myth forming around him began immediately after his death when miracle cures were attributed to him. A common custom is to light a candle next to his photo in the evening, place a glass of water there and ask for him to heal. The water then is drunk in the next morning in the conviction that Moreno Cañas turned it into medicine overnight. It is also reported that he has revealed himself to individuals or supplied them with curative drugs. Anthropologists May Brenes Marín and Mayra Zapparoli Zecca quote a woman, who reported how Moreno Cañas appeared to her in a doctor's surgery. There was a photo of him with a glass of water and a candle. He had spoken to her in a hoarse voice through a receptionist, who surprisingly had changed her state of consciousness and had revealed clairvoyant knowledge about her family:

I went into a surgery, on the table there was a glass of water, a photo of Doctor Moreno Cañas, a candle and a white cloth. The woman who received me suddenly

fell into a trance, extended her hand, greeted me with a hoarse voice and began to tell me things about my family.³⁸³

Belief in supernatural powers beyond God and the saints, in different ways of influencing them, and in supernatural powers of certain people, both positive and negative, is widespread. In 1996, 46 percent of Catholics in Costa Rica said they believed in witchcraft and magic.³⁸⁴ Respective belief and practices are traced back to indigenous, Spanish and African roots and vary from region to region. The names of the people who practice these also vary. There are *chamanes* (shamans) of predominantly indigenous origin, obeahmen of Afro-Caribbean origin, *curanderas* and *curanderos* (healers), as well as *brujas* and *brujos*, *hechiceras* and *hechiceros* (witches and sorcerers). Most Costa Ricans know whom to consult when they need supernatural help, but few admit to having done this.³⁸⁵ Brenes Marín and Zapparoli Zecca explain that there is a widespread desire not to show clear commitment in matters of faith, but to keep all spiritual possibilities open. They quote a woman who answered the question of whether she believed in witches:

No, no, I don't believe in witches, but it is said they fly, and it's true - they fly!³⁸⁶

In their study of lay religiosity, Brenes Marín and Zapparoli Zecca limit themselves to the San José metropolitan area. They explain that the so-called witches call themselves predominantly *consejeras espirituales* (spiritual advisors), belong to the Catholic Church and regard Saint Barbara as their patron saint.³⁸⁷ In an interview Zapparoli Zecca explained that spiritual counselors fulfil an important social function by acting as psychologists of the people, speaking the language of the predominantly but not exclusively female clients seeking help, listening to them and being available at all times. They allow more time for discussion than doctors and, unlike psychologists and priests, promise a quick solution. In contrast to those, the spiritual counselors help women to find inner peace:

The psychologist [...] will tell you [...] that after a long process you have to find your own solution. The priests [...] will tell you when a woman sees them because she has problems with her husband or something like that [...]: "The woman has to bear it because the Virgin Mary was suffering and we all have to be like Mary." And the witches offer you a short-term solution. [...] The people go home feeling calm. They say to you: "Don't worry, it'll take just a little while, I'll take care of the problem right away." [...] And I wait and see what happens.³⁸⁸

³⁸³ Brenes Marín/Zapparoli Zecca 1991, 89.

³⁸⁴ Cf. Biesanz/Biesanz/Biesanz 1999, 242.

³⁸⁵ Cf. Biesanz/Biesanz/Biesanz 1999, 242f.

³⁸⁶ Brenes Marín/Zapparoli Zecca 1991, 86.

³⁸⁷ Cf. Brenes Marín/Zapparoli Zecca 1991, 82.

³⁸⁸ Interview no. 59, 06/02/2015.

The spiritual advisors themselves traced their gifts back to God. Some reported that they initially did not want to recognize them, and that they were mocked because of them. The decision to finally practice the gifts was based on the conviction that they had a responsibility to use them for the benefit of others:

We found over 100 witches who said God gave them the gift [...] They said: "I have asked God to take this gift away from me. But no, it's something given by God to help the neighbor."³⁸⁹

The spiritual counselors are consulted in crisis situations. Many women seek help from them because their husbands have left them, are unfaithful or abuse alcohol. Others suffer from conflicts with their children.³⁹⁰ When someone turns to a spiritual counselor, she often identifies as the reason for the person's misfortune a curse, which was carried out by another person with the intention of causing harm. While belief in the effectiveness of such curses exists among members of all social classes, and the suspicion of having become a victim of a curse is widespread, anthropologist Maria Eugenia Bozzoli de Wille found among 100 people interviewed no-one who admitted to having practiced a curse themselves. Therefore, she sees the central function of curses in explaining personal failure and personal problems and to provide practical guidance on how to deal with them. This guidance consists in specific acts of symbolic purification and symbolic protection, thus creating a sense of security and harmony. This can even lead to healing psychosomatic disorders.³⁹¹

The means and methods used by spiritual counselors to render curses harmless, solve problems, and fulfill desires, are in part derived from officially recognized or tolerated Catholic lay religiosity. These include prayers to the Virgin Mary, to various saints, to the girl Marisa and to Moreno Cañas, as well as the recourse to amulets, candles, incense sticks, votive pictures and holy water. These are combined with other means and methods such as reading cards, hands and egg whites, burying or depositing specific objects or herbs, and drinking, administering, spreading or spraying specific liquids. Zapparoli Zecca, who regularly consulted a spiritual counselor herself, said that she always started her university seminar on the introduction to anthropology with a presentation of magical religious means and methods in use in Costa Rica. Some of these means and methods she explained during the interview:

The prayer to Saint Alexius [...] helps keep the neighbors away. [...] The cinnamon/ If you want money, you can boil these cinnamon splinters in water, add a little cypress branch and some sugar. You cook it, you put it in a blender. The water that

³⁸⁹ Interview no. 59, 06/02/2015.

³⁹⁰ Cf. Brenes Marín/Zapparoli Zecca 1991, 100.135-149.

³⁹¹ Cf. Bozzoli de Wille 2003.

remains is applied to yourself or poured onto the floor of the house. This is a red ribbon, [...] which serves as protection from the evil eye. The women are fixing this to their children's shirts in here. [...] The evil eye is a something some people have who can harm you with their eyes. [...] This [...] here is called [...] legitimate come-to-me-powder. [...] Once I had it handed around, and at the end of the semester a couple comes to me and they say to me, "Professor, you gave her [...] this powder, and now we're a couple." [...] This is the powder of a Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift for love, happiness and money. Everything is for love, happiness and money.³⁹²

Saint Alexius is known for being able to keep away all evil, such as enemies, envy, curses and slander. According to Zapparoli Zecca people pray to Saint Alexius to create the greatest possible distance to their neighbors. This is an indication of widespread mistrust. The belief in the power of the *mal de ojo* (evil eye) also testifies to this, according to which some people with magical powers can inflict damage, such as illness or even death, on others through their gaze. Children in particular can be endangered by it, and are protected by red bands on the wrist or in the clothing. The *polvo de macuá* (powder of the Lesser Swallow-tailed Swift) consists of the ground nest of this bird, which is a symbol of love, happiness and money. Zapparoli Zecca's magic religious remedies are available in specialized shops. A journalist who, in 1992, observed what was going on at the *La Arcana* store in the center of San José writes:

The number of people who came into La Arcana during the hour we were there was incredible; mostly women with prescriptions from their witches. Some wanted to attract a specific man, while others wished to discourage a boss who had been harassing them sexually. [...] One very beautiful woman of about 23 asked for the seven perfumes to attract a lover, as well as some mercury. The clerk told me: "That young man will be at the altar in the wink of an eye; if he wants to get out of it he must find a super-witch."

The shop opened in the late 1970s with a stock of 132 perfumes, and now its shelves hold more than 1500, with suggestive names like Harmony, Good Luck, Seven Perfumes, Seven Machos, Road Opener, Get Away from Me and Rain of Money. To keep a husband from straying it offers Stay at Home, to be rubbed on the soles of his shoes.³⁹³

When asked what a spiritual counselor could do to help a woman suffering from domestic violence, Zapparoli Zecca replied that the limit of the effectiveness of spiritual counselors is the free will of the people concerned. The counselors can gradually influence people, but not fundamentally change them:

There is free will. I can't change you. So, they [...] can soften a person's character. But they can't change him. [...] I can take a plastic bottle, write the person's name on it, put honey in it and put it in the freezer. I'll freeze him and make him sweet, so

³⁹² Interview no. 59, 06/02/2015.

³⁹³ Luis Fernando Mata, "Brujas", *Revista Perfil*, November 1992, 21-29, quoted from Biesanz/Biesanz/Biesanz 1999, 243.

he won't bother me again. But change his behavior that he has beaten me and will no longer beat me, that not.³⁹⁴

Representatives of the official Catholic Church generally refrain from positioning themselves vis-à-vis the practices of the spiritual counselors. Zapparoli Zecca attributed this to the fact that the latter did not provoke direct confrontation, but worked clandestinely:

The Catholic Church [...] does not interfere. [...] It may happen that a sermon says [...] that the Bible says that witchcraft comes from the devil and stuff like that. No, not at all. And besides, we're not telling around. [...] There are many people who go [i.e. to the spiritual counselors] and don't like to say it, because [...] [other people could think or say]: "Who knows what they're doing", or "what they're doing to the husband" or such things.³⁹⁵

This statement is confirmed by the priest of the parish of *Corazón de Jesús* in Alajuela. He was aware of Catholics making use of forms of lay religiosity not recognized by the Church. Although he rejected it, he showed understanding for the reasons for this behavior:

There are people who resort to such practices. [...] Why are they looking for this kind of help? [...] Because of the problems they have. [...] I admonish them that we have the greatest medicine in God. [...] People resort to it out of ignorance and [...] sometimes out of despair. [...] They don't know where they are going, and then they see a way out.³⁹⁶

So, while those who represented the official Catholic Church and those who represented lay religiosity, some of which is officially recognized and some not officially recognized, predominantly acted in mutual tacit agreement, the relationship between these two groups and members of Pentecostal churches and communities was completely different.

³⁹⁴ Interview No. 59, 06/02/2015.

³⁹⁵ Interview No. 59, 06/02/2015.

³⁹⁶ Interview No. 59, 07/02/2015.

10. The Pentecostal Perspective

Demarcation strategies of Evangelical Pentecostal women against Catholicism included a negative assessment of the competence of clerics, in dealing with family conflicts and the associated spiritual suffering. They compared their own negative experiences with contrasting positive experiences they had eventually made in this regard in Pentecostal churches. This is the statement of an informant:

Since I was 17 years old, [...] I went to priests with all my problems. [...] But they never welcomed me properly and didn't let me enter the center, they let me sit in a storeroom and said, "Yes, I will pray for you." That's all he told me. [...] I had the feeling that there was no help for me there. And later I realized there was a lot of help when I came to church, to the CCVN. There [...] we received much help, much growth and much advice.³⁹⁷

Another informant, who had suffered from being maltreated by her husband until his death, described her search for help, which first led her from the Catholic Church to the so-called witchcraft and finally to a Pentecostal church:³⁹⁸

How do you get to know God? Every time you have problems. [...] Problems with the husband. I went to the Catholic Church, to a priest, because my husband drank too much and was very violent and very jealous and very macho. [...] I prayed to the saints. [...] And I went to the priest. [...] And what did he tell me? [...] He told me, "If Julio has been like this for 60 years, who will change him?" [...] That discouraged me so much. [...] And thank God I came to this house of prayer, [...] to meet someone to ask and find an answer. [...] [I had sought help] even with sorcerers. [...] When you're desperate. [...] I searched like crazy, everywhere. And then the moment came when I came to this girl, [...] and this woman was a blessing to me.³⁹⁹

For both informants, the added value of Pentecostalism over official Catholicism and lay religiosity, was its handling of family conflicts and emotional suffering. The second informant reported that her husband mistreated her even after her conversion. Consequently, her Pentecostal supporter was just as unable to change him as the priests and so-called sorcerers had been before. Nevertheless, her situation changed.

Evangelical Pentecostals judged the practices of lay religiosity officially recognized by the Catholic Church, as well as the practices not officially recognized, as pacts with the devil, and were convinced that a destructive power emanated from them. They attributed the fire in an Evangelical church to the fact that a so-called witch had lived in the neighborhood. Catholic Pentecostals also criticized recognized as well as unrecognized practices of Catholic lay

³⁹⁷ Interview no. 44, 05/07/2015.

³⁹⁸ Chesnut describes similar processes of the search for help in Brazil that lead from Catholicism and Umbanda to Pentecostalism; cf. Chesnut 2003b, 2011.

³⁹⁹ Interview no. 43, 04/28/2015.

religiosity. Their negative judgement on recognized practices was clear, but more cautious than their judgement on non-recognized practices. Some Pentecostals, who had made use of practices known as witchcraft before their conversion, stated that they had always felt uncomfortable with it, but only understood after conversion that the real reason for being uncomfortable was the diabolical origin of the practices. The following two quotes are from informants who belonged to Evangelical Pentecostal churches and, before their conversion, had experienced practices of recognized and unrecognized lay religiosity. The first one grew up with her grandmother, who she described as both a convinced Catholic and a spiritual counselor. Her report illustrates the blending of officially recognized practices of Catholic lay religiosity with those that cross the boundaries of the officially recognized. On the house altar of her grandmother there were pictures of spiritual masters like Moreno Cañas standing next to pictures of saints, and all of these depicted received what, according to tradition, motivated them to help. So, she or her grandmother always placed a glass of water for Moreno Cañas between the candles for the saints. The grandmother was visited by women for whom she read the hand and egg whites. She went into a trance to let others speak through her and communicated with the deceased. In order to protect her granddaughter from the evil eye, she prepared baths with vegetable ingredients and prayed and tied bracelets with red beans round her wrists. At the same time, she had been actively involved in the Catholic congregation. She had told her granddaughter that she would inherit these spiritual gifts from her. Looking back, she now explained the religious behavior of her grandmother with being deceived by the devil, who had made her believe that what she did was pleasing to God:

My grandmother was on the one hand very, very Catholic, with many saints, so, she had a table, she called it the table of the saints, there were many Madonnas and saints and all that, she had always lit them candles, [...] between these saints she had pictures of masters who she called Master Ali, Master Moreno Cañas, they were her spiritual guides. [...] Other women [...] visited my grandmother, and she read their hand, [...] took an egg white [...] and read it. [...] She went into a trance and began to speak, once I even heard her speak like a man, speak in other languages, speak Italian, speak something like Chinese, [...] strange languages she didn't know. [...] My mother was dead and so was my grandfather, and she communicated a lot with them, she communicated with the dead, and she told me: "Your mother says this or that." [...] She prepared me many baths with strange plants and prayers and things, [...] she let me bathe in this water and said, that's to fend off the evil eye. [...] She said I would inherit the gifts from her. Small bracelets with small red beans, [...] which had a symbol, [...] which she tied around my hand. [...] She was a leader in the Catholic Church. [...] When I was nine, ten years old, I was praying the rosary, with all the litany, [...] so I was invited to pray the rosary to the baby Jesus. [...] This is strongly mixed up with religion, it causes a lot of confusion, I have the feeling that this is what happened to my grandmother, as she believed in the Catholic Church, [...] she was very religious, [...] but with all that stuff with all those saints, [...] it was part of her religion. [...] She practiced all this as part of the Catholic religion. She had the feeling that it was all good, right, and that it pleased God. So,

it was this deception. [...] In the case of my grandmother, it was a mixture of extremely strong religiosity, which also belongs to it, [...] the deception of the enemy, but she practiced all these things within the Catholic framework as part of her religion.⁴⁰⁰

The informant quoted below cited marital and financial problems as reasons for consulting witches and sorcerers. They had given her various means to end her husband's promiscuity, renew their marital love and alleviate the financial distress. Looking back, she stated that all these attempts had not helped, because they had only given the devil stronger influence and could have had an increasingly destructive effect. It was only as a result of the conversion that their marriage was healed, because rejecting witchcraft and turning to God had undermined the influence of the devil so that God could work constructively and heal what the devil had destroyed. But when two of her sons became addicted to drugs, she again sought help in witchcraft, until it was revealed to her that this prevented God from working, so that she disposed of a remedy that a sorcerer had given her to heal one of the sons. This had made the healing of the son possible:

I had three children, and my husband maltreated me very badly. I didn't know God, so I began to visit [...] places of witchcraft to fix my marriage. [...] Sometimes my husband was unfaithful to me, so I went to witches to do something for me. When I found a photo of any woman, I took it to a witch to do something, and she sent me to buy mercury, get cemetery earth and black needles. [...] She gave it to me, covered in a piece of cloth, and I buried it. I only did this once to remove a woman who my husband had met. Then, on other occasions, I was instructed [...] to attach a piece of paper with the husband's name under the sole of my foot, so that he would always be with me, so that my husband would submit to me. But maybe for two days my husband was tender and then things [...] became even more difficult. [...] We were very poor. [...] I worked as much as I could in the house and my husband worked as a bus driver, and sometimes he even asked me to request a witch to provide something to spray on the bus so people would get on. And sometimes we'd go together to a sorcerer to fix the marriage, when he noticed we were on the verge/ because we argued a lot, and they gave us a perfume to wear. A terrible stench. And that made things worse. We were instructed to cut lemons crosswise and place them under the bed, to place water glasses under the bed. None of this worked, nothing, nothing. [...] Sometimes we were read tarot cards, [...] and the future was predicted to us, and we got a lucky charm to put in our pockets so that we would have enough money. [...] Then we both came to the Lord, [...] there was prayer for us, for our marriage, and we got to know God's Word. [...] Two of my sons [...] had alcohol and drug problems. These were ten very hard years in which I, knowing God's Word, [...] felt that God was not answering [...] and I fell back into witchcraft. I consulted them again to see if they had an answer to get my sons out of there. [...] Once they gave me a water with herbs to give them. [...] Every day I expected my son to come to give him a spoonful of the medicine in his juice. [...] One morning when I was praying, [...] I said to the Lord, "Lord, please, get my son off the drugs," and the Lord said to me, "The problem is, you have two masters." [...] I didn't understand, and the next morning I prayed again and the Lord said to me: "The problem is, you have two masters, I can't do anything." And I said to him: "What do you want me

⁴⁰⁰ Interview no. 74, 07/13/2015.

to do? Who is the other lord?" And the Lord showed me the bottle of medicine that I gave him [i.e. the son]. So, I went, took it with me, threw it away, and two weeks later my son decided to go to a center to be healed.⁴⁰¹

While Catholic Pentecostals emphasize their affiliation to the official Catholic Church, they vehemently criticize lay religiosity, especially so-called witchcraft.

Following on from the reports presented, the question arises as to what led to the informants finally finding help and healing in Pentecostalism, following the experiences described as disappointing with people representing the official Church and lay religiosity.

⁴⁰¹ Interview no. 80, 07/18/2015.

11. Conclusions

There is a wide spectrum of positions within the Catholic Church beyond the RCC, on how to contribute to spiritual healing of those, especially women, seeking help. While one priest did not see the need for spiritual healing, another did. The *Cursillos in Christianity* movement took up key terms of the Pentecostal healing discourse. The national Director of Women's Pastoral Ministry tried to reshape Women's Pastoral Ministry with episcopal agreement, in line with central principles of the Pentecostal healing discourse. It remains to be seen in which way Pentecostal elements in general, and the Pentecostal healing discourse in particular, will leave their imprint on the Catholic Church in Costa Rica beyond the RCC, and whether one can speak of an "incipient Pentecostalization"⁴⁰² of Costa Rican Catholicism.

The lay religiosity depicted, combines practices officially recognized by the Catholic Church with unrecognized practices. The boundaries between the officially recognized and the unrecognized are fluid. Lay religiosity aims at solving emotional, health and financial problems, the specialists of which are considered to be Catholics with special spiritual gifts, who describe themselves predominantly as spiritual counselors and are often referred to as witches, not only by Pentecostals. The spiritual counselors work therapeutically by facilitating conversations, seriously addressing personal problems and regrets, interpreting them and offering practical solutions through acts of purification and protection. In this way, they create a feeling of control, patience and confidence in those seeking help.

Reports about priests who did not perceive emotional needs were part of the demarcation narrative of Pentecostal women from the Catholic Church. With regard to spiritual counselors however, women who now belonged to Pentecostal churches reported that they had perceived their emotional needs, but they regarded their solution strategies as ineffective. So, what are the similarities and differences between the lay religiosity and the Pentecostal healing discourse? The trigger for consulting a spiritual counselor, as well as for consulting a Pentecostal counselor, is usually a crisis situation due to emotional, health or financial problems. Acute emotional crises of women are often connected with being abandoned or abused by the partner, with promiscuity or abusive alcohol consumption by the partner or conflicts with the children. A spiritual counselor, like a Pentecostal counselor, enables a conversation, which for the first time offers many women the opportunity to put into words and reflect emotions and experiences. A spiritual counselor, like a Pentecostal counselor, attributes the problems to the

⁴⁰² Egeris Thorsen 2015.

workings of negative spiritual powers, thereby freeing those involved from guilt. In order to solve the problems, in both instances positive spiritual powers are called upon to defeat the negative ones. What distinguishes the lay religious and the Pentecostal healing approach in dealing with these problems, are the aims and the methods to help achieving these goals. While lay-religious practices aim at a change of conditions, Pentecostal practices of inner healing aim for an inner change of the person and a changed approach to the conditions. While lay religious practices are limited to specific acts of symbolic purification and symbolic protection, the Pentecostal healing system, especially in the context of spiritual healing, also makes use of acts of symbolic purification and symbolic protection, but offers also an extensive repertoire of pastoral-psychotherapeutic methods. The question of payment also distinguishes spiritual counselors from Pentecostal counselors. Spiritual counselors, unlike Pentecostal counselors, are usually paid for their counseling services. But since belonging to a Pentecostal church is also connected with financial demands, this does not seem to be the decisive difference. It is the therapeutic approach that makes the difference. Thus, Zapparoli Zecca's statement that spiritual counselors cannot fundamentally change violent husbands, corresponds with reports of Pentecostal women, who especially in relation to this problem explained that witches had helped them just as little as priests, while in the end they had found help in a Pentecostal church, although with the help of Pentecostal supporters it often does not either, and if it does, then it does not immediately succeed in cases of spouses overcoming their misconduct. Consequently, the special feature of the Pentecostal healing discourse in the context examined, is primarily the pragmatic conviction that it is necessary to change yourself and your own handling of the conditions, in order to activate resources, to find options for action, and to be able to influence the situation. It is secondly an extensive pastoral-psychotherapeutic repertoire of methods, which can help to serve the implementation of this conviction.

Part Four: Evaluation of Results

12. Key Findings

12.1 Inner Healing and Agency

Research into the question of the attractiveness of Pentecostalism for women in Latin America, repeatedly takes for granted a dualistic concept of agency, according to which women have just two possibilities when facing patriarchal concepts: either to submit to them or to rebel against them. Starting from this basic conviction, the observation that patriarchal gender roles are strengthened, but also overcome or transformed in Pentecostalism, has often been described as being a paradox.⁴⁰³ Furthermore, on the basis of a functionalist understanding of religion, the effects of Pentecostalism on women were regarded as their motivation to convert. A popular answer for the appeal of Pentecostalism lies in its emancipatory potential. These arguments are based on a naturalization of the subject's freedom and autonomy, which leads to possibilities of thought and action that do not correspond to the binarity of submission and subversion being ignored. However, relations and structures of power are essential conditions for becoming a subject. Apart from these it is not possible to act.⁴⁰⁴ Within these, norms can be consolidated or resignified⁴⁰⁵ as well as experienced, occupied and lived in, in a variety of ways.⁴⁰⁶ Based on this conviction, this study researched how women in Costa Rica experienced Pentecostal convictions beyond the dualism mentioned above, and what resources and options for action were made available to them, in order to understand the transformative power of the Pentecostal discourse for them. With this aim in mind, concepts and practices of Pentecostal women were precisely perceived and analyzed, in order to reconstruct their belief structures and to show how they interpret their own experiences.

The first of two central results of this study is that the transformative power of Pentecostalism for women in the context studied derives from the healing discourse, primarily from that part of the healing discourse called inner healing. Provided agency is not regarded as a synonym for resistance against being dominated in a relationship, but as an ability to act with a specific intention, plan and desire within a specific historical relationship of subordination, the

⁴⁰³ Cf. especially Martin 2001; also Drogus 1997; Mariz/das Dores Campos Machado 1997; Burdick 1998; Montecino/Obach 2001; Lorentzen/Mira 2005; English de Alminana 2016.

⁴⁰⁴ Cf. Foucault 1978, 1980, 1983.

⁴⁰⁵ Cf. Butler 1990, 1997.

⁴⁰⁶ Cf. Mahmood 2012, esp. 22f.

experience of inner healing enables agency: It creates options of how to act. These options for action and the convictions and practices on which they are based, are summarized below.

A fundamental conviction of the healing discourse is that humans are a three-part composite of body, soul and spirit, which interact with one another. Because pneumo-psychosomatic etiologies are attributed to various types of suffering, methods of spiritual, mental and physical healing are combined in healing practice. In the given context, healing emotional suffering caused by experiences of physical, psychological and sexual violence, was the focus of pastoral and therapeutic activities with women as well as of the informants' reports. Another fundamental conviction is that it is necessary to change yourself in order to change your life situation, and that this in turn requires reconciliation with yourself and your biography. Comprehensive reconciliation is to be achieved by forgiving the misconduct of others and of yourself, and by transforming the self-concept. Forgiveness plays a central role in the healing process: Its success is regarded as decisive for replacing personally and socially destructive emotions and behaviors with constructive ones. Therefore, the aim of various pastoral and therapeutic methods is to enable forgiveness. The transformation of the self-concept is aided by an awareness of God's love by reinterpreting the own biography, experiencing a positive sense of community and identifying the own abilities. It is said that the decision to forgive also affects the self-concept, as the experience of liberating yourself through an active decision from being emotionally stuck with the perpetrator, is interpreted as an experience of self-efficacy and control that contributes to overcoming acquired helplessness. In many cases, the transformed self-concept is also acquired through adopting a Marianist female image: As a result of this, traditionally female spheres of activity are upgraded in the eyes of the women themselves and in the eyes of others.

Once reconciliation with oneself has taken place through comprehensive forgiveness and the transformation of the self-concept, this, according to Pentecostal belief, leads to overcoming personal and socially destructive emotions and behavior patterns and, as a result, in many cases to transformed relationships. In addition, some of the pastoral and therapeutic counselors support women seeking help to develop practical behavioral and communication strategies in dealing with husbands, children, with other people, or with material goods such as finance. There is nothing to suggest that the healing practices inhibit women in their effort to overcome

private conflict, or lead away from sociopolitical commitment.⁴⁰⁷ Rather, they give them an emotional basis from which practical options for action can develop.

To interpret the experiences of Pentecostal women in Alajuela on the basis of the binarity of submission and subversion would mean not perceiving their aims. It is not their aim to prevail over the authority of their husbands, as they do not criticize their authority, but the abuse of this authority. Their ideal does not consist in the absence of authority over them, but in a responsible shape of that authority. They do not pursue the goal of subverting patriarchal norms, but their goal is being able to develop their possibilities within the framework of norms. For many women conversion results both in strengthened bonding with their husband, resulting from the conviction that marriage cannot be dissolved according to God's will, which is also connected with subordination; on the other hand it means a strengthened position for them toward their husbands. This strengthening has its source on the one hand in a transformed self-concept, and on the other hand is based on the new resource of spiritual authority. This results from the biblical knowledge acquired in the churches and from their growing ability to argue with the Bible and theology; it has a constructive effect when confronting the partner, as they both share the Christian tradition of authority and do not question the Christian truths in which the women take part through their personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Thus, the Catholic tradition of authority leads the majority of men – even those who criticize or mock their wives' churches and their commitment – not to question basic Christian assumptions, such as the existence, power and judgment of God, the authority of the Bible and the existence and power of the devil, and to interpret it as a spiritual risk to disregard the moral and spiritual superiority of their wives.⁴⁰⁸ Although the position of women in relation to their partners is strengthened in some respects as a result of their conversion, gaining power over the partner is not the aim of their conversion. Neither is the question of gender hierarchy in general the focus of their attention. Concepts of patriarchy are the normative framework of their way of life in the context researched, both before and after their conversion; the role of the husband as head in a marriage relationship is not queried. The question of how a marriage relationship can succeed, and what responsibility both spouses bear for it however, is considered to be more central than the question of hierarchy.

⁴⁰⁷ Contrary to Cordero 2003 and Calderón 2015.

⁴⁰⁸ Cf. on the shared tradition of authority as a power resource for Muslim women in Egypt Mahmood 2012, 178. Cf. on the widespread recognition of Christian basic assumptions in Costa Rica as a result of the Catholic tradition of authority Kessler 1995, 21.

Research of the religious context of Pentecostalism in Costa Rica, which is primarily characterized by the official Catholic Church and the Catholic lay religiosity, including the so-called witchcraft, confirms that the specific feature of the Pentecostal healing discourse, which is experienced as transformative, is first of all the conviction that it is necessary to change your own person, in order to come to a changed handling of the conditions, and secondly the pastoral-psychotherapeutic repertoire of methods, which serve to implement this conviction. Whether and to what extent this approach increasingly finds its way into the Catholic Church beyond the RCC remains to be seen and is a matter of future research.

12.2 Discursive entanglements

Negotiation processes and identity politics that were studied as part of a genealogical contextualization⁴⁰⁹ form the self-understanding of rival church groups. It was shown to what extent sedimented demarcation practices⁴¹⁰ led to the majority of Evangelical and Catholic Pentecostals not perceiving existing similarities in the discourse, which can be traced back to interactions in the context of the charismatic renewal movement and beyond. Binary conceptualization of *cristiano* (Christian) / *evangélico* (Evangelical) versus *religioso* (religious) / *católico* (Catholic) also has an effect on academic studies of Latin American Pentecostalism, in that entangled histories and the resulting similarities in the discourse between Evangelical and Catholic Pentecostalism are hardly perceived. This research, however, looked at the processes leading to the present local healing discourse. The second central finding of this study is that the local Pentecostal healing discourse is the result of cross-denominational interactions at both local and global level. The extensive repertoire of pastoral and psychotherapeutic methods was created by Evangelical and Catholic practitioners of inner healing, exchanging their experiences, adopting methods from each other, adapting them to their context, combining them and in this way transforming them.

The dominance of the healing discourse with a focus on inner healing is the central feature of the Pentecostal discursive network in the context researched. Participation in this discourse connects Catholic and Evangelical Pentecostals and distinguishes both Evangelical Pentecostals from Evangelical non-Pentecostals, and members of the RCC from other Catholics. With regard to the basis of the genealogy of the healing discourse it was shown that first of all “Pentecostal” is a cross-denominational category, and that secondly the Catholic Church is not to be

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. Bergunder 2014, 269-273; 2018, 211-215; Maltese 2015, 79.

⁴¹⁰ Cf. Maltese 2017, 359.361.430 and others.

understood as a passive recipient of Pentecostalizing by Evangelical churches, but that the form of the Pentecostal discourse is the result of mutual influences.

13. Implications

13.1 Research on Pentecostalism

Using the example of Costa Rican Pentecostalism, it has been shown that essential definitions of “Pentecostal” or “Evangelical” do not serve in perceiving specific interests of different groups as well as synchronous and diachronous connections between them. Nevertheless, they are widespread in research on Costa Rican Pentecostalism⁴¹¹ as well as in research on Pentecostalism in general, if, for example, Pentecostalism is defined as “Evangelical renewal movement”⁴¹², and if criteria of “Pentecostal” or “Evangelical” are understood as depicting “family resemblance[s]”.⁴¹³ The statement that Pentecostalism is a heterogeneous movement, is part of the consensus of research on Pentecostalism, and yet “no serious consequences have been drawn from it”.⁴¹⁴ An approach focusing on historicity, however, which understands “Pentecostal” and “Evangelical” as terms filled with specific contents by different people who pursue specific aims, and which understands Pentecostalism as a global discourse, makes it possible to do justice to the heterogeneity, contingency and fluidity of Pentecostalism. This means for research on Pentecostalism that political dynamics at the local level as well as involvements in global processes, must be taken into account in order to study connections and negotiation processes between different groups, and to classify the resulting discursive developments. This approach corresponds to “a genealogical and ethnographic reconstruction which explores Pentecostal slogans and narratives based on their present usage concerning their historical development, and inserts them into the specific context”.⁴¹⁵ The application of such a reconstruction in various regions would make it possible “to relate majority practice and deviations within the worldwide Pentecostal movement to each other in such a way that this would also enable to present an overall view of global Pentecostalism.”⁴¹⁶

13.2 Feminist Theology

For feminist and gender-conscious theology, this research is a challenge, as is the analysis of religious movements for feminist researchers in general. For feminist and gender-conscious theologians, the observation that women within Pentecostalism actively support a movement that represents principles of female subordination, provides a dilemma, because this behavior

⁴¹¹ Cf. Valverde 1991; Bastian/Fanger/Wehr/Werz 2000; Calderón 2015. This also applies where similarities will be observed between Protestants and Catholics, see Steigenga 2001; Dawley 2018.

⁴¹² Köhrsen 2017, 133.

⁴¹³ Anderson 2010, 15.17.26.

⁴¹⁴ Maltese 2017, 612.

⁴¹⁵ Maltese 2017, 613.

⁴¹⁶ Maltese 2017, 614.

seems to contradict a presumed natural striving for liberation. Heike Walz' statement shows that the debate with regard to this dilemma has been mainly avoided so far: "A completely unresearched field is how theological gender studies react to fundamentalist, evangelical and conservative theologies".⁴¹⁷ She asks: "Is dialogue possible here, even if both sides will hardly assume that the other side could also be right?"⁴¹⁸ Such a dialogue could be promoted by trying to understand the meaning of Pentecostalism from the perspective of Pentecostal women themselves. However, a feminist theology that advocates a dualistic concept of agency, understanding striving for liberation from norms as natural, cannot perceive, let alone take seriously, options of interpreting and acting within patriarchal norms beyond the dualism of resistance and subjugation. Such a concept will only allow two options, either rejecting the Pentecostalism outlined in this research as an instrument of a patriarchal ideology, or showing to what extent women belonging to Pentecostal churches exercise resistance, even though they do not justify their behavior in a feminist way. Mary McClintock Fulkerson for example, identifies a clandestine resistance in the explicitly submissive attitudes of female Pentecostal preachers of the Church of God (Cleveland); the way it is expressed she explains with their social upbringing as marginalized members of the working class.⁴¹⁹ This interpretation, however, does not do justice to the concerns of the people researched any more than does Brusco's analysis of Pentecostal women in Colombia, which she declares to be secret feminists.⁴²⁰ Postcolonial feminist theology criticizes limiting feminist theology to the perspective of women from the North Atlantic region; its merit is to include perspectives from other regions of the world in the feminist theological discourse,⁴²¹ but both postcolonial feminist theology and the gender-conscious theology which questions the binarity of gender with reference to Butler,⁴²² retain the dualism of oppression and subversion. Therefore, the question has to be put to feminist and gender-conscious theology, how it relates to women who describe themselves as non-feminist, without either attributing to them their own aims or denying them agency. There is an urgent need to enter into a dialogue that aims at enabling mutual understanding, in order to answer this question.

⁴¹⁷ Walz 2008, 32.

⁴¹⁸ Walz 2008, 32.

⁴¹⁹ Cf. McClintock Fulkerson 1996.

⁴²⁰ Cf. Brusco 1993, 1995, 2010.

⁴²¹ Cf. among others Dube 2013; Pui Lan 2013; cf. the overview in Tiplady Higgs 2017.

⁴²² Cf. Karle 2006; Wendel 2010.

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C. Maps

1. Costa Rica



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2. The city and districts of Alajuela

