Making Space for God: Born Again Identity, Youthful Belonging, and Difference in London's Global Churches

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I Thomas Fearon declare that this thesis and the work presented is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, or reproduced photographs, this is clearly stated.

For the two things that can

be true at the same time.

Abstract

Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity is thriving in the UK, especially in London. This research focuses on Pentecostal-Charismatic churches catering to young people in the capital and focuses on what they reveal about globalisation, histories of migration and African diasporic experiences. Taking born-again faith and its lived experience seriously, the research explores how young Christians invite God to work in their lives and how they do so by engaging with global forms of Christianity in local contexts. It traces how young people cultivate knowledge, ethical orientations, and practical religious dispositions that allow them to experience their relationship with God as embodied and transformative. The thesis works with the notion of "making space for God" to think about how young people use their faith to contest religious and diasporic heritage, articulate future aspirations, and worship the Holy Spirit sensually on their own terms, making spaces for God in the process. As the children of mostly Black African parents, the young people use faith to challenge reified markers of identity such as 'race', ethnicity, and culture. In doing so they redefine these categories. Their faith allows them to articulate difference at the intersection of religion and diaspora, transforming themselves and finding new forms of belonging in the process.

The thesis contributes to the literature on the Anthropology of Christianity, particularly in global contexts, where the interplay between continuity and discontinuity shapes religious horizons and identities. Further, it contributes to conversations concerning African diasporas in the UK by exploring how youth can become important social shifters in complicating existing narratives concerning the relationship between Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity and diaspora in the UK.

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I prayed in the final months of writing this thesis. Not because it's something I usually do but because I had exhausted all other ideas. I hope I did it with enough sincerity. Without the guidance and love of the young people who willingly invited me into their churches I'm not sure if I would really know the true comfort that a prayer can bring.

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Contents

Introduction

“You have to make space for God”, Pastor Katie’s eyes lifted from the road momentarily and looked up at me through the rear-view mirror. We were on our way from London to a university campus in the south of England for an event named ‘Success Motivation’ and in response to my passing mention of the early start on a Saturday morning, Pastor Emma began explaining to me the need to make sacrifices to let God into your life. In the car I was joined by two more members of the Christ Love campus church fellowship. At events like ‘Success Motivation' members of the campus church network across the south of England come together for a programmed event that was intended to motivate student members in their upcoming exams by encouraging them to draw on the power of God.

As I strained to listen to the conversation between Pastor Katie and Brother Daniel in the front seats, I began to contemplate what Pastor Katie meant by ‘making space for God’. Next to me was Brother Abraham, almost oblivious to the excitement coming from the front seats. Instead, he was engrossed in Bible passages on his mobile phone. He was due to share a testimony about the work of God in his own university studies, an opportunity to thank God for his results, and wanted to ensure that he referred to the correct passages. Abraham was making his person and personal space for God. As we journeyed towards our destination, stopping briefly at a MacDonalds, the anticipation for the event was building. At various moments during the conversation, Pastor Katie shouted “Praise God”, which meant her sharing with the rest of the car her relationship with the Holy Spirit and the work of God in her life. I listened intently and in doing so realised her words were also making the car a space for God.

At this point in 2017 I had only met Brother Abraham just a few months previously, when I was sitting in Goldsmiths University working on yet another iteration of my PhD’s funding proposal. I wanted to explore the role of Christianity, particularly Pentecostal and Charismatic forms, among young people of African heritage. Abraham had approached me, sat down, and begun to engage in convivial small talk. Somehow, before he even mentioned it, I sensed that he wanted to talk to me about his faith. However, rather than politely rebuff his proselytization, this time I was keen to speak. It was in

response to Abraham's invitation that I had begun attending services with a university fellowship, Christ Love, based at another university in London.

The event and service we were on our way to attend on the south coast with Pastor Katie seemed unlike the regular Sunday and mid-week services I had been attending up until this point. Such special events that happened around every six weeks, and ranged from events focused on university studies, 'Sex Education', Mental Health and Wellbeing, and seemed to galvanise members into further ministry participation and the expectation that they would receive wisdom, encouragement, insight or knowledge through their spiritual endeavours and encounters with the Holy Spirit as a focus. As I came to realise throughout my time with Christ's Love, and another youth and student church, Disciple Church, special events like these dictate the rhythm and tempo of spiritual life for church members. Participation and dedication to church life is an opportunity for them to 'grow' their faith, to build relationships with God and with each other, making space for God in the process.

We arrived at the south coast university along with other members of the congregation who had travelled by coach and train from as far as Coventry and Norwich. As I expected, most of the attendees were young people from a range of African backgrounds. The service consisted of a universal message of faith, of the power of God's work in the lives of the young worshippers, and from the Pastors came a promise- that if members put their faith in God, if they developed a relationship with the Holy Spirit, then their university studies would be a success.

During this and other events and services, congregants read scriptures, worship, pray- in tongues- and lay hands. For members of Christ Love there is an abundant focus on becoming, being, and maintaining a born-again identity, that transcends, eschews, transforms, and refuses other markers of identity. What I came to realise is that my initial intent to focus on the dynamics of faith among young people in and of African diasporas in the UK required an understanding that for this younger generation, the children of the African diasporas, faith means and does something different to their parent's generation- at least in the way it has been presented previously by anthropologists and sociologists.

During my early days in the field, I was challenged and surprised by the way in which members of Christ Love articulated spiritual subjectivities that were central to their senses of self, suggesting new formations of faith, self, and identity within the unfolding story of diaspora. Although these young people are many things, their faith was foregrounded above any other aspects of identity. The performance of this God given identity, one in which they are born again, 'a new creature', 'filled with the Spirit', 'never to remain the same' became abundantly clear throughout the service and many others I have attended.

Rupture, transformation, and the subjective and temporal breaks they encourage are well studied by scholars and are a well-developed paradigm in the now highly established anthropology of Christianity (c.f. Meyer 1999, Robbins 2003, 2007, Daswani 2015). However, when approaching – sometimes imposing- the subject of identity, culture, ethnicity, and 'race' I was often surprised by the myriad ways that young church members refuted my line of questioning, repeating that they are not 'this' or 'that' but they are Christian. This thesis then takes those articulations of self and identity as a starting point to consider the ways in which the young Christians make space for God. In doing so I consider how making space for God is both an act of ethical self-making, poesies, and performance, but also a form of globally oriented Christian participation within a framework of what the young people and their churches imagine as being born again. Making space for God means many things, but within the context of youthful and diasporic self-making, it takes on political and ethical resonance as the young people challenge normative understandings of identity, Blackness, and the diasporic- all categories the significance of which cannot simply be assumed as given.

For the young people discussed in this thesis, being a member of either of the two churches where I carried out fieldwork- Christ Love, the youth and student arm of a global Charismatic church, Christ Embassy, based out of Nigeria; and Disciple Church, the youth and student arm of United Denominations (formerly known as Lighthouse Chapel International), another global church, based out of Ghana- being born-again informs both their understandings of self and their place in the world.

The focus on how born-againess is achieved and sustained is different in the two churches but within the context of Black British youth, most of whom here are the children of African migrants, their participation in these global religious movements allows them to articulate and cultivate difference and a self-proclaimed distinctiveness as being born again. It is an alterity to a range of positionalities they are often expected to inhabit by outsiders, and initially by myself. Throughout fieldwork I learned that they do not define themselves as 'Black', 'African diasporic' or according to their particular cultural heritage. In this thesis I show the ways in which their transforming, distancing from, and refusals of normative categories is both informed by born-againess and productive of born-again subjectivity.

For the young people, their political agendas are only sometimes explicit and categorical refusal works within the discourses, language, and material experience of born-again faith. Instead, questions concerning how to develop an embodied and ethical relationship with God, how best to participate in their church fellowship through ministry, and how to live their everyday lives as young people in London with the Holy Spirit guiding their choices, informs their social worlds. At the same time the cultural forms of the global church ministries and of charismatic forms of Christian faith enable them to challenge existing cultural norms that are centred around secular notions of culture, 'race', and ethnicity, that they must also navigate as young people living in and of diaspora. They navigate these social and cultural expectations and realities *with faith* and in doing so make spaces and selves with and for God.

Making Space for God

Ironically this piece of research did not start out with the intention of focusing on Christianity. Early conceptions of the project were interested in exploring the future thinking and aspirations of young people from Black British backgrounds in London. As a resident in London for more than 10 years, particularly in South London, home to thriving and diverse African and Caribbean diasporas, I wanted

to pay attention to the ways that young people navigate diaspora, generation and belonging, and how they are well positioned to produce and inhabit new and future oriented cultural forms. My interests and questions arose in response to my experience of being a student of anthropology in these areas of the city and my increasing frustration with the disconnect between the space of liberal university education and influx of majority-white elite classes into well-stablished Black African and Caribbean neighbourhood, especially in Lewisham, Southwark, and Lambeth (all in south London). I also wanted to learn more about the city space I shared with fellow Londoners and think about how the city informs particular social relation in and through space.

While thinking about the way in which young people might produce the cultural forms to imagine and inhabit alternative futures and challenge forms of representation, the literature on Pentecostal rupture, and transformation (Daswani 2010) as well as the future horizons that open through Charismatic, Pentecostal, and Evangelical participation (Crapanzano 2003) provided the conceptual tools to begin unpacking some of my initial questions. Not long afterwards, I was approached by Brother Abraham in our university refectory. It is almost as though Christianity, particularly its Charismatic forms, found its way into my horizon due to the ways that Charismatic faith demands to be seen and heard. There were several other serendipitous moments and encounters with Christianity, such as being stopped in the street by young and Black Christians and invited to church and suddenly taking notice of an abundance of African and Caribbean (as well as Latin American) churches out of the window of regular bus commutes in the city. Suddenly the presence of Christianity appeared where I had previously ignored it. Not so much a calling, but perhaps an invitation to begin thinking seriously about the presence of Christianity as it seemed to be everywhere I went in the city. In many ways, making space for God, was being asked of me even before I began fieldwork.

Taking Pastor Katie's words, "to make space for God" seriously welcomes a form of spatial thinking that has informed my theoretical and methodological approach to this research. To think spatially allows for a viewpoint that brings into focus the spaces between the worldly and the divine and allows

recognition of the fuzzy, and incomplete work of spiritual and ethical world making. These in-between spaces complicate the binaries between the religious and the secular, as well as this world and the divine. Further, they reveal cultural production of identity and self as a process that works between and against reified categories (Bhabha 1994). For the young church members, embodied relationships with God and the cultivation of a born-again identity allow them to participate in the embodied cultivation of self in the public and political sphere (Mahmood 2004, Hirschkind 2006) and its role in engaging with and producing territorialised transnational and global ontologies, cultures, and spiritualities (Coleman 2000, Robbins 2004a, also Beliso De-Jesus 2015 for critique). Further, and as I also reflect upon throughout this thesis, is how the in-between can become a methodological site to produce ethnographic knowledge at the intersubjective space between subjects, where the materials and language of Charismatic Christianity work to make space where spiritual knowledge can be shared (Harding 1987:174, see also Stoller & Olkes 1987).

Space and the practices that born-again experience encourages, requires my interlocutors to inhabit and act as Christians in the spaces in between. The young Christians in this thesis find themselves located between multiple positionalities. They strive to be born-again while maintaining obligations to secular endeavours at university and work. Also, as young people they represent an experiential position between childhood and adulthood, where youthful concerns and cultural forms inform their experiences as Christians. Further, and key in this thesis, is the way that the young Christians are generationally tied to notions and experiences of diaspora, being the children of African migrants. They must navigate externally applied markers of nation, ethnicity, diaspora, and 'race', as well as the cultural forms normatively associated with these categories, while remaining faithful to the cultural forms of their churches and charismatic Christianity itself. This often creates fruitful frictions between competing and contested cultural forms that emerge within and against notions of diaspora and cultural heritage (discussed in more depth below). The in-between represents what Homi Bhabha (1994) conceptualises as a space where "the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity." Like with a great deal of converts to Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity around the

world, the new horizon of born-again experience sparks a reflexive process of redefining the world according to a new set of morals and standards. For the young Christians, their decision to embrace born-again faith on their own terms encourages them to enter that space in-between, a paradoxical space, where they grapple with being in the world but not being of it either- or as many of the young Christians say, "in the world, but not of it".

Members of the youth and student ministries seek to share their faith with those who are willing pursue it themselves, on university campuses and beyond, basing their faith on the manifold power of the Holy Spirit rather than that of inherited religious doctrine. To be a 'born again' Christian, is preferred over being a 'religious' Christian, something regularly expressed by members as well as Pastors, suggests being and becoming born again is an activity that challenges the category of 'religion' that anthropology takes for granted in that it refuses the category (Asad 1993). Faith is considered a 'relationship' with God, rather than a 'religion'.

After meeting Abraham, I began attending fellowship meetings and services with him and his fellow congregants. I was to spend the best part of three years getting know this congregation and its network of student church fellowships, attending events and meeting up with church members when they had time. Christ Love [1] is a network of student fellowships who meet during the week at different university campuses. In London the network of fellowship joins together on a Sunday and hold service together. This group is part of a much larger global network of campus churches, overseen by an independent neo-Charismatic mega-church and non-denominational (or denomination in itself), Christ Embassy, led by Pastor Chris Oyakhilome, a Nigerian pastor whose popularity for his spiritual teachings and healing services transcends national boundaries, with significant global following particularly in west-Africa, South Africa, North America, and in the UK. In the UK the ministry broadcasts programming on its television channel Loveworld TV and operates a distribution network for the church's teaching material and merchandise (books, CD's DVD's etc.), as well as producing

[1] Anonymised

music and media ‘in-house’. For example, the phenomenally popular Nigerian gospel singer, Sinach, is a member of Pastor Chris’ touring entourage, whose music transcends this denomination.

At the Christ Love the young worshippers themselves develop meaningful relationships with God and the Holy Spirit through the cultivation of embodied disposition whereby they become “filled with the Spirit” and transformed to “never remain the same”. They develop and maintain these spiritual relationships, both vertical and horizontal, through the teachings of Pastor Chris, and fellowship Pastors who consider themselves to be sharing a form of spiritual knowledge that goes beyond carnal or worldly ways of knowing and understanding the world. This allows church members to consider themselves as different to those with whom they share everyday space, at university, at work, or even within their families. As members of the Christ Love ministry, they become part of a nationwide network of campus fellowships and are strongly encouraged to participate in the growth of the church, by holding ministry positions in media, ushering, and choir, while also evangelising on their own campuses to fellow students.

The fellowships are split into ‘cells’ at each university campus where they can gain formal (or sometimes informal) representation through the Student’s Union. Each cell might only consist of a few members, whose responsibility is to grow the cell on their campus. However, on Sundays and for special events, where these fellowships meet, the numbers can swell to around 30 for Sunday services, and over 100 for special events. Throughout this thesis, it may appear that the actions of the young people are parochial, but combined they represent a growing and important movement of young born-again Christians. The university campus is an essential space where the young people can practice their faith and transform the space of the university campus into a place where the Holy Spirit can be sensed and expressed. Lecture theatres used throughout the week, become transformed into a church on a Sunday. The young people use space dynamically to sustain their born-again identities.

The young people themselves present a formal and church-sanctioned expression of faith. I will discuss this in more detail below, but I quickly had to learn and adapt to their ways of speaking and bodily

comportment that were standards of faith expected among the church group. I was encouraged to join in, especially as most people wanted me to eventually realise God for myself. Although there was time for fun and jokes, among this group of young people, the performance of a focused and successful Christian character was equally as important as a relationship with God. Pastors are spoken to with respect and members are often referred to as Brother or Sister. On Sundays, most of the congregation would wear formal dress, suits for men and dresses for women. In many ways the student church mimics the social forms and expectations of Christ Embassy, perhaps even intensifying these standards. Most of the young people who attend Christ Love are from a range of Black African cultural backgrounds, although I did meet congregants from Afro-Caribbean backgrounds and a few members whose parents are from China. Some are international students, whereas the majority are British citizens who were either born in the UK or moved as a young child. Although the church is based out of Nigeria, this church cannot simply be known as a 'Nigerian Church' (something I will discuss more below). Most would have encountered the church either as students or as a child attending Christ Embassy with their family.

The Disciple Church[2] is the youth and student arm of a global Ghanian Pentecostal denomination United Denominations (formerly known as Lighthouse Chapel International) and led by Bishop Dag Heward-Mills. Since the late 1980's Bishop Dag has grown his ministry from its base in Accra, Ghana to one of the largest independent Pentecostal denominations in the world (see Gifford 2004 for discussion of church in Ghana). The headquarters, known as the Quodesh, alongside the Anagkazo bible school, outside of Accra, is also home to the Disciple Church headquarters where Bishop Dag preaches regularly[3]. Like Christ' Love, Disciple Church in the UK, caters for students and is popular with a Black British demographic. However, with a larger base than Christ Love, Disciple Church holds mid-week services for 'workers' so long as they fit into the age bracket of the other members (18-late 20s). On Sundays all the various fellowships based in London meet at a hotel conference room in central

[2] Anonymised
[3] See Reinhardt (2014 & 2017) for ethnographic account of the Anagkazo bible school.

London which adds up to around 300 in attendance. The liturgic focus shares with Christ Love an emphasis on the primacy of the Bible as the word of God. However, what differs in this church, and following the teachings of Bishop Dag, is a focus on discipline and loyalty to the church ministry[4]. Here the Holy Spirit is called upon, rather than dwelling within, suggesting a slightly different "body logics" and embodied relationship with the Holy Spirit (Brahinsky 2012), but this is also not possible without being born-again and declaring Jesus Christ as one's 'Lord and Saviour'.

Church members are strongly encouraged to have a 'ministry', where church members partake in the 'work of the church', and it is considered disloyal not to hold one of these positions. Additionally, members are often expected to attend lay-school, which involves teaching on the Bible, evangelism, and ministry roles such as shepherding (looking after new members). However, the mood of the church, despite its focus on discipline, seems to attract young people for its 'youthful' worship. The music is often upbeat, with a dance group and engaging sermons. Young people often shout out during the service, "Amen", "I feel it!", and there a numerous in-jokes that give this church a sense of being a space for young people.

Despite their differences what make these churches similar is their universal Christian message of salvation and being born-again. By universal Christian message, I take this to mean, following the exclamations of my interlocutors, that salvation transcends worldly experience, and is not limited to a particular group of people, in this life as well as the next. Essentially salvation is for everyone (although it should be noted that LGBT+ identities are often left out of this idea of inclusion). What makes these church ministries particularly interesting here is that they cater for the spiritual needs of young people who are positioned closely to existing African diasporas in the UK, providing guidance on their everyday experiences as young people inhabiting the unique position of being the children of African migrants. As mentioned above, the narrative of youth and diaspora is not always explicit in

[4] Both Christ's Love and Disciple Church maintain networks of dissemination for the teachings of Pastor Chris Oyakhilome and Bishop Dag Heward-Mills, using print and digital media.

both churches, particularly in Christ Love where the format of the regular message and worship follows that of the 'main church', Christ Embassy, although special events cater to the positionalities and everyday experiences of the congregation. However, implicit discourse concerning youthful experiences and the topics of culture, ethnicity and 'race' do appear within the context of how to maintain a born-again relationship with the divine. These discourses again work in the spaces between this world and the divine, enabling the young worshippers to navigate secular society, along with categories of identification with being born again foregrounded in these endeavours.

Aspects of worship and associated discourses pertaining to the regional, cultural, and ethnic leadership of the churches appear in the aesthetic forms of church life. This includes the images of recorded sermons and references to discourses that exist within these diaspora groups. However, for the young people, their negotiation and interpretation of the aesthetics and discourses emerging from their church headquarters in Nigeria and Ghana and within the diasporic base of the wider church membership is navigated according to their positionalities as young people, raised in the UK, and striving for genuine relationships with the divine. This thesis then will discuss the implicit negotiation of culture, ethnicity, and 'race' in the formation of born-again identity.

Considering the importance of maintaining a relationship with God and the Holy Spirit, it becomes an etic question: what does it mean to be born again? Despite and sometimes despite their positionalities and obligations to other aspects of daily life- being raised by African diasporic parents, attending secular university programmes, and navigating the city a young Black Christians. The young worshippers locate themselves in positions continuous, contiguous, adjacent, and in opposition to various positionalities and possibilities, in relation to what Stuart Hall calls the "constitutive outside" of identity and identification. In other words, for the young people discussed in this thesis, much of their everyday action and practice as born-again Christians requires them to work in relation to and sometimes against that which sits outside of the universal notions of faith and to use their understandings of a world filled with the Holy Spirit to transform worldly categories and renderings of

self. For the young people themselves, the question is, how does one transform oneself and the world around, to put God first? This thesis focuses on the practices and participation of the young people, primarily in church contexts. However, the church is not contained to services and following the logic of charismatic Christianity, has the potential to transcend place, to 'spread' in a way that attempts to transform the world (Robbins 2004b).

Thinking spatially allows for the problematisation and transformation of assumed and existing positionalities and categories of identity, which I have learned is one of the major concerns of my interlocutors. As with many other Christians for whom being and becoming born-again marks a transformational rupture, both embodied and temporal, the young Christians work to carve out spaces for God in their own lives, and in response to complex structures and patterns of recognition that afford certain forms of identification over others. For the young Christians I spent time with their unique positionalities as (mostly) the youthful (between 18 and late 20s) children of African migrants, living in a diverse city like London, means their pursuit of a practical and sustained born-again life means they must navigate a path between several social obligations. An ethic of born-again identity allows them to foreground faith as a set of embodied and conceptual tools to navigate the spaces between the worldly and the divine.

Making space for God can be conceptualised on several overlapping scales. Starting from the embodied space of becoming born-again, the young church members cultivate the knowledge, discourse, and comportment of being born-again. The promise of salvation and the production of spiritual difference from 'the world' enables the church members to participate in global flows and networks of born-again Christianity. Within these global flows and scapes church members work to transform the spaces they inhabit as young people. Further, the production of a spiritual difference allows this research to investigate the adjacent spaces of culture, ethnicity, and 'race' where the young Christians in this thesis use their born-again identities to disrupt normative spaces of representation.

Kim Knott's (2005) inquiry into the spatial dimensions of religion begins with the body as a vehicle that moves through space (see also Massey 2005). Taking the relationship between sacred and profane to be a transformative dialectic (Knott 2005), which is enacted through bodily worship. She opens up inquiry into the ways spaces are made for God, both internally within the body, and externally through the spaces of everyday life. Within this frame, the different technologies, techniques, materials, medias, and aesthetic formations which young Christians use to experience and make space and God becomes a central focus of this research. Knott's analysis further disrupts normative understandings of religion as a category by taking note of the way in which the religious and the secular are entangled in and through space (see also Asad 2003). Being a Christian, according to Bandak and Jorgensen can be understood in terms of foregrounds and backgrounds and the various "bundlings, affects, forms, ideologies, and practices" that produce differences for believers (and unbelievers alike) (2012:447). Extending this paradigm for the anthropology of Christianity to include both time and space, (as well as location- which the authors above propose) means this heuristic can take note of the dynamic, shifting, and contested practices and discourses that become articulated as the young Christians strive to foreground their born-again identities and make space for God.

Thinking through the role of born-again experience and practice also encourages an analytic focus on the transformations encouraged within typically secular spaces of the city (Garbin & Strhan 2017). Again, the relationship between rupture and continuity emerges and a dialectic process of becoming for the young Christians. Although, becoming born-again may represent a moment of rupture, for church members, the ethical and tactical work of cultivating and maintaining a spiritual relationship with the divine necessitates working in relation to a set of 'un-spiritual' alternatives that perpetuates the unfolding experience of becoming and remaining born-again in the UK (something I discuss in more detail below). If church members say they will "never remain the same", then the question here becomes; what is the process of cultivating a born-again identity and how forms of transformational practice are encouraged or required? Space can be understood as an ecology of becoming-in the Deleuzian sense- which opens to reveal the non-physical, de-territorialised geographies and terrains

of the non-human and the spiritual. Conceptions of space in this vein speak to what Low (2016), shows in cultural analyses of the production of space, where discourses, ethics, embodied practices, and ontologies converge; in this thesis spatial analysis takes note of spiritual action and experience of these young actors, as well as the frictions, that emerge in and through space.

These spiritual geographies are as real as they are imagined (Said 1979, Anderson 2006) in the way that the transcendental and immanent planes of spiritual experience converge on both global and local planes. Being members of Christ Love and Disciple Church also allow church members to participate in a global community of born-again faith, not only bound by denominational affiliation but with the shared goal of promoting the salvation of the world (Coleman 2000). This of course plays out in the space between the global and the everyday for the young church members. I also consider these practices and orientation to be part of what Katherine McKittrick (2006) calls "Blackened geographies" that represent the role of diasporic cultural forms in formation of Black experience. McKittrick argues:

> *"While the power of transparent space works to position individuals, communities, regions, and nations hierarchically, it is also contestable… What this contestation makes possible are 'Black geographies', which I want to identify as 'the terrain of political struggle itself'" (2006:6).*

These arguments point to the ways that 'race' and Blackness contributes to the formation of spaces and relations within. With this in mind, this thesis takes note of the practices that these young Christians make as also being young Black and British, even as they de-emphasise Blackness in their verbal articulations of self. Being Black, either in majority white spaces, or within majority Black spaces, requires the young Christians to employ various tactics and the articulations of Christianised politics to navigate and make these spaces spiritual- despite the racialised performances and structures of these spaces. Blackened geographies and a way of conceptualising the power embedded

within space also allows this thesis to take note of the way in which global Christian forms are lived and experienced in the city of London in particular (Garbin & Strhan 2017).

In all, the notion of making space for God encapsulates a range of scales as well as scopes. Making this space requires the young people in this thesis to navigate their positionalities, and participation in their church ministries, including the ethical expectations of being born-again. The global, the local, the ethical, the diasporic, the political, and the spiritual converge in space in the young peoples' endeavours to make space for God. In the next section I will survey the existing terrain to show how these youthful movements represent a shift in the narrative of charismatic faith among African diaspora communities in the UK.

(Dis)Locating the question- Location, Terrain, and Context

This research is predominantly concerned with younger members of the west-African diasporas and their contemporaries, most of whom were born in the UK. I explore the complex relationship between youth, faith, aspirations, and heritage within this context. This milieu is further complicated by the generational and spiritual outlooks of my interlocutors that differ from those of their parents' generation due to both spiritual emphasis and everyday concerns. This speaks to the continuities and ruptures promoted by born-again Christianity and the new directions cultivated between existing forms and contexts of Pentecostal and Charismatic faith and the contexts in which they are lived.

In the UK and in particular, London, Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity has grown exponentially. This form of Christianity is most strongly associated with migration and diaspora populations, mainly from Africa- mostly West-Africa- but also has strong ties amongst the city's Caribbean and Latin American population. The growth of independent and denominational "Black majority" churches (Rogers 2013) highlights the large African population of London. Census data from 2011 tells us that there are around 100 000 people who identify as Nigerian living in the UK, with almost half living in London (Office for

National Statistics 2017)[5]. This example is indicative of a thriving African diaspora in the UK, particularly London, so much so, that Rogers labelled Southwark, in south London, the "African capital of the UK" (2013:15). In his survey study (ibid) he found that there were 250 "Black majority" churches in Southwark alone. A large number of these churches can be described as Pentecostal-Charismatic and across a number of London boroughs with large African (and Caribbean) communities it is not hard to miss the presence of Christianity, with churches appearing in office blocks, warehouse estates and in former high street shops.

The expansion of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity in these forms tends to be analysed in anthropological debates in relation to globalisation (Coleman 2000), modernity (Robbins 2004b), individualism/ dividualism (Daswani 2011), and notions of success and economic empowerment (Haynes 2017). Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity is indeed global, with now dated estimates that there are around 500 million adherents worldwide (Barrett and Johnson 2002). This figure further highlights the difficulty of bundling everything into a single category, with Anderson *(*2004) pointing out that this statistic is based upon a 'family resemblance' of 'gifts of the spirit' and does not illuminate specific experiences of faith, such as those central to this research. The largest followings of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity are in sub-Saharan Africa (see Meyer 2004) and in Latin America (e.g., Martin 1990) but with ever-growing movements worldwide, which commentators put down to its "radical similarity of practice" despite the "dissimilarity" of context (Lehmann 2003:121). Many of the young people reject denominational markers, with one young Pastor explaining to me that "only un-believers are concerned with denomination". For the church members, being born again is paramount, and membership of a particular global church allows them to pursue their faith on these terms.

[5] ONS statistics highlight that a significant number of people born in the UK identify with their parents' nationality.

Coleman (2002) and Robbins (2004b) argue that earlier social analysis in the 70's and 80's of Pentecostal-Charismatic movements attribute their expansion to the exportation of American Pentecostalism and the missionisation of the global south. These arguments have focused on the popularity and success of the 'prosperity gospel', which promotes 'health and wealth', giving the message that it is "God's will for believers to be rich, healthy, and successful" (Haynes 2012:124), and that poverty is caused by sin and demonic influence (Robbins 2004b:137). It is true that many of these faith movements in Africa and Latin America preach a 'prosperity gospel' imported from America. Comaroff & Comaroff (2000) see Pentecostalism as being particularly well suited to neo-liberal enterprise as adherents pursue modernity and the wealth promised to them through the prosperity gospel. However, critiques of this previous anthropological analyses, which explained external Pentecostal discourses as well suited to new 'deprived' and 'dependent' contexts, argue that this resulted in a narrow understanding of the movement (Hunt 2002a, 2002b).

In this understanding notions of individuality and modernity are often reified and this global analysis locates Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity as an access point to modernity and economic prosperity, forcing scholars to focus on certain aspects of the movement at the expense of others (Coleman & Hackett 2015:15). Adherents are thought to break existing ties with local culture to become individual and modern economic actors on a global stage (Maxwell 1998, van Dijk 1999). This harks back to Weberian notions of Protestant personhood and "obligation away from lateral [horizontal] social bonds among consociates towards dyadic [and more vertical] bonds between the individual and the divine" (Bialecki, Haynes, and Robbins 2008:1147, see also Coleman & Hackett 2015). Engelke (2010a) argues that this may go some way to explain the ruptures Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity creates but does not say much about how they are experienced in everyday life.

Neither a hegemonic understanding of Americanisation-through-missionisation nor perceiving the prosperity gospel as a "spectral parallel" or superstructure of the market (Haynes 2012:125), addresses the lived experience of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity and the ability this has to be a

productive space, “a site of action, invested in and appropriated by believers” (Marshall 2009). A functionalist approach, which explains that people choose to convert to Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity as a way of dealing with poverty and the seemingly relentless forces of economic markets fails to address the complexity of globalisation and the ways Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity engages with and thrives at the intersections of these spaces of modernity using spiritual worship. Instead, I adhere to the argument that these global spaces are made *for* God and made through the complex interaction between global Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity, local, emerging youthful contexts, and faith.

Some of the arguments outlined above, in relation to prosperity and globalisation, have influenced the way Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity has been understood in the UK and Europe. Notions of economic dependency are implicitly incorporated into explanations concerning the role Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity plays amongst the African (and Caribbean) diasporas, even if they are legitemised through emic spiritual perspectives (see Toulis 1997). Members of churches in the migrant diaspora are caught between ‘integration’ and ‘individualism’ or ‘community’ and ‘ethnic identity’ (van Dijk 2002). This framework, which applies tautological arguments to explain the role that Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity plays within diaspora downplays spiritual experience in favour of the migration process and in doing so reifies the rupture of migration over alternative explanations for the formation of faith groups and religious lives. Similarly, the focus on African-churches-in-the-UK upholds ‘African’ as a marker of difference and tells us more about “what makes them African rather than what makes them Christian” (Engelke 2010a:182)[6]. Here I will review the literature on Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity in the UK to outline my own position, one which places faith and youth at the centre, with the aim of understanding how a younger generation of British-Africans and their contemporaries, use faith to negotiate both the past and the future and how they produce and

[6] Engelke (2010) here is referring to African Independent Churches in Africa, however due to the large number of churches in the UK with mainly African populations the same argument can be applied in a British context and in relation to global Charismatic denominations based in Africa.

define their own spaces for God in the present. Turning to youth requires me to focus on ruptures which are based upon faith, generation, and heritage, and can contribute to understandings of diaspora in the UK.

The literature on Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity tends to focus on the proliferation of churches on the African continent and Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity's antithetical relationship to 'Africaness'. Meyer (2004) discusses the way in which anthropological understandings of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity aimed to move beyond essentialist notions of "African" or 'local' identity by appreciating the relationship between Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity in Africa and globalisation. She highlights the analytical difference between African Independent Churches and Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches, the former tending to be associated with a more "'authentic' Africanized version of Christianity", and the latter being located within the global debates I evaluate above. The ability for Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity to extrovert itself and de-essentialise markers of "African" cultural difference has been well studied within anthropology on the African continent. However, when Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity is studied in the UK these markers of difference reappear to legitimise arguments which relate ethnicity, migration, and diaspora to the popularity and importance of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches.

For example, Harris' (2006) ethnography is based in a Yoruba church in London and follows the spiritual lives of migrant workers and students from the late 60's onwards. Her focus is on the synthesis of Yoruba culture and Christian practice within the diaspora. Harris focuses on the 'spiritual power' evoked by the members of this Church, which is conceptualised primarily as an African-Yoruba- notion, albeit a Christian one. My issue is that her arguments are framed squarely within the context of African (specifically Yoruba) diaspora, migration, and culture. A focus on the African elements of Yoruba-Christian spirituality falls back on ethnicity and practices within an "African church" to explain the existential experiences of diaspora which the young people in this thesis challenge. However, a strength of Harris' is how it shows how Yoruba Christians "mobilise" this

spiritual power according to their everyday needs and social contexts. In other words, she takes seriously her informants' spiritual epistemologies. Understanding spiritual experience and the ways it is mobilised is important as its faith to be understood in practical rather than ethnic, nationalistic, or racial terms which are framed by migration.

In this vein Doubleday (2008) and Maier (2011) focus their research on the social lives Pentecostal Christian Nigerian migrants in London and explore many aspects of their lives, including gender, family, work, leisure, and church. This enables them both to gain an understanding of not only the religious lives of their interlocutors but also how social, economic, and moral lives are organised in correspondence to each other. This approach again takes African as a marker of difference in British society but in doing so evaluates different units of analysis to give a more holistic picture of Nigerian lives in London (Coleman 2013). This approach is useful because it locates Nigerian Pentecostalism within a coeval city and entangled in fluid transnational relationships (Coleman & Maier 2013), highlighting the rich spiritual and social lives of this community. Again, for my own work it has been important to connect spiritual experience with the many facets of community and city life, identifying relationships which extend beyond the church and become engaged with everyday, often 'secular', concerns. Rather than rely on ethnic or national boundaries in the analytic construction of community, a "boundary-making paradigm" developed by Maier (2011) enables the church group she carried out research with to define their own ideas of community through the interaction between belief and everyday concerns.

Dinham (2011) points out, the notion of 'faith community' often becomes one which verges on the imagined and ignores the situated and contingent relationship between 'faith' and 'community', particularly in transnational contexts. Doing fieldwork with young Christians, who are implicated within the ongoing story of migration and diaspora, without reifying their 'race', ethnicity, and relationship to a diaspora group involves taking seriously their spiritual experiences and following the scenarios where their faith and/or heritage is articulated, transformed, or even refused. The churches

which I will focus on in this thesis span more than one ethnic group and tend to cast themselves in universal Christian terms rather than ethnic or national, meaning it may be contentious to conflate religion with diaspora, 'race', and ethnicity. In her 2021 ethnography, *Kincraft: The Making of Black Evangelical Sociality (2021)*, Todne Thomas challenges existing suppositions about the relationship between 'race' and Christianity in African American and African-Caribbean contexts in the United States. She shows that despite the church's role among Black communities as forging a space of sanctuary in the face of racism, these identities are far more complex, resisting "the uncritical application of ethno-religious and racio-religious lenses that try to define Black evangelical communities straightforwardly as the product of ethnic and racial formations" (2021:84). Thomas shows that church members navigate forms of kinship that move between global religious aspirations that transcend racial and ethnic boundaries, while also producing community that allows church members and family to navigate racial and ethnic, and diasporic particularities.

In this vein and in a UK context, Fesenmyer (2015) highlights how Kenyan Pentecostals in London make sense of their experiences of migration through their faith, recasting their migration narratives in religious terms. Religion has similarities to diaspora in that it transverses and connects multiple locales (Vasquez 2010) which according to Fesenmyer "allows us to move away from categorising a religion as 'ethnic' or 'universal', and asking if it constitutes a diaspora, to focusing on how religion can help to reinforce and transcend place- and ethnic-based identities" (2015:68) Turning to the spiritual lives of young people allows me to move beyond 'Africanised' and ethnic narratives of Pentecostal-Charismatic faith in the UK to understand how a new generation of young people are using their faith to look forwards to the future and at the same time look to their heritage as a way to set new trajectories and articulate aspirations.

According to Robbins (2004b), Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity, through its global reach, maintains a paradoxical position which is both a homogenising force and a movement which can be adapted and used in local contexts and situations (Maxwell 1998, Droogers 2001). Pentecostal-

Charismatic Christianity has been particularly successful in traversing the globe and as Robbins (2004b, 2009b) argues, this is down to the ritual life of worship which is able to introduce an internal cultural logic through a basic premise of ecstatic worship, conversion, and evangelism (sharing faith with others), whilst simultaneously re-defining the cultural forms which existed before its introduction. As I will discuss below, Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity maintains aesthetic formations and forms of worship that allows for the immediate experience of God to become a global and transformative force (Meyer 2010). What has been most interesting about the ethnographies which focus on these global/local relationships is that they show that Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity is not a one-directional 'flow' from global to local (or from Africa to diaspora- van Dijk 2002) but is both 'world-breaking' -as existing cultural forms are redefined according to Pentecostal-Charismatic transformation- and 'world-making'- as churches become active and influential through local organisation and participation (Robbins 2004b).

Upon Christian conversion, existing social relations, rather than becoming broken altogether, become re-defined. When an individual(s) becomes born again it marks a 'rupture' or 'discontinuity' within the social order (Robbins 2004b). This discontinuity sets up dualisms where the world becomes split between those whose lives are with God and those who are not, which allows Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity to "define the ruptures it produces" (ibid:128). For example, Meyer (1999) shows how making a "complete break with the past" is encouraged amongst Pentecostal believers in Ghana, where an appeal to temporal outlooks draws a "rift between 'us' and 'them', 'now' and 'then', 'modern' and 'traditional', and of course, 'God' and the 'Devil'" (ibid:317). This is not a straightforward process of doing away with the past but becomes a dialectical process where becoming 'born again' defines what is 'traditional' through Christian practice. Pentecostalism in Meyer's case re-defines traditional Ewe ritual practices, which become aligned with the Devil, but crucially, this difference must be maintained through ongoing spiritual practice. What this shows is that although global Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity has the ability to transform cultural contexts, the local is not done away with altogether, revealing how these movements "in their very struggle against local culture…

prove how locally rooted they are" (Casanova 2001:438). The paradox is clear: by accepting and in the same movement subsuming local ontologies Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity is both open and opposed to local culture (Robbins 2003:223).

As well as re-defining local ontologies, Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity, through its institutional organisation and spiritual practice, becomes a process where worlds are made (Poewe 1989, Robbins 2004b, 2009b). Churches are often organised at a local level and encourage participation through spiritual rituals which often require the devotion of a great deal of time, with most members attending services on a Sunday and often at least one during the week. Services can often last for many hours, and members of the church are encouraged to spend time in fellowship with other members of the church, outside of the church evangelising, or volunteering in administrative roles for the church, some becoming ordained as Assistants or Pastors within the church. As I will discuss in more detail, both my proposed field sites solicit this commitment of both time and faith from their young members. The consequence of this participation means that although these churches are institutionally connected to major global denominations they are run by the local people and members who respond to local situations and concerns (Robbins 2004b:130).

Robbins goes further to say that the successful 'world making' of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity produced by the social productivity of churches and their congregations can be explained somewhat by the ritual life of its members. Ritual is a term which may not adequately describe the spiritual practices of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity due to the movement's focus on spontaneity and sincerity. However, social interaction amongst Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians can be understood as ritual due to its often-formulaic quality and "directness towards divinity" (Robbins 2009b:59)[7]. Acts such as praying together and for each other, worshipping through singing, and healing, create a shared bodily and emotional experience which involves interaction and communication- not just with God

[7] Robbins (2009) quoting Albrecht (1999) notes that Pentecostals often reject the term ritual for being "un-spiritual". However, many of social interactions which could be understood as ritual ore often described by other names: "'worship services', 'spiritual practices', [and] 'Pentecostal distinctive".

but collectively. Through these rites of worship communities are formed with a shared Christian identity, as members collectively seek a relationship with God. These typical acts of worship retain a spontaneity which allows them to be performed anywhere (as in the case of the baptism) and can be applied to almost any situation- praying in preparation for an exam, healing physical afflictions, sharing testimonies, and thanking God, amongst others. Often, experiences of modernity and diaspora are redefined as obstacles which can be overcome using faith (van Dijk 2001). This refusal of a sacred-profane distinction allows Pentecostal-Charismatic worship to actively shape social life and creates social spaces which are with and for God.

Rather than being just a knee-jerk reaction to linear global flows and the processes of modernity, economy and technology, the ways Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity engages with and appropriates these processes are better understood as *representations* and imaginaries of the global, which are constructed in the ways Pentecostal-Charismatic groups organise institutionally and spiritually (Csordas 2009, Robbins & Engelke 2010a, Coleman 2002). They are representations of what believers think the world ought to be like where an image of globality and modernity is made in the name of God (see Jenkins 2011). Shifting the perspective from hegemonic understandings of globalisation to understandings of how the global is appropriated and expressed by Pentecostal-Charismatic groups shows ""it is not so much the individualism of Pentecostal conversion which leads to the creation of modern subjects, but the ways its projection on a global scale of images, discourses and ideas about renewal, change and salvation opens up possibilities for local actors to incorporate these into their daily lives" (Marshall-Fratani 2001:80). It should also be added that these images, discourses, and ideas are projected back at the world as these groups participate in and influence economic markets (Gifford 2004) and export their faith through various media forms such as television (Coleman 2000) and online. By actively engaging their faith on this global stage the world is both broken and re-made- or as Engelke (2010a) describes, "realigned"- to be made in the image of the believer.

As described, the young people I discuss in this thesis find themselves inhabiting the terrain and context I outline above. However, their experiences and articulations of faith specifically as the children of diaspora, means their experiences push the narrative of Christian faith in the UK in new directions. Their unique position as members of global churches shows that their participation in and contribution to this religious movement, carries different meanings, and produces new cultural forms, based upon the formations and articulations of self-presented by the young people centred in this thesis. Throughout the thesis the fact that they are young and inhabit a multitude of positionalities helps provide novel and contemporary understandings of both the Pentecostal-Charismatic movement as a whole but also its unique importance for young Black-British people.

Aspiring in Christ

"Aspire in Christ" is a common phrase I often heard used among the young people in this thesis. As I will show this often means that the young people look to Christ for direction in their everyday lives, but also highlights the youthful and future oriented horizons of people who are young and participating in a religious movement that seeks to transform the near future (see Guyer 2007). A number of commentators note the popularity of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity amongst young people in Africa (Meyer 2004). This appreciation of youth within African Pentecostal-Charismatic movements also resonates with the rich literature on youth in Africa more generally (Honwana 2012). Meyer highlights that Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity on the African continent allows young worshippers to "eschew gerontocratic hierarchies and *aspire to progress in life* (the upwardly mobile), yet think (realistically, perhaps) that this goal can be achieved only through a God-given miracle" (2004:460, emphasis own).

Placing faith and spiritual experience at the heart of youthful relationships with God also highlights the dynamic mechanisms by which youth acts as a social shifter, where young people define their place in society and redefine indexes of autonomy, agency, and inter-generational relationships

(Durham 2004). For example, van Dijk (1992) shows how young born-again preachers in urban Malawi express ambition and aspiration through faith and redefine relationships with their rural heritage, using their faith to thrive in new urban contexts. Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity's focus on success and prosperity and the ways faith is regarded as a tool to look to the future- and break with the past- resonates with the ways the anthropology of youth has been understood, where concerns and practice in the present become ways to negotiate possibilities (and limitations) in the future. Again, these debates act within the dynamic space between the global and the local, with some arguing that globalisation forces young people to embody the contradictions of modernity (Comaroff & Comaroff 1999)[8] thus defining boundaries between generations, whereas Durham (2004) highlights the local struggles that enable the relativity of age and 'youth' to become appropriated towards political and social goals.

What Durham calls for is an appreciation of the relativity of age and categories of 'youth' because of the strategic and dynamic role they play, not as just an expression of a structured system but as a means by which persons are defined- and I would add, where aspirations are produced. Young people "produce and negotiate" cultural forms (Bucholtz 2002:526), showing that youth is more than a category of transition from "dependent childhood to independent adulthood" (Collins-Mayo 2010) but a strategic position taken to articulate aspirations, where age and 'youth' (and faith) are defined through practice. The cultural forms produced by young people carve out new 'youthful' spaces where aspirations can be articulated and acted upon (Willis 1990, Weiss 2009). Johnson-Hanks (2002) calls for an aspirational understanding of young lives, where rather than viewing the life course as a series of events, we view actions and decisions as conjunctures which take seriously the aspirations of young people and how they cohere in a social system.

[8] In this case Comaroff & Comaroff (1999) highlight the generational cleavages brought about through experiences of post-coloniality and modernity. I also acknowledge the recent controversy surrounding John Comaroff and the need more than ever to be critical and careful when citing his work.

Having mentioned the previous example, Day & Rogaly (2014) show how identity, faith, and belief do not congeal around stable notions of age, community, and ethnicity, but instead become nominal sites of contestation and aspiration. In this thesis I show the ways young people act upon their faith and the aspirations they articulate not only define their relationship to God but also how they relate to older members of their community. Prema Kurien (2017) highlights the slippages in religiosity and religious meaning for Indian evangelical members of the *Mar Thoma* Megachurch, in the United States. She shows that the coupling of ethnicity with the religious movement, which originates in Kerela, India, carries more weight for older, migrant generations; whereas for the younger generation, born in the United States, their understanding of religious self becomes decoupled from ethnic identity. This not only involves the transformation of religious practice but also extends to highlights generational questions about the role of faith in 'assimilation' and American citizenship.

For members of the churches discussed here, I consider this to be an ethical position on behalf of young worshippers, where typical 'religious' practice is called into question through new forms of worship and associated meanings. Newer forms of worship amongst younger members of the churches I have been visiting often challenge what are perceived to be the overly 'religious' actions of some Christians, including their parents, with more emphasis on faith which can be used to achieve aspirations as young people. Throughout this thesis, locating and being aware of aspirational religious practice has helped to highlight the ethical positions young Christians take, focusing not only on the spaces which are made for God but also the actions, materials, media, and relationships which make distinct spaces for 'youthful' worship. Continuity and rupture remain an important analytical framework when it comes to thinking about youthful concerns, which has required me to look at the ways young Christians are negotiating their heritage while also participating in secular British society.

Identity, Refusal, and Difference

The sub-heading of this thesis is *Born Again Identity, Belonging, and Difference*. I will show in the following chapters how the young Christians, by virtue of becoming and being born-again, cultivate a subjective sense of alterity and difference from their peers and those they share secular spaces with. As mentioned above, the often-used phrase, particularly among members of Disciple Church is that they are "in the world but not of it". Similarly, members of Christ Love, following the words of Pastor Chris, exclaim that they "will never remain the same". These declarations point to a faith which is unbounded, limitless, but also contains within it the possibility of claiming an identity which exceeds the categories of this world.

As mentioned above, the young Christians eschew worldly categories of identification in favour of those defined through their relationship with the divine. Their embodied, ethical, and subjective relationships with the divine enable expressions of identity that are informed by their experiences and declarations of faith. What makes these identifications of sociological interest is the way in which forms of belonging emerge through shared faith, and a communal identity as being born-again, rather than along the lines of culture, 'race' and ethnicity.

At the present moment, since the murder of George Floyd, and the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement, conversations, frictions, and questions regarding identity and recognition have come to the fore more than ever. Globally oppressed communities and their allies have stood in solidarity to demand rights, recognition and equity for Black Lives, LGBT+ communities, refugees, migrants, and working-class communities. In the UK, under a Conservative government, identity, or 'identity-politics' have become a political vehicle for division as well as solidarity. Labelled in the UK press, somewhat problematically as 'culture wars', these debates emerge around claims to and rejections of various experiences, subjectivities, and positionalities. In many ways the word 'identity' makes many, including anthropologists feel uncomfortable, due to its ability to fix-in place. Scholars

have critiqued the term identity, whether due to its inherent liberalism (Povinelli 2006), or for its deferral of a shared humanity due to a logic of 'radical alterity' (Jackson 2019).

The fieldwork for this thesis was carried out prior to the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement in the UK, and the subsequent articulations of identity by many members of Black and Brown-British communities. It can be seen in the BLM protests how identities are on the move, becoming reformulated and challenged in ways that articulate new understandings of Blackness, against conceptions of 'race', and with louder, more visible demands to recognition. These events have made it clearer than ever that we must question the categories and forms of analysis and solidarity we action. As I will show in this thesis, the ways that demands to recognition and identification with the Black Lives Matter movement are not homogenous. Blackness has never been homogenous. When put into conversation with born-again Christianity it can be seen where frictions and lines of flight occur. The young Christians I discuss in this thesis show points of departure from claims to Blackness they consider to be associated with the BLM movement. Instead, their identities as born-again, eschew identification with forms of cultural identity related to transatlantic forms of Blackness. They proclaim identities "in Christ", articulating difference at the intersection of Black, African diasporic, and Christian experience.

So are words like identity, and difference useful? In chapters 5 & 6 I cover the literature pertaining to conversations around identity and difference, particularly in reference to the work of British scholars Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy. Their work speaks to a particular political milieu in which ant-racist agendas of the 1980's and 90's in the UK demanded a critique that deconstructed 'race' and created a critical space for the identification and recognition of 'Blackness' within British society. Stuart Hall's extensive writings on the condition of diaspora and diasporic identities highlights the way in which identities are not fixed, instead made, un-made, and re-made through difference and identification. As such, he says, "diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (1990:401-402). Hall's notion of identity need not be tied to

liberal notions of 'identity' that are synonymous with charged terms such as culture, ethnicity, nation, and 'race', but instead become articulated as a response to particular signifiers that label them as such (Hall 2017, see also Gilroy 1989). Further Gilroy's conception of the Black-Atlantic points to "an explicitly transnational and inter-cultural" conception of what constitutes a diaspora that does not rely on a movement in-this-lifetime, allowing for the proliferation of manifold Black diasporic configurations. Both authors help to maintain unfixed notions of both identity and diaspora. And due to this I follow Gilroy's example of highlighting the constructedness of 'race' by putting it in parenthesis- I do the same by capitalising Black and Blackness.

These conversations continue to apply to the young Christians in this thesis, particularly, as I show, through their articulation of a God given identity they are able to claim alterity and difference through their born-again declarations of self. Although the young people do not directly use the term identity, the way in which they declare themselves to be other to, or beyond worldly categorisation suggests that 'identity' particularly in the way that Stuart Hall deploys the term applies here. I will show that rather than follow the logic of liberal 'identity politics', these articulations of identity work against the grain of liberal politics and identification, instead working with forms of refusal (see Simpson 2014), that challenge and add nuance to existing secular understandings of 'race' in the UK. Before doing so I will show how the young people cultivate spiritual knowledge and ethical participation in global Christian flows that enable forms of belonging that go beyond diaspora, culture, 'race', and ethnicity.

"Let's Do this God Thing"- Christianity and Anthropology

When I began attending services with Disciple Church, my shepherd, Simon, pulled me aside after a mid-week service and asked me to really try and consider faith for myself. He understood my position as a researcher but for him faith and research were not mutually exclusive. He wanted me to continue coming to church but to also try faith for myself. As we joined the rest of the mid-week congregation in a nearby KFC he encouraged me, "Let's do this God thing", and although I was unable to make any

promises, I felt that perhaps incorporating God into my understanding and interpretation of the ethnographic context would be both challenging and somehow more sincere. Incorporating God, the divine, even notions of the transcendent into my own reflexive practice has required to the help of the Anthropology of Christianity as a starting point.

The anthropology of Christianity, as a well-established sub—discipline has become a key rubric for this ethnography. Not only does it provide the tools to challenge existing notions of belief (Robbins 2007), materiality (Keane 2007, Engelke 2007) and personhood (Hann 2012, Daswani 2015) but encourages scholars of Christianity to think about the differences that Christianity makes for both believers, non-believers, and the anthropologists that research alongside them (Cannell 2006). Fenella Cannell's seminal work (2006) has carved out a space within anthropology for taking Christianity seriously, where it might not have been done so previously (see also Harding 1991), given the inherent secularity of the discipline (see Lambek 2012). Both Cannell (2005, 2006) and Robbins (2007) also highlight the latent Christianity embedded in the discipline itself, that goes some way to respond to Asad's (1993) important intervention regarding the Christian bias in the anthropological category of religion itself. I outline in more pointed detail, the importance of the Anthropology of Christianity, as a methodological framework in the following chapter, however, here it is important to say that the anthropology of Christianity has enabled Christianity to become considered as an ethnographic object in itself. The work of Joel Robbins (2004a, 2007, 2016) convincingly calls for Christianity to be considered a cultural form that despite its radical differences in context, follows a particular cultural logic in the way it is practiced and experienced, particularly in terms of ethics, embodiment, and its relation to the transcendent as well as existing cultural forms (also Chua 2012, see Hann 2007 for critique).

In his initial intervention into the Anthropology of Christianity, Robbins draws on the so-called Anthropology of Islam, that attempts to locate Islam as an object of study, despite the multifaceted discourses and traditions that make up the sub-discipline (see Asad 2009 for critique).With this in mind

the Anthropology of Islam has been vital in enabling me to consider the way in which discourse, tradition, and ethical self-cultivation in religious contexts become important ways for Christianity to be understood as an ever-changing, dynamic and lived religion. As with Islam, being a Christian, for the young people in this thesis, requires dialectical negotiation between scripture and everyday practice (Mahmood 2004, Mittermaier 2010, Elliot 2016).

For the young Christians in this thesis, and as I will show in the following chapters, their faith informs their everyday decisions, practice, and actions, and in turn their everyday experience informs the meanings and interpretations of the faith. This highlights questions of ethics as well as the ways in which the young Christians challenge normative, and liberal discourses and notions of self, identity, and recognition. The internal and imminent critique of Christianity shows how, as a set of conceptual tools- especially in its Pentecostal and Charismatic forms- provides believers with the discourse to challenge ontological and material possibilities and experiment with religious practice (see Bialecki 2017, Reinhardt 2016). The chapters in this thesis (particularly in the second half) deal with the consequences of these themes, particularly in the ways that Christian faith can become a form of critique regarding 'race', ethnicity, generation, and culture. The supernatural becomes the rubric through which the young Christians in this thesis challenge secular categories and ontologies- to produce subjectivities and realities that are made with and for God.

Relatedly, several significant contributions to the Anthropology of Christianity have informed the theoretical framework and approach of this thesis. First, the notion of rupture and continuity, that Robbins (2017) and others (Meyer 1999, Daswani 2013, see also Robbins and Engelke 2010) use to highlight the everyday and existential negotiation of Christians who must navigate new horizons and outlooks with their faith. Usually situated in cultures of conversion, and in post-colonial or missionary contexts, these frameworks note the moral, ethical, and existential struggles, negotiations, and practice encouraged when conversation and the new contexts enabled by Christian faith, rub up against existing traditions and obligations. However, as two recent contributions from the

Anthropology of Christianity importantly highlight that rupture and continuity, or continuity and change are related and in constant tension (Daswani 2015, Premawardhana 2018), one does not rule over the other but as the latter succinctly puts it, it is "less a matter of continuity *or* change, than continuity *of* change" (Premawardhana 2018:8). What these two ethnographies show is that despite the ruptures and cultural change promoted by born-again faith and conversion, believers must still do the moral, cultural, and frankly demanding work of making it work. The young Christians here are no different and while they choose to live as born-again, as different to those around them, they must also navigate being Christians (and demand to be seen as Christians) in spaces that do not easily afford Christianity as a de-facto form of identification.

This thesis follows the tradition of congregation-based ethnography in the Anthropology of Christianity (Coleman 2000, Engelke 2007, Luhrmann 2012). However, the interventions of Bandak and Jorgenson (2012), who discuss the multiple 'foregrounds and backgrounds' of Christianity help to shift analysis into the everyday to take note of the various "bundling" of affect that emerges when Christianity makes differences in areas of life beyond only the 'religious'.

> *"Instead of asking what is a Christian or for that matter who is a Christian– questions which might easily and deceptively lead us to think of categories as simple and stable – we aim to offer a way to conceptualize the shifts and tunings that have some themes take front stage at particular locations, as well as across them, while making other themes recede to the background. This is not to say that the very questions of what and who is a Christian are unimportant, but rather an attempt to bring focus on the particularities under which these questions are posed." (2012:448)*

This approach challenges some of the binary, and culturalist thinking promoted by early conceptions of the sub-discipline that rely on rupture as a key idea and tend to focus more-so on the religious components of Christian experience. In this thesis I draw on both the culturalist tradition that aims to take Christianity seriously as a coherent object of study, as well as considering the ways that

considering 'foregrounds and backgrounds' allows me to shift the study of Christianity in to the spheres of ethics, politics, materiality, subjectivity and the everyday where the young Christians in this thesis navigate the experience of being born-again in spaces usually expected to be devoid of religious intervention.

The question posed by Simon, when he asked, almost told me, "let's do this God thing", was an invitation to meet him half-way. If he was to make space for me in his life, then my challenge was to make space for God in mine. And if my life also meant I was carrying out ethnographic research then the further challenge has been to make space for God in anthropology. So, when Amira Mittermaier delivered the keynote speech at the *2021 Society for the Anthropology of Religion conference,* after I had finished up my fieldwork, where she suggested that further steps could be made in building "more than human horizons", as imagined by interlocutors of faith into our writing, I felt somewhat vindicated:

> *"Making space for God is not just a matter of what you pay attention to in the field. It is also a matter of writing. The kind of writing I am interested in makes space rather than putting in place" (2021:28)*

I felt vindicated not only in my choice of title for the thesis but for attempting to take seriously what Pastor Katie told us in the car, and Simon's invitation to do this God thing. Anthropology has made space for Christianity but continues to struggle to make space for the God that animates the lives that are lived as Christians.

Representing God? In and beyond the Field

This thesis has been researched constructed and written with and through a number of tensions and frictions. A house built on sand rather than upon a rock. Tensions between insider and outsider, born-again and not, whiteness and Blackness permeate the research. Even the anthropological categories I

use to think through the issues that arise in this thesis reflect several inherent tensions. Religion, Christianity, 'race', diaspora, identity, are categories that can slide towards fixity and binaries, and are not always the categories articulated by the young Christians themselves. The practice of ethnography demands that the anthropologist remain reflexive of the position through which they interpret the experiences of those they study. My own positionality proves the demand for reflexivity, in that I inhabit multiple layers of outsiderness in relation to the young Christians discussed in this thesis. In this thesis I intend to sit with these inherent tensions and friction taking the advice of Donna Haraway by "staying with the trouble" and finding unexpected collaborations with my interlocutors throughout.

First it is important to consider my whiteness as a researcher and how that has influenced the narrative of this thesis. As I will show, the articulations of self and refusals of worldly markers of identification are indeed prompted by embodied relationships with the divine. However, these refusals have emerged within a particular set of circumstances where this white researcher is present and afforded the privilege to interpret Black lives and spaces. Even in interviews and conversations when I further questioned and sought clarification on observations, the inherent relationship, which cannot be removed from existing structures of power and 'race', determine the flow and direction of these conversations.

Added to this is another layer of outsiderness which is my lack of Christian faith, or any faith at all for that matter. Throughout this thesis I continually highlight the tensions that arise in various contexts due to my lack of faith, and the ways in which my own idea of ethical anthropology is drawn into question (see chapter 1) as a researcher informed by secular anthropology. When these two layers of outsiderness, 'race' and faith, are put into conversation with each other I have found that they produce unexpected formations and even relatedness. The young Christians, despite attending churches with Black-African leadership, where the congregations are overwhelmingly made up of Black individuals, my presence, even as a researcher seemed to confirm to some that their faith was available to all, despite worldly differences. I was just another soul who had the opportunity to hear

the word of God, and potentially another soul to be won. In this sense, and in this context, faith seemed to override race, and in doing so highlighted the fragility of the categories I discuss above.

There were also moments where my presence was invited, welcomed, and catered for. Within the student fellowships, I was often treated like another student, often put into fellowship groups with other Goldsmiths students. I also lived in the same city as my interlocutors meaning that the boundaries between field and home became blurred. Rather than fight against these 'unconventional' fieldwork dynamics I have put into practice a humanism, the kind that Michael Jackson insists allows the anthropologist to take note of people's lived experience through the richness of a shared humanity (1989). But when the divine is an actor, this poses a new challenge, for they must also be included in the human plane of experience and taken seriously too.

I employ, partially at least, a recursive attempt to incorporate the reality and agency of God, the Holy Spirit, and Christ into the ethnography and analysis within this thesis (Holbraad 2012). This is because it reflects the realities that inform the worldviews, and experiences of the young Christians. At times this is reflected in the way I discuss the divine, sometimes using 'He' or 'Him'. This is because it reflects the speech and declarations of my interlocutors and allows me to make space for God in the thesis.

This is also prompted by another tension in anthropology, that expects the symbolic and the cultural to cohere in seamless ways. Taking aim at anthropology's obsession with 'thick description', John Jackson Jr. (2013) describes his fieldwork experiences with Black Hebrew Israelites in New York. What he found is that a conventional ethnographic approach would expect the spiritual lives of the Black Hebrew Israelite adherents to cohere and align with other aspects 'race', nationality, religion, gender, and class. Instead, Jackson Jr. is presented with a group who carefully and meticulously present ethnographic material that confounds and contradicts itself. This is what Jackson Jr. calls thin description, requiring "flat ethnography, where you slice into a world from different perspectives, scales, registers, and angles… And the thinness of these slices is central" (2013:16-17).

My experience of fieldwork echoes Jackson Jr's. in that whenever I raised the categories I mention above, I was confronted with a spiritual response, that God was often the answer, even told that if I knew God for myself then I would no longer need to do the research because He would give me the understanding. Further, there was often a reluctance from church members to question or critique the church leadership. Sometimes frustrating, and often feeling like platitudes, the young Christians refused to reduce their faith to anthropological concerns, requiring me to pay attention to the foregrounding of faith. However, this should not have been a surprise considering the importance of sincere speech and scripts, for the church members, as well as Protestant Christianity more broadly (see Keane 2007).

Confronted many times with script-like responses I considered it important to pay attention to what was being said, as well as the context in which it was expressed. Scripts are important ways for the young Christians to declare their faith in God and commitment to the church. These scripts enabled the young church members to sidestep and refuse my interest in the relationship between born-again faith, identity, and diasporic experiences, the scripts themselves were an indicator of a set of material and subjective relations, between these positionalities. This required me to be attentive to the gaps in the narrative, and the work that these scripts- as declarations of faith- were doing. Born-again language ideology is active in the world, and despite its scripted character, works to make subjective and material differences for the people that use them.

This thesis works with what I at first considered to be a lack of depth, instead weaving together multiple 'perspectives, scales, registers, and angles' to make my argument. In all this thesis attempts to work with humanism to explore the ways that the categories I mention above intersect and diverge at different moments and in different spaces, the spaces between foregrounds and backgrounds, between this world and the divine.

Methods and Ethical Issues

For this research I carried out congregation-based participant observation, with the secondary aim of following the everyday lives of church members beyond the church. I planned for this to include social, work/ university, and family life to provide a holistic view of the lives of young Christians. I identified a number of churches serving the African diaspora with youth programmes and approached them via email or phone call. Inially, I found that this approach was not forthcoming. It was only when I met Brother Abraham by chance in my university refectory that conducting ethnographic research with student fellowships became a possibility. Upon Brother Abraham's invitation I was able to start attending church services at another university campus and begin regular participant observation with the congregation. Overall, I spent nearly 2 years attending church services with both churches discussed in this thesis, and in that time developed meaningful relationships with individuals who kindly granted me access to other areas of their lives. It is important to note, that these other activities often involved Christian faith in one way or another, whether in activity or in conversation. This showed to me the pervasiveness of faith in all aspects of life for the young Christians I discuss in this thesis. This is something I draw upon in Chapters 2 and 3.

I became a regular member of the Christ Love fellowships and was granted permission to carry out research by Pastors leading the university fellowships and was given permission by these gatekeepers to interview church members. I interviewed as many church members and Pastors as possible. Some were more willing to talk in an interview format and were understanding of my research endeavour, whereas others were less willing. In the latter cases I chose not to conduct a formal interview.

Although interesting in itself, after a year of spending time with Christ Love I decided to spend time with another church to think more about the role of youth in shaping the spiritual lives of Christians living in London's African diasporas[9]. Having learned about the importance of university fellowships, I

[9] I spent around a year attending the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God's youth group after being approached in the street by one of its members. I became close with this individual but I was unable to secure access from church elders so it was decided mutually that I should stop attending.

attended various freshers' fairs and spoke at length with a member of another youth church that I call Disciple Church. My contacts, known in the church as 'shepherds', Micah and Simon, were keen for me to attend services with them, although again, this was a negotiation, with the hope that I would want to stay on as a permanent member.

I attended Disciple Church for over a year, joining services, evangelism, New Year's 'crossover' service, theatre events, and prayer groups specifically for the young men in the congregation. My shepherds were happy for me to attend as a researcher, and while I did attempt to gain formal access from church leaders, I was often told to just "keep coming". With the invitation of the young church members themselves I considered this to be an acceptable form of access. However, when it did come to securing formal interviews, the church leadership decided that it would not be appropriate for me to do so- something that feeds into the overt discipline expected of church members. Therefore, my time at Disciple Church is informed by participant observation and compliments the words and actions of my interlocutors elsewhere.

Initially it was fairly easy to get to know most people in the relatively small congregation at Christ Love. I ensured that I explained my presence and purpose and sought informed consent as much as possible on an individual basis. However, at Disciple Church, and the larger Christ Love events this was not always possible. Simon Coleman (2000), describes this situation in his ethnography with Charismatic Christians in Sweden, describing how in large congregations he was able to fit in as a presumed believer. This was not as simple in my case, as I attended churches with an overwhelmingly Black congregation, so my presence was conspicuous. This required me to ensure that in interactions with the general congregation I made them aware of my research, and to counter any assumptions- of faith- that might be made about my primary reason for attending the church.

As mentioned above, I often found in formal interview contexts that church members would stick to scripts. They would often refer to bible passages and church teachings in their responses. Sometimes, the interview would become an opportunity for them to evangelise to me, and question me on my

own spiritual journey. Instead of viewing this as a negative, I embraced the power shift in the interview and attempted to find common ground as I questioned faith for myself. Overall, I carried out around 30 formal interviews.

Ethical issues continued to be raised throughout my research. I was often initially invited to church with the hope that I would embrace Jesus for myself. Some hoped that I would realise that the answers to my questions came from God and that I would abandon my research and embrace life as a member of the church. Considering this was not my intention I felt it was important to engage in the ethical practice demanded by each of the churches I was attending, by participating according to the values and demands of the churches, even if this complicated the ethics of ethnographic research. This required me to embrace the method employed by Tanya Luhrmann (2012) and learn about Christianity from the "inside-out". I discuss this methodological context in more depth in Chapter 1.

The demands put upon me in order to gain access mean that I had to participate in a way that was expected of anybody attending the church. As a fellow student, I was treated in the same way that other student church members were. I was not afforded a special status as 'anthropologist'. I admit that some find this approach disingenuous, even deceptive. To be seen to be participating actively in church life when 'in the field' and to continue living life in the same city when not, has not sat well with some colleagues at the university. Especially as a white researcher, with the privileges afforded by my positionality, has meant I have had to think deeply about the complications afforded by this particular research context.

In honesty, it would have been for easier for me to be treated as the visiting researcher, allowed to participate as and when it suited me, but this has never been the case in ethnogprahic fieldwork. The complicated distinction between insider and outsider is something that allows anthropologists the unique ability to engage with different and radical alterity in meaningful and empathic ways. I consider my participation to be a requirement of entering the spaces I was invited into. This is something that all new church members are expected to do. In this way, born-again Christianity can be considered a

practice (Lindhardt 2011), and a process of learning (Luhrmann 2012), that I would only be able to begin to comprehend in its fullness if I were to do it with "my whole body" (Orsi 2013).

A number of explicit issues arose during fieldwork, that I reflect upon during this thesis, as points of learning. The fact I attended two churches was highly unusual, and members of both churches repeatedly encouraged me to attend just one. This reflects the ethical practice expected of church members, which I discuss in Chapter 3. Further, I ensured that my participation did not give off the impression of someone who had fully embraced God. Instead, I had to find a middle-ground that publicly showed my commitment to participation without giving false impressions. I chose to show that I was learning about faith for myself in an attempt to understand its importance for others. Again, I discuss this in Chapter 3, but this revealed the ways that almost everyone in Disciple Church has the potential to be dangerously unconvincing in their faith.

As time went on, church members considered me to be on my own walk with God, and despite my research, would continue to walk with God after it ended. Some considered, and still hope, that my thesis will be an evangelistic document that will bring people to God. With these expectations in mind, the ethical concerns raised in the field continue to inform the writing of this thesis. Further, eventually leaving the field was not as simple as going 'home'. I was asked that even though the research had ended, why I couldn't continue attending the church. For this there was no appropriate answer, other than that my time with the church had come to an end but everything I experienced would stay with me forever. That is the truth.

Outline of Chapters

As mentioned above this thesis has been carried out with two church groups, Disciple Church, and Christ Love. I have anonymised the names of the youth ministries, the locations of their services (to an extent), and the names of church members. Church members do in fact often change their names,

either to anglicise them, choose a Biblical name, or to reflect a 'God given' name that is divinely inspired and reflects aspects of their spirituality. In these cases, I have chosen a name I feel is appropriate, however, overriding a God-given name is not something I feel particularly comfortable with, despite the need for anonymisation.

I have chosen not to anonymise their parent churches. I discussed this with the head Pastor of Christ Love who agreed that the uniqueness of his church meant that it would remove context and depth from the ethnography I present here if I changed the name. While this makes the veneer of anonymisation fragile, I follow examples from anthropologists who have carried out work with global church ministries who do not anonymise the church they research.

The liturgy and social life of each church informs the subjectivities, experiences, and worldviews of its members. As mentioned above, I spent most of my time with Christ Love, and a significant amount of time attending services and fellowship with Disciple Church. At times in this thesis analysis is informed by one rather than other, sometimes both and while these churches should not be considered the same, they both speak in their own ways to the aims and contributions of the thesis.

This thesis contributes to the understanding of Christianity in the UK, particularly in African diasporic contexts. However, the ministries that I encountered reveal new global flows of religious movements and new forms of belonging that are encouraged through youthful participation. At the intersections this reveals unexpected and dynamic expressions of identity from the young Christians, that add new nuance and perspectives to conversations regarding 'race', ethnicity, and identity among Black-British diasporas. In all, this thesis is about the various scales through which young people make space for God, and in doing so I hope there is sufficient space given over to the foregrounding of faith.

The thesis is split into 2 sections that inform each other. The first explores the foreground of born-again faith, through knowledge, experience, ethics, and global participation. These opening chapters explore the ways that the cultivation of self with and through faith allows for the articulation of difference and the subjectivity of alterity. The second section, looks at how faith subsumes various

backgrounds, enabling various "bundlings, affects, forms, ideologies, and practices" that inform the political articulations of identity, and claims for recognition in secular, racialised, and diasporic spaces. These chapters explore the ways that demands to recognition are rooted in the backgrounds of faith that are themselves embedded in other facets of identity and identification. The theme of 'Making Space for God' is maintained throughout, starting with the body as the vehicle through which space is produced and experienced, moving outward to the spaces young people imagine (global), cultivate (ethical), and inhabit.

Chapter 1 is a methodological and ethnographic account that grapples with the production of knowledge in religious contexts and allows me to question what being 'born-again' means for the young Christians. I take note of the ways that the young Christians seek spiritual knowledge, that is only accessible through an embodied relationship with the divine. I explore how the production of anthropological knowledge can intersect with and is afforded through a personal and ethnographic invitation (almost demand) to explore faith for myself. This divine knowledge (known in the church as *epignosis*) allows church members to cultivate a sense of alterity in relation to those limited only to carnal and worldly experience.

Chapter 2 continues to explore the cultivation of alterity by considering how participation in global forms of Christianity, produce transcendent and global horizons that allow young church members to transcend their worldly positionalities and find belonging within a global community of Christians. I take note of the forms of mediation that allow for God's presence across territory, producing global and communal spaces for God's presence.

In order to appropriately participate in these global ministries church members learn to appreciate authority as it is shared as the word of God. The cultivation of ethical relationships, and communities is discussed in chapter 3. This chapter thinks through the ways in which the young Christians do the 'work of God' as a duty to both their church ministry and to God. Again, the cultivation of congregations who are "on fire for God" and unashamedly 'zealous' allows the young Christians to use

these moral and ethical frameworks to navigate that which is considered carnal and dangerous. This speaks to their positionalities and unique concerns as young Black people living in London and as the children of African parents. Through cultivation of ethical spiritualities, the young people are again able to articulate alterity and difference in relation to those who are dangerously non-Christian and unconvincingly 'born-again', prompting various practices to ensure discipline is maintained in the church.

Chapters 4,5&6 shift the focus towards the backgrounds of faith where frictions between the liberal and secular categories of identity and identification are challenged. These frictions and unexpected intersections occur in and through the city space of London, on university campuses and in the homes of my interlocutors. Their practices as Christians first and foremost, challenge the liberal secular space of the university as they demand and subvert spaces of representation (Chapter 4). The church members attempt to challenge and transform Black-British cultural spaces more generally in the city, especially the Notting Hill Carnival, by expressing Christianised identities that eschew and refuse categories of identification along the lines of 'race', ethnicity, and culture (Chapter 5). Further, they question their heritage, instead claiming an 'inheritance in Christ' vis-à-vis their belongings to a global church community, challenging existing formations and understandings of diaspora in the UK. Culture becomes the rubric through which the young people grapple with and negotiate both their cultural heritage as well as the culture of Christianity (Chapter 6). These final chapters challenge the categories typically deployed to mark out these young people. They also show how by being born again people can be 'different' and by being so they make space for God.

Chapter 1

"Awakened to the Spirit Realm": Knowledge and methodology between this world and the divine

> *If you fail to acknowledge the contingency of experience, you avoid the indeterminacies of the between—the ambiguities of social life, the tangential contours of experience, and sensuous processes of our bodies. If you do accept the contingency of experience and present yourself fully in the vortex of the between, then your body—the scholar's body—demands a fuller sensual awareness of the smells, tastes, sounds, and textures of the lifeworld. Such an embodied presence also means that scholars open themselves to others and absorb their words. -Paul Stoller (2009:33)*

Becoming Born Again

Pastor Ruth prays in tongues. The Holy Spirit has a message for me. The Holy Spirt has already imparted messages for the rest of the 20 or so strong congregation, and I was hoping that I would be left out, but before I had a chance to resist, I am called to the front of the university lecture theatre which is being used for the Sunday service. Pastor Ruth, a young woman, and former student congregant herself but now a senior Pastor, begins praying in tongues. The supernatural words are spoken to her heart by the Holy Spirit and spontaneously flow out of her mouth in a mix of heavenly language and what sounds like French. Neither I nor Pastor Ruth speak French- as far as I am aware. After a few minutes we are both on our knees with our palms on the floor. I feel compelled to mimic her actions, continuously aware of the onlooking congregation in the lecture-theatre-come-church, but this time with a lack of inhibition which usually limits my participation. She seems on the verge of tears as she exclaims words and sounds.

An active member of the church, an international student, born in francophone Sierra Leonne, translates the French words which the Holy Spirit has gifted to the Pastor to mediate this message.

"Oh, this is deep", he chuckles.

Now back on our feet he tells me that Jesus wants me to know Him, that my research is leading me to Christ and the only way to understand is to let Him in. I hesitate and as Pastor Ruth takes both of my hands, I realise that my plans to participate in only some of the worship of this church are scuppered. She tells me that it is unusual for the Holy Spirit to push someone towards Christ is this way and that she understands that I am on the spot here, but I just need to let Him in. I pause, now is not the time to explain the nuances of my methodological approach... "Do you want Jesus to be the Lord of your life?".

"Errrrm…OK" I reply, thinking that will be enough for me to return to my seat.

" Just say: Jesus be the Lord of my life".

"JesusbetheLordofmylife". I mumbled it, and not without hesitation, but I said it all the same. Pastor Ruth hugs me and it feels good. Everyone is clapping and smiling at me. I return to my seat with a warm sensation flowing through my face and torso, the kind you might get if standing in front of a large audience, but this time it feels different. Samuel leans close, "Congratulations, you're born again". It was certainly easier than I thought it would be. For a moment I feel content with the idea and enjoy the feeling of happiness which has swept over me. I feel special as an individual and accepted as a researcher.

I feel as though I inhabited two worlds simultaneously. A kind of anthropological deception but also a Christian inflection. Both there and here at the same time, feeling with my body but not quite sure in my mind. Giving my life (or my fieldwork?) to God made sense in the moment but I'm struck by the gravity of what happed. I'm unsure whether my experience of becoming born again was the same as the people who are now congratulating me, how would I know? I feel good, yes, but does that mean

I'm really filled with the Holy Spirit? Questions begin to surface in my mind as I return to my home in south-London and avoid speaking with my flat-mates: Am I really born again? What does it mean? What has changed? Am I a 'Christian'?

***

This chapter reflects on the awkward relationship between Christianity, anthropological fieldwork, and the transformations made possible when ethnography locates itself at the boundaries between the two. My own transformations have produced unexpected yet productive moments of understanding and have enabled the production of ethnographic knowledge through a shared embodiment of the divine. I draw upon experiences of these unexpected moments and how I have traversed them ethnographically. Starting with an account of being pulled to the front of the congregation to give my life to God, I use this to work through the boundaries and binaries this moment simultaneously produces and collapses: between the worldly and the divine, body and mind, flesh and sprit, material and immaterial, researcher and researched. I use this to trace an ethnographic movement from a worldly observation (comparable to a secular ignorance) to a divine embodied knowledge and think about what this means relationally as a fieldworker who inhabits the spaces between.

I reflect of how my own boundary crossing might be comparable to the embodied knowledge of the young Christians themselves, as they cultivate young Christian identities using their knowledge of God's word and works, as the Holy Spirit dwells in their hearts. I draw on conversations, advice, and accounts given to me by some of the young people, to consider Christ Love's notion of *epignosis* (divine knowledge) as a way of knowing God and self between this world and the divine, using mind body *and spirit*.

My own moments of vulnerability have left me open to transformations which have had the power to create new ways of thinking, seeing, feeling, and doing fieldwork. I have entered what Mclean & Leibing term 'the shadow side of fieldwork', a space where relational experiences can challenge

existing “public knowledge[s]” (2007: xii). It sits uneasily at the confluence of multiple boundaries, between here and there, field and home, academy and encounter, self and other. This is a ‘vulnerable’ self (Bihar 1997) which is a characteristic of the ethnographic self not often confessed in publication. In this case the self is even more vulnerable confronted with a Christian other who is often cast as a “repugnant other” (Harding 1991).

I describe unforeseen ways of knowing which can throw a light upon the ‘shadows’ which are often produced by fieldwork relations of power and positionality (Leibing & McLean 2007:5). I explore the personal and relational experiences of fieldwork which have produced a *knowledge* of God working in, on and through the bodies of myself and those around me, working through immersive methodological contingencies to consider the processes of ethnography as one of getting to know God. Not to be confused with being subsumed as a religious insider, this chapter works through the knowledge gained when transformations reveal what might otherwise be obscured (Coffey 1999:33, see also Goulet & Miller 2007), or what we refuse to see (Turner 1993:6), and the anthropological possibilities for engaging with radical and ontological otherness (Luhrmann 2018). This chapter provides an ethnographic understanding of Charismatic knowledge as it is embodied, learned and gained between this world and the divine.

Here I outline ethnographic experiences and methodologies to challenge existing forms of knowledge which rely on the surfaces of materials and language as evidence (see Harding 2000, Engelke 2007, Keane 2007, Meyer 2011 for examples). This evidence, which relies on the tangible and visible aspects of religion and religiosity, is often the ethnographic medium scholars of religion rely on when researching aspects of the divine. This chapter aims to provide an appropriate grounding in the epistemological concerns of the young members of the ministries as they too seek to increase their knowledge of the divine through both thought and action. Tracing the proximity between this world and the divine through the production of knowledge goes some way to reach across the boundaries that typically separate self from other, material from immaterial. Following embodied processes of

knowledge production shows how the sincere search for divine knowledge- *epignosis*- makes the divine immanent and the power of God useable through Christian selves, entangling inner conviction and outward expression.

Approaches to faith and belief from anthropological perspectives have often privileged an atheistic or least an agnostic position falling back on reasoned analysis to provide anthropological insight, meanwhile avoiding becoming actors within the religious systems being studied. These positions are borne out of the pre-occupation with religious 'beliefs', maintaining the idea that beliefs are rational depending on context. This maintains a highly cognitive and discourse-based understanding of belief. This approach, critiqued by many (Asad 1993, Cannell 2005, Lambek 2012), shows that the secular emancipatory project of anthropology is deeply rooted in Christian epistemology and orthodoxy. This is not to say that belief is not an inherent part of many religious systems, particularly Christianity where the phrase "I believe" is central to the articulation of difference, but thinking against belief in anthropological fieldwork and writing (Lindquist & Coleman 2008) it may be possible to speak about belief without the impasse of an epistemological difference but perhaps an epistemology which works across religious/secular boundaries.

Even those who embrace the ontological turn within anthropology, despite taking seriously the religious worlds they encounter and decolonising beliefs, by placing them within multi-ontological explanations, by insisting that the visons they have really are real, and that the rest of us are not looking hard enough, limit the possibility of co-existence within these worlds of thought (Willerslev & Suhr 2018:72). Their experiences rely on overwhelmingly 'ecstatic' moments of certainty, which although avoiding the problem of belief, do little to enable the transference of knowledge. In doing so they remove relationality from the experience of the divine, and the experiential dynamics by which their visions become real.

My own experience of becoming 'born again' in this case has allowed me to ask not only What is a Christian? (Robbins 2003) or, Who is a Christian? (Garriot & O'Niel 2008), but also: Am I a Christian?

This final question carries important caveats, because although I performed the rites which declare Jesus-Christ as my saviour and invite the Holy Spirit to dwell in my heart, my truth is that when I go home (continuously inhabiting the flux between field and home), I fail to maintain the self-identity of 'Christian'. Additionally, although Christ Love is not prescribed by members as an ethnic, nationalised or racialised space, the majority of devotees are of African heritage, adding further complexity to the authenticity of my boundary crossing.[10] Despite the differences, both real and apparent, which might prevent a so called 'authentic' experience, the boundaries seemed to have been crossed, highlighting the possibility of an ethnographic knowing based upon embodied experiences of the Holy Spirit. Asking whether I am a Christian (or not) allows me to recursively work through the moments that have produced that question and attempt to grasp the quality of faithful experience among the young Christians themselves.

My personal criss-crossing of boundaries between field and home, self and other, and worldly and divine, highlight to me an 'ethnographic self', produced through experiences of the spaces between and inflected with a divine presence. These boundaries and binaries become a heuristic tool for me to challenge, using my own embodied experience, what counts as evidence, data, and knowledge (Luhrmann 2010:213, see also Engelke 2008, Hastrup 2008). A turn to the ethnographic self in this case can take seriously the experiences of immersive fieldwork in relation to religious experience and knowledge. It is by passing through the spaces between that residues of God's Spirit remain in the form of, words, feelings, and sometimes dreams; something which can give an indication of God's presence beyond the surfaces of materials and language, which is collectively embodied. This is an intersubjective and embodied space of knowing (albeit still partial) which is comparable to how the young Christians in Christ Love also embody the divine and partake in the relations by which Christian personhoods are figured and imparted.

[10] The ministries are nodes within complex transnational denominations, with headquarters in Nigeria and Ghana. The majority of the congregations are either born in Africa and in the UK to live and study or are the children of African parents.

The more established members of Christ Love encouraged me to focus on knowing God myself to truly know what their faith was all about. In one sense I feel they were steering me away from representing them negatively or inappropriately. In another they were showing me that there is simply no other way of knowing in this context. They insisted that their ministry is about nothing other than their love for God, their definitions giving them the power to guide my research questions and keep private aspects of the ministry they did not want me to know about. This required an "ethnographic dance" (Jackson Jr. 2013:96), to follow the mysteries of what I was being pushed towards, a dance which ultimately thrust me to encounter the divine. The account above of what I call 'becoming born again', as recorded in my field notes, was a way to make sense of something using my physical, visceral, and sensory experience of the moment.

As I will describe, through conversations with informants, I have been advised that although this, and many other moments, made me 'feel' a certain way, I should think about knowledge of God beyond the physical 'stuff of the flesh', and to do so I needed to develop my own personal relationship with Him. Much of my research has been guided in this way. Being pushed by members of the ministry to focus primarily on exploring faith rather than (ironically) the more enigmatic social structure of the ministry required me to go with the flow of ethnography, eventually realising that I would not be privilege to a holistic view of the lives of the young congregants, but a view in which their 'frontstage' and foregrounded faith was on show. Speaking of African Hebrew Israelites of Jerusalem, who were selective of what they divulged, John Jackson Jr. explains,

> *"They have frustrated many an interested ethnographer who has tried to gain something other than a glossy and pre-packaged rendition…[and] is predicated on their concerted effort to control the terms of any ethnographic conversation about themselves, to steer the ethnographic ship from below, to have some substantive role in constructing and transmitting their story." (2013:90).*

Asking me to give my life to God was perhaps members of Christ's Love way of telling their stories.

I argue that the surfaces of language and materials could only take me so far in seeking the religious knowledge the young Christians embody and express themselves. I consider these embodied experiences to be the affective product of the kind of semiotic forms Webb Keane (2007) describes, whereby the material presence of the divine becomes evident in experience and productive of alternative knowledge. It also indicates the cultivation of a set of body logics and a spiritual sensorium which complicates a mind/body divide (Brahinsky 2012). To contribute to this literature, I consider how the ethnographic self, situated within the complexities of fieldwork can become implicated within these semiotic practices and enter personally into the process through which religious knowledge is gained.

Being and becoming born again for members of Christ Love involves 'increasing' one's knowledge of God through an embodiment of the Holy Spirit, which produces contiguous embodied spaces between this world and the divine, through which bodily techniques, geared towards worship of the divine, are exerted. The worldly and divine bleed into each other via a shared and embodied Sprit of God, as His work is manifested in the world through the material bodies of the faithful. I argue that these spaces although enabled and mediated through language and materials, within the dynamic cultural logic of Charismatic Christianity, are more importantly spaces of a divine knowledge or what Christ Love phrase in their teachings, using the Greek terminology, *'epignosis'*.

Exploring this notion requires the use of interviews conducted with congregants, as well as some of Christ Love's written and digital materials to understand the Holy Spirit as dwelling in the hearts of those who are born again and the embodied sensorium their faith produces. For the young congregants, their identities as 'born again', or 'children of God' are formed and expressed in relation to their knowledge of God, participation in the ministry, and expressions of faith. As an epistemological framework it gives insight it into the mutable embodied spaces between this world and the divine which the worshippers both produce and inhabit themselves- through faith practices and always in

relation to the secular. Here I provide a preliminary interpretation of the Christian epistemology I have encountered during fieldwork, from which I can elaborate in subsequent chapters.

At this point in the thesis, I consider becoming and knowing to echo the processual nature of fieldwork itself, which I argue should situate itself between the permeable boundaries between Christian and non-Christian and produce spaces of relational subjectivity, giving greater insight to the processes of becoming and attainment of knowledge in the lives of the young Christians themselves. It also allows for an examination of the ethnographic self beyond identifying the familiar and foreign between anthropology and Christianity but perhaps to consider becoming born again as a playful or 'ludic' method (Knibble and Droogers 2011) which has enabled me to temporarily drift beyond the boundaries of the discipline and become familiar with the religious worlds I seek to understand. This, I argue, is the space in between and is also the space of ethnography.[11]

The ethnographic moment above allows me to consider being 'born again' as vulnerable submission to God and a process of becoming, as knowledge of God is increased and accumulated. Many aspects of the young congregants' lives can be understood as processes of becoming and this is a theme which runs throughout this thesis, particularly when contextualized within narratives of migration, generation, and Black London youth. The uncertainty of worldly situations are responded to through faith in order to be surpassed and transformed through a relationship with the divine.

The following chapters will show how knowledge and Christian selfhood are put into action by young Christians through ethical participation, to produce and embody the social and cultural forms of Charismatic Christianity. The presence and search for something 'more', acts as a knowledge framework which puts religious lives in motion and enables young people to shift the narrative of

[11] Harding similarly suggests that "*this space between belief and disbelief, or rather the paradoxical space of overlap, is also the space of ethnography. We must enter it to do our work"* (1987:178). Whereas Harding maintains the difference between belief and dis-belief I take the ontological dissonance between the worldly and the divine as a starting point.

diasporic and Black-British identity in London today and respond to their material and youthful situations through the ethical subjectivity of born-again faith.

Ethnography and Christianity: an awkward relationship

The move by ethnographers of Christianity to immerse themselves is often questioned by those academics around us, or not taken seriously enough to be considered important enough to write about or publish. For example, Engelke, speaking of Victor and Edith Turner and Evans-Pritchard points out:

> *"But when we read [the work of Turner and Evans-Pritchard] we should take note of the moments when they slipped out of a clearly professional frame and treated such considerations as a mixture of personal and intellectual challenges – when [Christian] belief, in other words, became method" (Engelke, 2002: 76–9)*

This exercise is not an easy one. As has been well recognised, the ethnographic repertoire is full of awkward and often unwanted encounters between researchers and Christian informants. These moments of discomfort and awkwardness manifest in many ways, particularly when encounters with Christians are unexpected or unwanted. Facing Christianity head on requires methods which allow our research to hurdle the boundaries which have previously left us questioning own sincerity (Coleman. L 2009) or reflecting on our emotional antipathies (Crapanzano 1994). The methodological challenge is to enter into the ethnographic spaces which make us feel uncomfortable, yet stir something within us, or give us new ways of understanding and explaining occurrences (Luhrmann 2010).

My approach to understand the spiritual lives of young Christians without prior value judgements has led me to conceal aspects of my personal life, particularly because personal lives do not stop during fieldwork, especially at home. This reveals another set of shadows within anthropological fieldwork, those which determine the characteristics of our ethnographic selves and the relations of power

through which we operate and the boundaries they draw. Although this concealment comes from a position of respect, whereby I sought to remove aspects of my personality which might increase distance between myself and church members, it re-draws boundaries according to what is concealed. Lovell explains: “Discretion- the veils covering the secret- imply separateness, distinctness of the secret and what lies around it...” (2007:59). However, in the process of fieldwork the secrets we keep and what we reveal produce an intimacy with the people we study (ibid). Lovell explains that the secrets we keep and the secrets they keep are in motion, “secrets ‘secrete’” through experience and dialogue (ibid). To methodologically traverse existing boundaries and shed aspects of my own personality I accidentally produced a position between my worldly self and the divine, where an ‘ethnographic self’ could operate. It is with my ethnographic self that I was able to enter into the spiritual relations of the ministry.

I met Katie for coffee one afternoon in central London during her lunch break. By this point in my research, she had become a mentor of sorts. She asked me how things were going. I explained that I often felt disingenuous and that having given my life to God I was failing to live up to it, that I was concerned I that my actions were somehow deceptive. She comforted me but not in the usual way. She asked, “How has your life changed since getting born-again?” This caught me off guard and required a thoughtful response. I explained to her that it has certainly changed the way I know myself now I am able to recognise a presence of something that I did not acknowledge before. I tell her that my “walk with God” is something that will stay with me forever, and although I will probably not be in the ministry long after my research finishes, I will always carry with me the knowledge that I have opened my heart. By asking me that question Katie performed a form of witnessing, she spoke to the side of me which I tried to conceal from myself. On the way home she sent me a text message:

“Just keep going, one step at a time, you are doing so well, and no one is asking you to be what you are not so no pressure there! God has got you and He knows you and your situation better than you

do.

Have a frank & honest conversation with Him and talk it out, He wants to help you ☺"

In my moment of vulnerability, I revealed something I had been trying to hide. On the other hand, Katie in comforting and supporting me shared with me what she knows about God, and what He knows about me. In pushing me to seek Him further she also caused me to consider what position my experiences had led me to. How had I opened my heart to God? What kind of knowledge is that? Moments of intimacy like this permeate boundaries which between researchers and researched and produce an ethnographic self in the process.

These boundaries shift and mutate according to context, making what might seem so real in one instance unfamiliar in another. Ethnography at 'home' represents this shifting boundary especially when it separates the professional from the ethnographic and recursively between the ethnographer and the academy. The question marks over whether or not I am now a Christian circulate, as jokes, or comments amongst colleagues and peers. "He's had a haircut... he's wearing a smart shirt, is he a…? So, are you a…?" I often find myself vigorously defending the lives of Christian others, to the point of sounding evangelic myself. These are what Shore (1999) describes as "critical experiences" in the construction of ethnographic selves in and beyond the fieldwork context. Situating myself within the academic milieu, even during fieldwork, meant I contaminated the secular space of the institution but the reaction I often received allowed me to reflect on the transformations I had experienced 'in the field'. Combined with the moment I describe above, these experiences in the field (and out of it) have produced the empathetic analysis of knowledge construction which I attempt here.

To inhabit this ethnographic space produces a vulnerability, as sincere ethnography flattens the field and thins the borders between field and home, researcher and researched, which tend to allow the ethnographic self and everyday (academic) self of the researcher to remain separate persons (Jackson Jr. 2013:53-58). These experiences locate the ethnographer of Christianity between in many ways, particularly while the distrust of Christianity permeates the discipline (Cannell 2006). Perhaps the

difficulty of engaging with Christianity on these terms is the "bugbear of belief" (Engelke 2010b), precisely because when we let belief overwhelm us it is considered to be unprofessional and a violation of the exceptional status of participant-observation and authenticity as a frame of knowing anthropologically. The privileging of belief within the anthropology of religion more generally has often prevented a "conversation between cultures" (Ruel 2002) which treats belief as an object to be verified, particularly when belief is assumed to apply to all religious traditions. Instead, and considering Asad's criticism of Geertz, belief should be understood as "activity in the world" (1993:125).

The activity of belief should then include that of playful, vulnerable, and empathetic ethnography. Situating myself within the field of relations produced through participation in the ministry and animated by a shared pursuit of spirituality I have been dragged across the boundaries between myself and the congregants, and in doing so produced an ethnographic space of intersubjectivity which situates myself between the worldly and the divine alongside other congregants. This makes real and comprehendible the production of Charismatic knowledge, precisely because it also works in-between and is animated through the body- in its sensing and emotional capacitates- and its relations.

Bridges of belief

When I began to attend church meetings in 2017 as a post-graduate student and explained my research interests to members of the group, some were immediately concerned that I was trying to "explain the supernatural with the natural", that my position as not born-again would inhibit my understanding. The separation between worldly and divine is strongly articulated at Christ Love and my interests in the worldly manifestations and expressions of their faith, were thought to be missing the point: The Spirit of God. Many of the congregants would frame their relationship with God as one based upon knowledge. Knowledge in the divine sense is regarded as an articulation of truth, and realised through the word of God, whereas worldly, secular knowledge (for example academia) is 'of

the world' and ignorant of the divine. The two can be reconciled corporeally but first requires faith in and knowledge of the word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit, who is received upon salvation.

The fact that I was not born-again and 'filled with the Holy Spirit', to some members of the ministry, meant that I would only ever be able to comprehend their 'supernatural' experiences according to the values and meanings of 'the world' and of 'the flesh', ultimately meaning I would be misguided. During a sermon the Pastor's message felt like it was directed at me:

"It doesn't matter how many degrees or PhD's that you have in this life, because unless you know God for yourself then none of it will matter".

His message made clear again the separation between the natural and the supernatural but pointed to the way that the Spirit functions through it, through a process of knowing. It can be conceptualised as a dynamic space between this world and the divine which defies the rational logics of the secular world, yet functions through it. At this point I was situated firmly in the secular.

For example, emotions and feelings, although often visceral and felt within the body are the manifestation of something considered to more than their material output. Language too, although written and materialised in the Bible- read and heard- carries with it a spiritual quality which transcends the written or spoken form. The bible for these ministries *is* God's word and the words contain a spiritual knowledge. I could listen to a Pastor's message, be moved by the visceral experience of a room of worshippers praying in tongues, touched on the hand by another member during prayer, or feel the burning 'fire' of the Holy Spirit as a Pastor shrieks into a microphone, sound vibrations sending shooting sensations up my legs into my torso; but this would all be misunderstood unless I accepted the supernatural element which made all these moments spiritual and indicators for the work of the Holy Spirit flowing through those conduits (Reinhardt 2015b, Coleman 2009). My informants' concerns led me to the limits of language and materials for understanding and in order to grasp the quality of the congregants relationships with God I was advised that I should know God for myself. It was often recommended I should start reading my Bible, which would "soften my heart". To

know God myself was occasionally proposed as an ultimatum, if I were to continue to spend time getting to know certain individuals. On another occasion I was light-heartedly told that if I hung around for too long, I would be "in serious danger of believing in God". It was expressed by some members of the ministry that if I did so it would be only a matter of time before I would "let Him in".

Talal Asad argues, "the Christian apologist tends not to regard belief as the conclusion to a knowledge process but as its precondition" (1993:47). I consider that knowledge process as it is embodied, and the consequences this has had on my own methodological approach. Anthropological approaches to the study of Pentecostal and Charismatic forms of Christianity have located its global popularity and proliferation within a physical and material basis. André Droogers considers the popularity of the global movement to be "precisely because the corporeal experience, through the charismata, is so important, it grounds universal human potential in a physical basis" (2001:57). Tracing this physical basis, others locate divine presence through the dynamic flow of language, materials, and media (Coleman 2000). This has fostered important discussions on embodied-yet mediated- experiences of the divine, which has led to a great deal of works which trace the material and linguistic forms of Christianity and their 'sensational' and material deployments in relation to the 'sensing body' (Keane 2007, de Witte 2009, Morgan 2010, Meyer 2012).

As an object of and complication of observational evidence (Engelke 2008), the turn to material religion and the uses of language for example, does create a surface from which the observing anthropologist can find some more stable ground and can allow for a comparative study of religion which does not rely on an ontological divide based upon belief (Keane 2008). From this position material approaches to religion challenge the "privileging of 'inward' belief above 'outward' ritual practices, content above form, texts above objects" (Meyer 2012). Webb Keane's notion of semiotic ideologies deals with the "dynamic interconnections among different modes of signification at play within a particular historical and social formation" (2018:67). Put simply, Keane deals with the ways in which objects are attached to signs and become meaningful.

In this vein, semiotic forms have been shown to define what is considered material or immaterial in the first place, and what is an is not an indicator of authentic divine presence (Engelke 2007). They have been employed anthropologically as evidence for processes of objectification by which words, bodies, and materials become religiously meaningful and portable to animate religious experience (Engelke and Thomlinson 2006). These semiotic modalities guide what becomes objectifiable in what Keane (2010) describes as the "surface of things" (perhaps what could be described as the 'manifested presence of God'), highlighting the social, religious, and ethical relations produced through the enactment of languages, materials, and bodies.

However, to consider the Holy Spirit as embodied actor requires a way to grasp the immaterial, which although demanding attention to the signification of material forms, also requires consideration of the active role the divine plays in the transformation and animation of those forms, including for this argument, the ethnographic self. Birgit Meyer rightly points out that to focus on material forms there lies a paradox, where analysis of semiotic forms requires an outside perspective despite making comments on the inside experience of the religious phenomena in question (2011: 37). Perhaps this duality of perspectives renders material forms from the 'outside' perspective appear as fetishes, but as Meyer qualifies, this argument bears traces of a semiotic ideology indebted to modern Protestantism (ibid).

Jon Bialecki's (2014) argument asks whether God can exist in anthropological atheism. He sees the implication for Keane's project to be that although materials embedded within particular semiotic ideologies compose the presence of the divine entity, they appear passive, produced by human subjects, rather than as an equal actants in a network of equally agentive objects (2014:37-38). Following Jon Bialecki's arguments further, which questions existing atheistic and ontological presuppositions that often frame God as a product of human agency, he challenges the idea that "agency is to be located solely in human agents, and that human creations cannot exceed the capacities endowed by their creators" (ibid:34). Using his own research experience with the North

American Vineyard Pentecostal church, in conversation with Tanya Luhrmann's book, *When God Talks Back* (2012), and framed by Bruno Latour's object-oriented-ontology, Bialecki locates God's agency in heterogeneous material - and psychological- formations, which allow God to be a constant source of surprise (ibid:41-42).

Bialecki's discussion of Latourian ontology is an understanding of objects which are linked together in chains of relation, enabling a multiplicity of religious experience with a God who is existentially real. Working through Bialecki's arguments, perhaps it is possible to consider its implication for the ethnographic method. This object-oriented-ontology allows God -or the Holy Spirit- to be considered as an agentive object (equal to all other objects) entangled with the concepts of the ethnographer as well as their informants. Extending these chains of object relation to include God, His worshippers as well as the ethnographer, fashions religious experience as deeply relational and embedded in the ethnographic process. Bearing this in mind, approaching the embodied materiality of an agentive Holy Spirit from the ethnographer's perspective should be approached with caution, not by dismissing the power of semiotic forms but to consider how they enable the divine to become a signified 'as if' within embodied experiences without foreclosing the possibility that the divine becomes an 'as is' referent of belief (Webster 2012, also Robbins 2007).

To this end Willersev & Suhr (2018) consider the anthropological challenge to encounter faith within anthropological fieldwork. Using Kierkegaard's notion of "a leap of faith" they convincingly call for an anthropological response to disruptive and uncertain moments of divine experience in fieldwork, to allow revelation to work through us as ethnographers. According to Tanya Luhrmann (2018), this is an ontological challenge, not to decide whether belief is empirically founded, but to enter into the moral relations by which we may be able to say something about the worlds we share, which involves confronting radical otherness. Accepting the divine is also an act of accepting the religious actors we engage with and where Willerslev & Suhr's exercise focuses on the openness of anthropology to receive revelation, it also appears to be a relational one where the divine agent is acknowledged and

accepted which and can allow for the transformative, revelatory, and collectively experienced work of the divine as it manifests in worldly form.

When a Pastor at Christ Love's student arm preached to the congregation that the only thing separating an atheist from God is belief, he taught the congregation that "belief is a bridge" which connects the atheist to God. The way to build this bridge, he continued, is to share knowledge of the Holy Spirit. In the ministry, sharing the Holy Spirit takes many forms and congregants will spend many hours evangelising or 'outreaching' around their university campus'. They distribute printed material, or speak to passers-by and their peers, encouraging them to take a short prayer of salvation, to receive the Holy Spirit and become born again. The responsibility of the congregants is to make the bridge of belief available to all, by following the biblical impetus to share the gospel. Speaking metonymically during his sermon, the Pastor pointed to a way in which the existence of God can become a reality, even for the non-believer. Not only is the possibility of belief made available through the actions of human agents, but it is directed, inspired, and implemented by an agentive Holy Spirit.

The Pastor's sermon calling for a bridge, allows me to work through both arguments by Bialecki and Willerslev & Suhr to consider how God becomes real through the embodiment of divine revelation as it is embedded in wider networks of ethnographic and material relationality. Making available to the non-believing ethnographer a divine knowledge, enabled, and enacted by an embodiment of the Holy Spirit, it might be possible to consider belief not as precondition but a "conclusion to a knowledge process" (Asad 1993:21). This raises the question: What knowledge(s) allow for a bridging between God and an atheist anthropologist?

Belief is an inherent part of religion, particularly Christianity where the phrase "I believe" is central to the articulation of difference. The prayer of salvation at Christ Love, which appears inside the back page of their daily devotional pamphlet, 'Rhapsody of Realities'[12] the individual is required to: "believe

[12] Discussed in more detail in Chapter 2

with all my heart in Jesus Christ, Son of the living God", reinforcing the Protestant requirement for a sincere commitment to God (Keane 2007).

However, thinking against belief in anthropological fieldwork- at least as an indicator of intellectual inner conviction- (Lindquist & Coleman 2008) it may be possible to speak about belief without the impasse of an epistemological difference but perhaps a bridging, which works across religious/secular boundaries. This 'bridging' produces embodied experience which becomes entangled with divine agency (the "living God" expressed in the salvation prayer) through a divine knowledge, ultimately making belief a possibility.

Whereas Bialecki's (and Luhrmann's) Vineyard worshippers appear to be tentative in their framing of God's works, piecing together and allowing for His reality through various material and psychological forms, framed 'as if' God is acting through these "heterogeneous constitutive objects set in relation to each other" (ibid:41), the young Christians of Christ Love perform their faith with a sense of surety, metonymically 'as is' God is dwelling acting and directing them in the world through their own bodies and actions (Poewe 1989). For them, the Holy Spirit is a person, and He is real. They know God is real because of what they consider to be a divine knowledge- epignosis- set above 'worldly' knowledge and embodied in the form of the Holy Spirit. I ask how this embodied knowledge enables belief? In doing so how might this knowledge provide linkages between the worldly and the divine?

"Don't you want to feel as good as me Tom?", Brother Samuel asked me on the train after service one evening. To take an observant position was not enough for some of my informants who wanted me to enter into a set of relations based upon their knowledge of the divine, to embed myself into the ethics of the social and to really *experience* the Holy Spirit. To take the presence of God seriously perhaps requires an attempt to grasp it with more than mediated forms and what can be observed, heard, or touched. Although important, relying solely on language and materials to comprehend religious experience, as was my initial intent, would have inhibited my ability to discern the worldly from the divine, instead relying on the surfaces of language, materials and bodies that could be

observed. To grasp the supernatural element, as it is embodied, activating these processes for members of Christ Love required a slightly different starting point which involved my own subjective experiences and transformation in relation to the divine entity. This required a leap of faith for myself.

While I could allow myself to become moved by the animation of semiotic forms, coming to know God also involves learning to feel, think, and know in a way unfamiliar to the anthropological register. Simply acknowledging the power of semiotic practices does not provide us with an intimate knowledge of Charismatic experience- or in this case a Charismatic knowledge of God- and relies too heavily on what is perceivable and experienced within an immanent frame, rather than one modulated by the divine as is it experienced and known by worshippers.[13] Semiotic forms and mediated analysis circles the tricky notion of belief to comprehend religious experience, but as Birget Meyer (2011) points out there lies a paradox where analysis of semiotic forms requires both an *inside and outside* perspective of the religious phenomena in question. To go beyond this, I would argue that allowing ourselves to inhabit the divine is a way of experiencing and knowing with the ethnographic self (including the ethnographic body) rather than with evidence of our worldly senses and gives a more empathetic and arguably ethical understanding of what is happening.

Through participation and immersion beyond surfaces of materials and language, letting the knowledge processes that motivates the formation of semiotic forms sweep and throw me into new ways of doing, feeling, thinking and knowing that I am able to begin to piece together what might be called a Charismatic Christian knowledge which involves the materially embodied presence of the Holy

[13] Joel Robbins (2016) in his critique of 'immanent ethics', produces a powerful argument for the place of the transcendent. He argues that, whilst human beings are often caught in the flow of things in the 'everyday', there are often moments in religious lives which are attuned to the presence of what lies beyond. Similarly, Bruce Kapferer, considers religious ritual to be 'virtuality', which enables "the internal dynamics of rite as the potency of the capacity of ritual to alter, change, or transform the existential circumstances of persons in nonritual realities" (2004:45). When understood in a framework of becoming, the transcendent or the virtual may be what immanent expressions of faith are oriented towards, rather than simply modulated within expressions of the everyday (Robbins 2016:770).

Spirit and the cultivation of an uncanny sensorium which is situated and works between this world and the divine.

Epignosis: "In the world but not of it"

Watching some now dated online videos of Christ Love founder, CEO, father, and Pastor, he teaches the biblical notion of *epignosis*. He describes epignosis as a 'full and exact knowledge', which is divinely held and imparted, using the Greek translation of the bible to emphasise his point. *Epignosis* is knowledge, which enables the knower to participate in the gifts of the spirit, and to function with the power of God. This is put into opposition with *gnosis*, which is worldly or intellectual knowledge. Christ Love's particular liturgy teaches that epignosis is the highest stage of knowledge, passing through *ginosko,* the revelation of the bible as truth: *aido,* the awareness that this alternative knowledge can provide blessings: and finally, *epignosis,* the awareness and revelation that God's blessings can be used through the Holy Spirit. The student ministry watches sections of their Pastor's online videos during each service and this message, is particularly popular. Not only does it make a distinction between this world and the divine but points to the ways in which they are entangled with the word of God and an embodiment of the Holy Spirit.

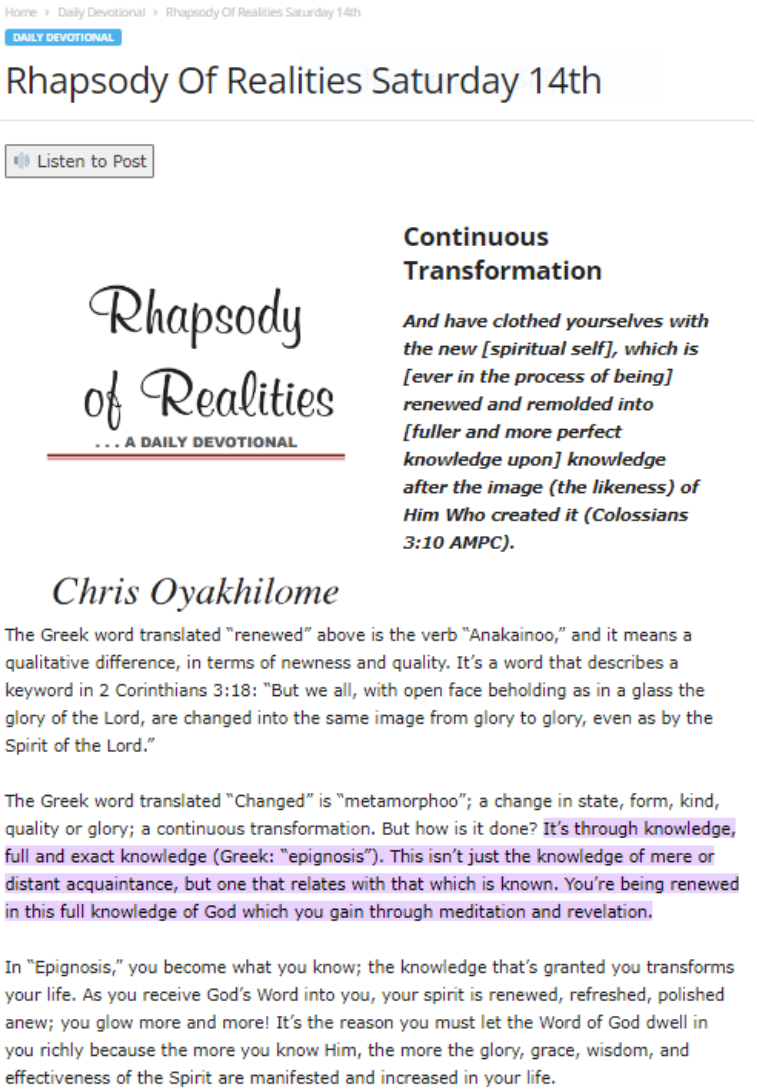
The notion of epignosis is not particular to this ministry but does provide a ground form which to work through the construction and situatedness of Christian selves. An internet search pulls up multiple pages from Christian ministries discussing the importance of epignosis for those who are born-again, often drawing on biblical references:

"*And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him:" (Colossians 3:10),*

"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:" (Ephesians 1:17).

A page from Christ Love's daily devotional reads:

"This kind of knowledge is full, exact knowledge— "epignosis" (Greek). God's provisions aren't going to come to pass in your life just because they're written in the pages of the Bible; there's a knowledge of Him that you must have; knowledge that unites the knower with that which is known; knowledge beyond the senses; specific knowledge, without assumptions… Therefore, the way to know Him, and get to discover you, is to study and meditate on the Word."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DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Rhapsody Of Realities Saturday 14th

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Rhapsody of Realities

. . . A DAILY DEVOTIONAL

Continuous Transformation

And have clothed yourselves with the new [spiritual self], which is [ever in the process of being] renewed and remolded into [fuller and more perfect knowledge upon] knowledge after the image (the likeness) of Him Who created it (Colossians 3:10 AMPC).

Chris Oyakhilome

The Greek word translated "renewed" above is the verb "Anakainoo," and it means a qualitative difference, in terms of newness and quality. It's a word that describes a keyword in 2 Corinthians 3:18: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."

The Greek word translated "Changed" is "metamorphoo"; a change in state, form, kind, quality or glory; a continuous transformation. But how is it done? It's through knowledge, full and exact knowledge (Greek: "epignosis"). This isn't just the knowledge of mere or distant acquaintance, but one that relates with that which is known. You're being renewed in this full knowledge of God which you gain through meditation and revelation.

In "Epignosis," you become what you know; the knowledge that's granted you transforms your life. As you receive God's Word into you, your spirit is renewed, refreshed, polished anew; you glow more and more! It's the reason you must let the Word of God dwell in you richly because the more you know Him, the more the glory, grace, wisdom, and effectiveness of the Spirit are manifested and increased in your life.

Figure 1-Screenshot of Rhapsody of Realities Daily Devotional online. Usually distributed in booklet form every month.

Not only do these biblical and liturgic references suggest that knowledge is gained, but it is gained through the bible (or other written and spoken or materials) *via* the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit then "connects the knower with what is known". This knowledge is considered prior to its physical

manifestations in the form of the transcendent divine but is actuated and 'entextualised' through the bodies of Christian actors (Keane 2007). When someone is born-again, they have with them the Spirit of God, who establishes God's words in their sprit. Thus, the Holy Spirit becomes an embodied actor within the process of knowledge production. During an interview with Michelle, a group Pastor in the ministry, explained to me:

"[Epignosis], its more than what you can see with your eyes, more than what you can hear with your ears, more than what you can see with your senses, its more than what experience tells you, it's more than what science tells you, it's more than what experiments tell you, laboratories, law, books, anything that has ever been written could tell you… it takes faith to live in epignosis because it's beyond the sense realm. It means that you have what you can't see. The bible says that Spirit of God bears witness with our spirit that Jesus Christ is God, which means that because you have the Holy Spirit in you, you can believe that Jesus Christ is God. It bears witness, it gives you a knowing of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is like a corroborator that Jesus Christ is God. Faith is the corroboration in your Spirit that what you say you have, you actually have… Jesus Christ is the word, the word brings about epignosis…"

One evening after a mid-week service I asked Katie, another group Pastor, what being filled with the Holy Spirit was like for her. She pulled out a plastic bottle from her bag and explained to me that the bottle is her body, and the water inside the Holy Spirit. She explained that if she were to fill the water bottle up, that is what it is like to be filled with the Spirit, filling her up from head to toe, inhabiting all areas of her body, but not a physical composition. When an individual decides that Jesus Christ is their saviour, the individual is thought to be filled with the Holy Spirit, providing them with the faith and the capacity for further knowledge. This gives the individual the confidence to believe in and receive the power of God, thus belief is not necessarily a prerequisite, but a process of internalised knowledge enabled through an initial declaration of faith, and further practice.

Katie continued to explain that she has learned that Jesus' sacrifice meant she was not living in sin and that she did not need to atone because He, through Jesus Christ has given her all things. In line with

the global prosperity movement, this ministry's liturgy encourages members that they are "all things through Christ" and their "inheritance in Christ" entitles them to live according to spiritual gifts.[14] One of many Instagram posts by Christ Love reads: "Learn to function in the Spirit, with your spirit, and by the Holy Spirit" emphasising the importance of the Holy Spirit in everyday activity. Learning who one is as a born-again Christian is a process of learning how to operate according to the Spirit. This can be understood as an expression of epignosis, as members of the ministry consider themselves to be walking examples of the trinity. "*We are sprit beings*", explained Michelle:

"When you learn that Jesus Christ is the son of God, that He came to die for you, that you are now righteous, that your sins have all been forgiven, you've heard it and you realise, wow I'm a child of God, and you realise your old life has been departed by the God life and you come to accordance that I am no longer a human being, I am no longer something that is human, that I'm a Spirit being, you've been awakened to the Spirit realm"

To be "in the world but not of it" is often expressed by members of the ministry, accepting that their faith as something which is real despite how others may perceive it. Here, *epignosis* is an example of a knowledge process which acknowledges the relationship between this world and the divine, connecting the two in process, as those who are born-again distinguish themselves form the knowledge of the world, whilst maintaining alterity within it.

This kind of knowledge is knowing that God exists inside oneself who is born again. Through Him one is able to operate with full spiritual gifts. Giving one's life to God sets off a process of becoming, producing aspirational subjectivities, where gifts of the Spirit can provide success and prosperity, through activity in the world.[15] Increasing knowledge is to learn and use the gifts bestowed through the death of Jesus Christ upon the person who is 'born again', allowing them to walk In God's divine

[14] These are common teachings and phrases spoken during sermons or disseminated through the Christ's Love daily devotional, promoting success and prosperity.
[15] This See Maxwell (1998), Haynes (2015), for examples of prosperity gospel in political and economic African contexts.

'will'. During an interview Katie describes the first time she gave her life to God, to receive these gifts, at the age of 14:

K: I remember crying profusely, like serious full-on crying, not just a tear trickling, I was weeping. I remember my friend came down to the altar with me and I asked her "Is this normal?", because I didn't know why I was crying, because if you know why you are then that is fair enough…I was crying for like two hours.

T: Is that a typical emotion?

K: What emotion do you attach to it? I didn't know if it was joy, I definitely know it wasn't sadness. I wasn't crying for joy because I didn't know what to be joyful about. I didn't have knowledge of what it was. I didn't know that God is inside of me. These things I came to know afterwards…It was obviously an expression of what was going on inside my heart.

Through this logic of embodiment, it can be understood how Christians- those who give over a great deal of attention to the Holy Spirit- begin to construct their notions of self, according to their knowledge of Him. This knowledge is more than inner conviction, but a materially enabled embodiment of the spirit. Stepping up to the altar Katie submitted her worldly flesh to be filled with the Holy Spirit, to be made spiritual. Her tears are an expression of her "heart" but also emphasise the position between this world and the divine that she found herself. In this process matter and spirit become one.

The word made flesh, and the flesh made spirit: The body logics of Charismatic Christianity

I would often ask members of the ministry the best way to know God. Almost always the response was "His word":

"You can have experiences, but they don't explain themselves, the word explains it… If you don't have an accurate understanding of the word, you can have an experience but not accurately define what

has happened…It could be the work of the devil… The power [of the Spirit] doesn't come before the word…"

The word of God is considered the most important way to know God and increase one's faith, and to understand the work of the Spirit. Inherited from the reformation, evangelical forms of Christianity consider the Bible "to contain all the knowledge necessary for salvation" (Strhan 2013:226), something which Christ Love also holds to be true, albeit with a strong focus of the embodiment of the Spirit. However, one does not just listen to the sermons, worship music, or read the bible passively and intellectually, neither does it rely solely on visceral moments of worship; their experiences with God are said to be dealt with the spirit, enabling the transformation of minds and bodies thereafter[16].

Many of the young Christians I have met admit that they often 'feel' God during worship. What makes this feeling remarkable is that it is often described as being concerned with the 'heart'. The heart- is where the Spirit dwells and is stirred. It connects the inner with the outer, this world and the divine, the body with the mind, through which God moves. When someone is born-again, they have with them the Spirit of God, who establishes God's words in the heart. Thus, the Holy Spirit becomes an embodied actor within the process of knowledge production. It is the Holy Spirit is who makes these words heard and felt within the heart, makes the words flesh and at the same time the flesh spiritual. Whether it is the word of the bible or the voice of a Pastor, the Holy Spirit activates them. This makes them real and true for the faithful.

In turn it requires speaking and doing from the heart and tuning one's activity in the world to the work of the Holy Spirit. Although I will discuss in greater detail in later chapters, the participation and activities of members of the ministry is driven by a desire to express the Holy Spirit in all that they do. This could be evangelism, as they seek to share His word with fellow students on campus or with strangers in the street. It could also be in the form of giving, usually monetary tithes and offerings, and is not just a physical gesture but one which is expressed from the heart. Listening to God's word

[16] Luhrmann (2004) labels this process "metakinesis".

and putting it into action, in this world, connects the worldly and the divine. More importantly, the young Christians situate themselves between the two, acting according to their knowledge of a transcendent divine by means of an embodied and immanent Spirit.

Knowing with the heart requires listening, speaking, and doing according to one's relationship with God and suggests an alternative logic of sensing, or a "shifting sensorium" (Ong 1991) which complicates normative notions of sensory experience. Understood as a sensory transformation enables an analysis of Christian becoming which does not rely on existing tropes of conversion and rupture but perhaps signals the cultivation of 'born-again' bodies who exist in this world but are not of it.

The relationship between the material, immediate, emotional, and body as opposed to the immaterial, transcendent, intellectual, and cognitive, as evidence of God's presence often draws boundaries according to creed and doctrine. Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity is often framed as being concerned primarily with the visceral sensation of 'God's touch', and being overwhelmed emotionally by the Holy Spirit, whereas fundamental and Conservative forms of Christianity are encircled by their distrust of emotions and materials- instead a reliance on the literal word of the bible as it is meditated upon and internalised in by a sincere subject take prominence (Keane 2007, see also Harding 2000, Crapanzano 2000). However, the notion of epignosis as described above, requires the carnal body for the Spirit to work, drawing the inner subject and the divine agent into a close relationship in both mind and body.

Despite the anthropological stances which separate literal and material Christianity, what these accounts have in common is their descriptions of Christians who are seeking to know God intimately, know His plan for them, and to know how He works in their lives. This search for knowledge includes both the body and the mind, this world and the divine. This knowledge process involves the internalisation of entextualised semiotic forms, and practices of faith in way that produce intimate relationships with the divine. Working somewhere in between this world and the divine, the

cultivation of Christian selves in this context permeates multiple boundaries, between body and mind, this world and the divine, the word and the flesh, and ultimately is the work of what might be considered the 'cultural form' of Charismatic Christianity (Csordas 1997, Robbins 2004a).

This, following Anna Strhan's account of student Evangelical Anglicans (2013) requires "practicing the space in between", as they learn to embody their beliefs whilst keeping their knowledge in line with that of the Bible. Like the young Christians in this thesis, the Conservative evangelical students Strhan describes, seek knowledge of God, using body, mind, and spirit. They work through the embodiment of their beliefs to collapse the space between this world and the divine, mind and body, by practicing their faith in this world, blending the utilitarianism with intellectualism (Engelke 2007:140-146). What makes the members of Christ Love significant is that although embodying the word of God as it is written in the Bible, their focus is upon the work of the Holy Spirit who enables the internalisation of God's word and makes it real.

There are of course a whole host of dynamics by which Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians constitute and 'cultivate' their spiritual sensorium and "body -logics" between this world and the divine (Brahinsky 2012). The anthropology of embodiment can provide important insights into the work of the feeling body in the production of knowledge. The Charismatic self, which is composed of body, mind and spirit is formed existentially and dialectically through the cultural logics of the movement, as adherents experience and perform what they regard to be the work of the Spirit (see Csordas 1997). This phenomenological understanding suggests that the 'born again' body senses in ways that challenge normative ways of perceiving- which often rely on the evidence of the visceral senses- to distinguish the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Alternative sensory logics are entangled with alternative body logics and suggests that it is the work of culture which produces alternative "ways of sensing" (Howes and Classen 2013). This alternative logic, and following Howes suggestion, requires "ethnographers to elicit the sensory models of the people they are studying" (ibid:49-50). Is it possible then to do ethnography with the heart? When

Charismatic Christianity is viewed as a cultural form, in dialectical relationship to the body, the ability to hear without hearing, see without seeing, and feel without feeling, instead to do these things with the heart, become plausible when considered to be involved in a process of knowledge production where the Holy Spirit is an actor.

Viewed as a process of learning or 'cultivation', by which an individual acquires the knowledge of alternative sensory modalities, attunes subjectivity to the presence of God (Luhrmann 2012). This suggests that being born again is a process of perpetual becoming, whereby the experience of the Holy Spirit is key to the formation of self, based upon another kind of knowledge, that engages emotion in ways which defy rational reduction of emotion to either cognition or visceral reaction (Rosaldo 1984, Lutz 1986, Jagger 1989).

Persons and their bodies in the youth churches are situated between this world and the divine precisely because they recognise themselves as being composed of both flesh and Spirit.[17] The task is to consider embodiment not only as worldly experience but also as a knowledge process directed towards the divine. Becoming in this case, involves gaining knowledge of who one is through the Holy Spirit and the word of God.

Knowledge as Between, Knowledge as Relations, Knowledge as Reflexivity

The Anthropology of Christianity has developed over the past two decades a coherent set of concepts and methods to place the religious lives of Christian actors at its core. To take seriously the concerns of religious informants 'on their own terms' it has been suggested that anthropologists employ and dialogical approach in order to enter the "intersubjective space between subjects" (Garriot & O'Neil 2008). This inter-subjective 'between' features in the post-modernist reflexivity of Michael Jackson (see 1989), but also resonates with the deeply personal and vulnerable ethnographic projects of

[17] The inability to remove the flesh and the world as a vehicle for the Spirit maintains a possibility for influence of evil spirits, and the work of Satan.

Stoller & Olkes (1989), Hastrup (1995), Bihar (1997) amongst others. This ethnographic exercise requires placing ethnographic experience and to a further extent the ethnographic self at boundaries between self and other and in this case this world and the divine.

Stoller describes the between as productive space of knowledge. The learning of what becomes knowledge involves a 'sensuous' and embodied inhabitation of the space between what they already know and what they are seeking to understand. For Stoller, this involves stepping across the boundaries of the known to inhabit the world of sorcery "from the inside" (2009:27). Similarly, Hastrup (1995) realises the potential for ethnographic fieldwork, of 'being there' to experience the rich texture of the worlds, realities, and knowledges we seek to understand. In order to grasp the lived reality of the social worlds we seek to comprehend we must situate ourselves fully within events and complexities that make them possible. Confrontations with radical otherness enable anthropology to reconsider the certainty of their own worlds, as new experiences of the divine for example can offer hope for change (Luhrmann 2018). The young people in this thesis challenge the uncertainty of their material worlds by transforming them through faith and their encounters with the divine. In this sense, my personal ethnographic encounters provide an initial unsettling of the order of reality which once held so much surety.

Despite my initial attempts to employ an ethnographic agnosticism and limit my participation in church services, I quickly found that the rules of practice required a degree of involvement I had not anticipated. I began to question my own sincerity, becoming conscious of the limits of agnostic participation, and worried my participation without belief was insincere. When I met a young man on my own university campus, Micha, he was adamant that the only way my research could ever succeed was if I made a personal commitment to God. After all the bible says that a double minded man is a dangerous one.

The moment I describe above of 'becoming born again' was a kind of watershed moment, happening over a year after first attending the meetings at Christ Love, and coming as an unwanted and

uncomfortable intrusion into my passive observation. I later found out that members of the ministry had been praying for my salvation, and I can recall the awkwardness as I dodged any previous attempts to 'win' my soul and give my life to God. In fact, at Christ Love it was strongly encouraged that new visitors adhere to the weekly altar call to publicly declare their commitment to God. Many times, I have tapped on the shoulder during the altar call and quizzed on if I was 'born again' or not. This is something that almost all new visitors go through. Submitting to the altar call is as much of a personal conviction as it is a public display of conformity.

As a rite of passage and wow 'saved', this act transformed how the ministry perceived my presence. No longer just a 'researcher' in the congregation I was now 'Brother Tom', my internal transformation was also an extraneous and public conversion. [18] Through fieldwork I became caught up in my own series of events, which have formed what I consider to be an incorporation of practical and embodied knowledge (Hastrup 2004, Jenkins 1994). This moment gave me a privileged status whereby I could do the work of ethnography whilst engaging with embodied knowledge of the divine, formed through a relationship with fellow members. Whether I had planned for it or not, I was now implicated in a field of relations which involved the congregants, God, and an embodiment of the Holy Spirit.

This social transformation is indicative of intersubjective relations between researchers and researched and highlights the rules of participation and co-performance expected of the congregation, which I will discuss in a later chapter. By performing the rites to become 'born-again' I was entering into the material relations through which members of the ministry collectively worshipped and sought a relationship with God. Soon I was expected to learn more from the bible, was encouraged to pray in tongues, and called up for anointing- some of which involved acts of mimesis, others which seemed more sincere- as well as encouraged to actively participate in the work of the ministry.[19] I shared this embodied space with the congregation and was expected to participate accordingly, to "play my part"

[18] Bennetta Jules-Rosette (1975) describes how her own conversion experience enabled her to set herself apart from other outsiders and to consider the publicly visible and socially constructed process of conversion.
[19] 'Working' for the ministry is a requirement for members.

(Hastrup 2004, Fabian 1990). These were all logical steps now I too had a 'relationship with God', and it was expected that as my knowledge of Him increased so would my outward expression of faith (even if I decided to draw certain limits on my participation).

I would often switch between different ministries which was considered unusual, due to the deep commitment members have, as well as the importance placed on being 'grounded' in a particular Church to 'grow' as a Christian. Often when I would introduce myself to new members of the ministries, or people I had not had the opportunity to speak to previously, they would ask if I was a Christian. I would explain how my research as well as my interest in faith and youth had become a personal 'walk with God'. Sometimes I felt this was entirely true, sometimes strategic to avoid lengthy questioning, but also a use of language that would enable communication.

My presence and the nature of my project played a role within this intersubjectivity. Pastor Ruth told me she had prophecy that my research would bring people to God through academia and would often tell me that I was one of her "favourite stories" of salvation within her campus branch of the ministry, the university I attended most regularly. I'm not sure why but perhaps this was because it was the least expected. Playing my part enabled a reflexivity between myself and members of Christ Love. Although most knew I was there to conduct PhD research, my own set of events had drawn both myself and members of the ministry into a reflexive relationship based around faith. Members of Christ Love became reflexively aware that the content of my thesis relied on how I formed my own relationship with God, something they were able to supervise and nurture. At the same time, I became reflexively aware that having partaken in the embodied act of renewal I was now complicit in the spirituality of these relationships.

Being seen to be filled with the spirit myself, meant that opportunities for the transference of spiritual knowledge were based on a shared relationship with God, rather than across boundaries which tend to filter out the divine, as was the case prior to my 'salvation'. Sometimes my questioning would confuse, or cause congregants to consider what might otherwise be tacit, compelling them into a

closer interlocutory and reflexive space whereby the divine could be brought into view and transferred (Crapanzano 1994). Often during interviews an interviewee's faith would somehow take hold and they would speak, at length, in an evangelical way, ending up at some distance from the original question, but taking us on a journey through scripture in a "dialogic performance" (Conquergood 1985). This occurred especially when divine knowledge was animated, and the Spirit called upon to answer my questions by recalling passages from the bible. The Holy Spirit would sometimes guide them to the correct passage, or they would pray in tongues briefly to find the correct words. The words would carry the interviewees from point, to point, almost like a sermon itself, as words and scripture swirled to formed contiguous themes. Long conversations would often leave me feeling exhausted, confused, or slightly frustrated, but within the encounter itself it is hard to ignore the weight of the words spoken and the presence they carry.

I consider these relations to be based upon sincerity and evident of an intersubjective negotiation and learning process usually considered to be "extraethnogrpahic" (Jackson Jr. 2010). I was not engaged in what Jackson Jr. (ibid) might call 'disembodied subjectivity', but I became what he would call a 'sincere' ethnographic body who entered a sphere of relations based on a shared embodiment of the Holy Spirit. Rather than relying on notions of belief and authenticity to inform ethnographic understanding- which I would perhaps never reach.[20] Transformation in this case led to increased participation and has enabled the formation of an ethnographic knowledge otherwise obscured by the boundaries which separated me from the workings of the Holy Spirit and the bodies through which He operates. Letting God in was just the first step to open oneself up to further experience and knowledge. Describing this process as experienced for himself in an African American Baptist church, Hinson sums up:

[20] Not to say that experiences and beliefs of Christ Love members are not authentic. Knibble and Droogers (2011) stress the importance of a playful approach which moves back and forth between 'metaphorical' and 'metonymical' modes of understanding. This is a challenge to existing modes of understanding religious truth claims (atheistic, agnostic, theistic) which maintain a positivistic separation between scientific / religious truth claims, rather than 'playing' between them, which is often the case for members of Christ Love who express divinity in this world.

> *"Experience grants knowledge; knowledge informs belief; belief invites further experience. At the same time, experience confirms belief; belief provides a frame for knowledge; and knowledge explains experience" (2000:11-12).*

In many ways the transformation of my social status within Christ Love was also coupled with a personal transformation whereby I became vulnerable to further experience and eventually a form of knowledge. Although I would not frame this as belief per se, the embodied experiences I encountered enabled me to recognise the divine element which animated the sociality of emotional expression in which I was now complicit.

As a process of becoming, it began to take over almost all aspects of my life where I would often be aware that I was now in the eyes of the congregation 'born-again'. Even when outside of the ministry's field of relations I have often stopped to consider my actions, particularly when my social activities involved submitting to worldly pleasures not outwardly condoned by the congregants. Some old friends even became suspicious that I had converted. Inhabiting the space between and oscillating in and out of a set of relations saturated with the presence of the divine soon became a personal introspection, as events I began to interpret events around me differently. Falling asleep with my laptop on one night and waking to find the screen frozen and the former Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, staring out at me took on a new resonance causing me to wonder if this was a message from God. On another occasion, I had a dream, in which a voice as clear as a bell told me "God's miracles are real" and this seemed to become evidence, beyond the material, of divine presence in my life. These moments, and many others, surprised and unsettled my usual patterns of thought and knowing but also became talking points between myself and my informants. Perhaps coincidental (as per the secular argument), these moments can also be viewed as my own embodied and internalised knowledge of the divine and how it operates through minds, bodies, and new-found spirits, between this world and the divine. The Holy Spirit had become an actor within the relations of fieldwork as well as in the moments when I found myself alone.

To 'become born again' allowed me to acknowledge, through my own embodiment, the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of the congregants. This act also allowed me to inhabit the spaces between this world and the divine, which are also spaces of ethnography. Situated between my worldly ignorance and Christ Love's divine knowledge I began to learn from others the importance of *epignosis*, not a concept alone but as knowledge in motion as it became enacted through our bodies and in our interactions. Further, this newfound comprehension of a divine other caused me to re-consider the order of reality, and has enabled me to re-consider the social, moral and material worlds of young Christians as deeply modulated by a relationship with god.

An opening of hearts

Turning to the ethnographic self is a methodological tool and conduit for understanding, which when used dialogically can create important and valid insights which would otherwise remain obscured. One must make themselves vulnerable to God which is often described as 'submitting' to Him, to become 'born again'. Allowing myself to be jostled and transformed by the relations of faith and seeking a Charismatic knowledge, involved learning to listen, feel and hear in a new way, a process of becoming, that can be considered as a knowledge process itself. These are all important embodied practices which increase one's knowledge of God but are also indictive of faith as activity in the world. In this sense the knowing cannot be removed from the doing, and by doing it myself I am able to consider the social life of Christ Love as directed and attuned to embodiment of the Holy Spirit.

Kirsten Hastrup says that "knowledge has become – and must be – acknowledged (implicitly, at least) as relational, both in the sense that it attaches itself to relations between people or between people and objects and in the sense that it emerges within a dialogical field" (2004:456). Here by becoming born again I entered into a relationship with God, and through a shared embodiment of the Holy Spirit, into spiritual relationships with members of the ministry, and their material relations. I could not get to know God as an ontologically separate object, but I could begin to know Him through an embodied

relationship based on knowledge, as words and materials became internalised. The semiotic forms produced and enacted by members of the ministry, as well as the global movement more generally, had become entextuaised in my own body. Those semiotic modalities uproot and destabilise the categories which typically separate us from the religious lives of the people we meet, allowed me to participate in those relationships which exist at the confluence between a transcendent divine and immanent material experience.

Acknowledging the presence of the divine allowed me to reconsider the languages and materials which enable the experience of God. Immersion into the ethics of Charismatic practice has the power to transform the materiality of the body and transform the thinking mind. Keane (2014) argues that ethical life makes affordances which has the potential to recognise presence beyond the material environment. These are complex body logics where materials and language take on a new form within the bodies of the faithful. Knowledge in this case is a material process whereby certain 'moods and motivations' are formed through an embodied relationship with the immaterial divine.

For the Holy Spirit to dwell in my heart required me to open it, this made me vulnerable to the significance of faith but became productive in creating a sometimes-intimate opening of hearts between myself and my informants, enabling me to learn about and share experiences of the divine. In doing so it made the so called "repugnant other" human. Faith and an embodied experience of the Holy Spirit deals in the currency of emotion as feeling become attributed to the divine entity. Emotions are social and cultural- as well as moral and aspirational (see Lutz 1996)- and to collectively know the Holy Spirit engages emotion in unfamiliar ways. These emotions are not exclusive to the people being studied but extend to the ethnographer too through embodied relationships.

Employing an ethnographic notion of self to conduct research cannot be removed from the ethnographer themselves beyond the fieldwork context. The day I was pulled to the front of the church service to give my life to God required me to perform the material rites through which my body would become filled with the Holy Spirit. Through this act I was considered to be renewed, no longer

just worldly flesh I had opened myself up to the Holy Spirit and begun the process of *epignosis* where I could learn of the divine work of God in its true form. Granted, some do feel the urge to convert and find their experiences to be lifelong commitments, but here I do not speak of conversion but of an ethnographic relationship with the divine as it becomes manifest in subjective embodied relations.

In this case I have attempted to show how, and following Paul Stoller's example, the "power of the between" is not only a powerful ethnographic experience but also one that can change one's knowledge of oneself and the world around one long after fieldwork is finished. So, am I a Christian? Perhaps not, but what I have described here indicates that becoming born again is an embodied knowledge process, rather than a state of mind, or a momentary experience, which has required not so much a 'leap of faith' but a cautious step into the otherness of faith. Katie helped me realise something else that afternoon when she asked me how my life had changed. Even if a methodology which inhabits the spaces between is temporary, the opening of oneself to other ways of knowing is something which lingers on.

Chapter 2

"In the world but not of it": Cultivating, Sensing, and Staging the Global

In this chapter I explore the ways in which this young cohort of diasporic Christians participate in, and actively reproduce a globalized Christianity emerging from west-Africa and how this global faith transcends worldly and place-based affects, identities, and expressions of faith. In their participation in their respective global ministries the young church members act to reproduce aspects of this global movement in line with their everyday experiences and outlooks as young Christians living in London, striving for personal relationships with God.

Young church members in London engage with a range of recorded and live broadcast media inspired from their church headquarters in Nigeria and Ghana, which becomes integral to their worship practices, spiritual understandings, and articulations of self. This de-territorialised, mediatised and global form of Christianity is one of the hallmarks of growing neo-Charismatic churches, a "world-making" (Robbins 2004b) movement which has seen large ministries based in west-Africa proliferate globally. It is large ministries like Christ Embassy and United Denominations which can be seen as a driving force for their popularity worldwide, particularly among various African diasporas.

I will focus primarily on one of these churches, Christ Love, the youth and student arm of Christ Embassy. Pastor Chris' charismatic leadership of Christ Embassy- the global church ministry- is maintained, circulated, and disseminated via a multiplicity of highly organised, global, and heterogeneous media outlets. This includes numerous websites, television networks, video recordings, music, live streamed events, social media and as well as in-person events and sermons. Christ Embassy, and its various subsidiary ministries, transcends its Nigerian base through global media and transnational religious connections while encouraging deeply personal and embodied relationships with the Holy Spirit.

Although based primarily in Nigeria, Pastor Chris is revered in the church, with many of Christ Love church members in London referring to him as their Pastor, daddy, or more profoundly, their "Man of God", where he takes on a divine authority. Many of my interlocutors express an unfaltering devotion to their Pastor and have trust in his teachings. Pastor Chris' charismatic authority is legitemised and reinforced through his didactic style of preaching, offering worshippers an alternative and 'accurate knowledge' of the gospel as well as through ritual such as healing, and worship. In the youth and student churches in the UK, church members take these 'sensational forms'- styles of preaching, service formats, and spiritual knowledge- as a template to claim and perform their own divine authority. I will explore how through mimetic performances, and re-articulation of their man of God's divine authority, young members of Christ Love student church claim their own globalised divinity and perform global Christian aspirations that transcend markers of African, Black British, or diasporic identity. Similarly, for members of Disciple Church, the youth arm of United Denominations (formerly Lighthouse Chapel International), their liturgic experience is informed by the teachings of Bishop Dag Heward-Mills who is based in Ghana. I will discuss the importance of his liturgy in the following chapter.

In what follows I will trace, using ethnographic examples the mediated performances, affects, and expression of divine authority and aspiration as they circulate and constitute these global church ministries, focusing specifically on how the global is both generative of and generated by youthful Christian subjectivities within London's African diaspora. I will discuss how a global ministry such as Christ Embassy employs mediatic forms to give legitimacy to Pastor Chris' divine authority, specifically through the spectacle of global church events. I will go on to discuss how the cultivation of a global faith becomes a template for young church members in the UK in their student fellowships to participate and express their own divine authority within this global Charismatic movement.

Often young worshippers at the church where I carried out my fieldwork would use the phrase "in the world, but not of it"- both to describe their embodied dispositions and the presence and power of the

Holy Spirit. I will trace how the young worshippers position themselves "in the world, but not of it" by drawing on what they describe as 'divine knowledge' or epignosis- and the cultivation of a charismatic spiritual sensorium which eschews the worldly and exceeds the carnal senses. The previous chapter laid the methodological and epistemological ground for understanding the role of divine knowledge in shaping the worldviews of the young Christians. This chapter begins to look at how spiritual subjectivities are put into practice through global Christian practice.

Engaging with virtual and mediated spirituality, the young worshippers participate in and re-produce a de-territorialised presence of immediacy- not just in their embodied practice but in relation to a spirituality which is equally external, global, and distant (see Meyer 2011). Many of these sorts of moments reveal the dual aspect of collective charismatic experience. It is at once both worldly and divine- physical and ephemeral, internal and external. This chapter thinks through the doubleness of presence and raises the possibility of thinking about the multiplicities and transubstantiations of religious mediation, where the Holy Spirit is known and felt immanently and collectively as a powerful globally transcendent force- what Birget Meyer calls the 'aesthetics of persuasion' (2010)-or a 'moral imaginary' (Seeman 2016). Here I'm working with what Meyer tell us:

> *"Media and practices of mediation invoke (even "produce") the transcendental in a particular manner" (2009:11)*

Church members experience the transcendent and in such a way that it becomes manifested *in the world*. Global Christianity allows for the cultivation of an affective and ontological sensorium which is both 'in the world and not of it'. The members of Christ Love actively re-produce a globalised Christianity. In doing so they produce a vision of a global faith that transcends the church ministry's Nigerian base. Equally, the young church members, through their embodied participation in this type of globalised Christianity are able to move beyond and above localised markers of identity, diaspora, and circumstances.

The transcendent divine is produced *as global* through its entanglement with a sensory religious practice which exceeds the worldly and material. Again, I attempt to take seriously the ontological and embodied presence of the Holy Spirit, which is so central to the religious lives of these young Christians. I would like to try and think of presence as it becomes constituted transnationally and disparately, drawing on the work of Aisha Beliso De-Jesus (2014, 2015) and her concept of co-presence, which challenges the reliance on the transcendental in theories of mediation. Briefly, co-presences can be understood as "multiple energies", feelings, temporalities, and places emerging through religious practice (Beliso- De Jesus 2014). I hope this might be a way, following Beliso- De Jesus' arguments to "refocus anthropological readings of diaspora" in the context of global Christianity, as transformational, and not just in terms of transnational connectivity and distance (ibid, see also Robbins & Engelke 2010). Thinking with copresence might be a way to take another perspective on global and transnational Christian movements, which rather than view Christian practitioners as separate and distant nodes in a transcendent cosmological map, bound together in transnational webs of mediation, instead, views the faithful as diasporic actors who produce a relational co-presence, collectively embodying the divine and making their worlds spiritual. The notion of co-presences helps explain the mechanics of global Christianity as it is simultaneously produced intimately and globally.

The churches in this thesis transcend their west-African base through global, media and transnational religious connections while encouraging deeply personal religious relationship with the divine. This locates the divine as simultaneously interior and exterior to the young worshippers and enables their senses to take on a divine capacity which transcends the body and the individual. I ask how this might be understood as encouraging a copresence between divine and human actors which does not rely on mediating a transcendent God, but materially knowing the divine through an immanent and spiritual presence? As a result, the transcendent and the material become entangled as the young members of this church learn how to feel God as members of a global community without relying on the limits of their physical senses.

Further, the spiritual practices of the young church members express and perform divine authority by emulating the esteemed head of their church ministry, Pastor Chris Oyakhilome. Engaging with existing debates concerning mediation and authority (Meyer 2006, Reinhardt 2015b), I show how young church members perform divine authority through their participation in a highly organised church milieu. I also reflect of how participation in church requires spiritual performances based on the mimesis of global images and authority (see Kaell 2016). In re-producing these forms, the young members of the church are using contemporary media to participate and perform authoritative faith to each other and reach out to their contemporaries which challenge existing renderings of Christian faith among African diasporas. I draw on notions of religious cultivation, particularly the work of Saba Mahmood (2004), Charles Hirschkind (2006) and Amira Mittermaier (2010, 2012) to think about how religious sensibilities, practice, ethics, and sensory practice constitute divine realities.

I will show where creativity and mimesis interact to produce Christian subjectivities, how they are moulded by the authoritative and aesthetic organisation of the ministry, and how they become agents in the global reach of this Charismatic Christian ministry. This also stages the conversation for following chapters that explores how ethical practice shapes and defines young church members' articulation of difference in a variety of contexts.

Cultivating Global Aspiration: Malcolm's Story

Malcolm's story of faith will show us how for young Christians like himself, the road to conviction is often not a simple one, and involves the cultivation of a sensory and performative faith that orients itself towards the global through the everyday. I first met Malcolm while attending the Christ Love campus church. For a while the Sunday services were being held at Malcolm's university. It was summer 2018 when I first began to notice Malcolm. A shy young man, who would filter in, sometimes late, and sometimes not at all, to the service, where he would sit separately from the rest of the group and quietly listen to the sermons from Pastor Simon. During these early visits to the church, he would

often avoid any call to the front of the small congregation, where hands would be layed by the Pastor upon those who stepped up. Neither would he pray in tongues or loudly like his fellow worshippers. As he would later describe to me, he was new to this form and style of worship- having grown up in a Catholic household, attending church with his mother and younger siblings. He felt his church attendance with family was "out of routine"- and although ambivalent about the way in which members of the church would pray loudly in tongues or fall heavily under the spirit, he was determined to learn more about God and cultivate his own ideas about faith.

"Really, it's just something I would do on the weekend. With my family, it's just a routine thing. So just go to church on Sunday. That's it. I don't know anything about God at all! The only time I thought about God was Sunday. Or if I was in trouble or something. That's a time where you say, Oh, God, I really want this. I want that. But I noticed that before, the only time I went to God was because I wanted something. Because I was in trouble. Or because I had to, because it was Sunday, and I had to go to church with my parents. Yeah, I've learned I didn't know anything else. I didn't really know who He was. Why he died for me. Because my parents were Christians, I should be Christian too. It's just, it's an empty relationship where you don't know anything about it…"

Malcolm and I attended the same university, and we became close, often meeting on campus, and attending mid-week fellowship together. Over time, Malcolm's participation in church began to increase. He would often tell me of his desire to do more in church and get involved with the fellowship's activities and his struggles in doing so. His initial reservations and ongoing struggles, however, tell the story many longer standing members of the fellowship would often prefer not to tell. For these more guarded members, expressing doubt, reservation, or disagreement with church authority was not something they would often articulate, especially to an ambiguously unpersuaded interloper in the church such as myself. So, the reader may consider Malcolm's story to demonstrate just one way in which a global Christian subjectivity is cultivated, sensed, and staged within the Christ Love church ministry.

"…I was just sort of on and off. And there wasn't really anything holding me to, like, campus ministry, there was the word the word was good, but it just wasn't interesting to me at the time. Because I've been to so many Catholic churches and what they preach, it's just the same word so my mind is so desensitized, so I just automatically did not listen to anything they say. So, when I came to Christ Love and they're actually preaching, I find it really hard to like take notes or understand or just do anything. I guess the experience of speaking in tongues, I was like okay, I know for a fact that God is real now. Number one sign to me that God is real, because my tongue was literally moving by itself. Yeah, just from that. I was like okay. 'God is real...'"

Over time Malcom began consuming more and more of the Christ Love's material: books, videos, accompanied by participation in the campus church fellowship. Malcolm often spoke of the need to increase his knowledge of the bible before evangelising on campus- something his fellowship leaders had been encouraging him to do. Added to this was the pressure of his final year studies, which meant he often had to split his time between studies, working commitments, and church participation. This made him feel anguish at not being able to commit to church as much as he would like. This pressure seemed to be compounded my Malcolm's mother who he spoke of from time to time- occasionally with frustration. His mother was concerned about his church membership, and as a Catholic, considered many of the worship practices of Christ Love and Pentecostal-charismatic practice more generally to be "demonic." Despite these pressures Malcolm expressed a quiet determination to know God for himself and the Christ Love fellowship provided a space for him to do so away from the pressures of daily life and over time his parents became more accepting of his church membership.

When I asked Malcolm about his born-again story, he admitted he just repeated the words Pastor Simon told the whole congregation to recite declaring Jesus Christ as their 'lord and saviour', without really knowing what becoming born-again meant. However, a turning point came for Malcolm at one of the fellowship's retreats, that happen at least once a year. This retreat was a 5-day trip away to the countryside in Scotland where attendees prayed, worshipped, received prophecy, some getting

baptised, with some time left over for fun activities. Although I did not attend the retreats, many of the church members often returned with a refreshed zeal for their church participation and I recognised it as an important event in the fellowship's yearly cycle. It was when Malcolm returned from one of these retreats that his enthusiasm for church became apparent. At the summer retreat Malcolm had received a prophecy from one of the fellowship Pastors. The Holy Spirit had revealed his future role in the church: leading his university fellowship, and winning souls on campus.

"... But even after that [speaking in tongues], I wasn't at the point where I'm now. I'm still going on and off. I fell off after a month. I wasn't studying enough. And when Pastor Simon started preaching, that's when I started liking it more and more. And it ultimately was the retreat that really set me on a path that I'm on now, where I just found out what to do in life, what I'm going to be doing in the future. And that's what I started to pursue Christianity more. So, I guess it was a mix mixture of the Word itself, and the signs that God showed me because it was not for Word initially, I wouldn't have gone to retreat or fallen along thus, that was like my lifeline. Yeah. And then it was like, when I went to retreat, that's what the experience I had really, like, pulled me in.

"For me. It's very rare for me to fall under the power like that. That is the only time it's happened was at the retreat. And that was just uncontrolled. I don't even know! It was the first time I've cried in four years. And it wasn't even like a normal cry, it was profuse, I was literally screaming. I was bawling so much. And I just couldn't explain that. But even though that happened, that wasn't what held me to Christianity. That wasn't what made me stay. I just kept doing it. Because yeah, it's just lovely... I can't really describe..." Yeah, I don't seek any personal gain. What I receive from God is to help other people to spread the gospel.... And the experience sent me off, like, let's say, the first time I started speaking in tongues, I was still living in carnal Christian life. But that's because I didn't know enough of the Word, and I didn't really know what I was called to be. 'Cos before the retreat, I didn't know I was supposed to do all these things [for God]. I was taught so much that I was going to do so much in future. That's

good experience. But the word itself and I think the most important thing for me. Praying in tongues as well. Yeah, 'cos it builds yourself up, it edifies. Every day, I've been building myself up, I'm more confident. It's not that I have to do it. I just do out of love."

As discussed in the previous chapter a key aspect of faith for members of Christ Love is the cultivation and enactment of biblical or 'spiritual' knowledge, known in the church and taught by Pastor Chris, as *epignosis*. Considered an alternative form of knowledge, epignosis allows the learner greater 'insight' or 'wisdom' of God's work through the Holy Spirit. Malcolm took the teachings of the fellowship Pastors, as well as those of Pastor Chris, the ministry's charismatic leader in Nigeria, very seriously, often doing further study and home and sharing new insights, learnings, and forming his own opinions on scripture with me when me met up. Malcolm would tell me with excitement when he found new connections between scriptures and what he was learning about himself.

However, this prophecy seemed to bring anguish for Malcolm. One spring afternoon I met Malcolm on campus, at his request to assist him with evangelism. As a shy person, he had been plucking up the courage to speak to people in the cafeteria about his faith and invite them to church but had been struggling to motivate himself. He saw this as not fulfilling God's plan for him and berated himself for avoiding his responsibilities. When we met, I felt some encouragement was needed and agreed to tag along and watch, rather than speak on behalf of the church myself. Armed with an abundant number of the Rhapsody of Realities, that we had collected from the church's stock warehouse in East London (the daily devotional pamphlet mentioned in chapter 1) that Malcolm was financially 'sponsoring', he tentatively began to approach fellow students with the devotional in hand. Church members were often encouraged to financially sponsor copies of the publication, which is printed monthly, and supposedly written by Pastor Chris himself. It is also claimed by the church to be the 'best-selling' book in the world and considered to be a key way of spreading the gospel and the church's (Pastor Chris') message to the world. Printed and distributed globally, as well as being available in multiple

translations via an app, the daily devotional connects worshippers in Pastor Chris' churches from around the world together under the same teachings and liturgy.

Malcolm had personally purchased £5 vouchers for a sports fashion clothing store to give to individuals who were willing to give him and his faith an ear. He saw this as a fair exchange for their time, and along with the gift of the voucher they would also be receiving the gift of the word, and gifts of the Spirit. Although Malcolm struggled to achieve his aim to win souls that day, for him it was important to participate and fulfil his prophecy.

"But even for me to come, like, there's most people today that I've talked to that I would never have talked to [in the past]. But even evangelism, yeah, to even evangelise. I'm still not as confident just go to walk up to any person- yet. I know I can do it. And I know what to say. I need to build myself up in the Word. I'm sure I'll be able to do it. But before there's no way I could have done that… The only reason I'm at the stage where I'm at now is because of the Holy Spirit…. I just kept doing it. Because yeah, it's just love really. I can't really say… I don't any gain or to receive from God. It is to help other people to send the gospel first, not for anything personal."

His anguished staging of faith in this touching way demonstrates the way in which Christ Love and its parent ministry, Christ Embassy operate on multiple scales. The everyday subjective cultivation and performance of faith by church members like Malcolm, add up to the sweeping global movements Charismatic Christianity provokes. Prepared with his copies of the 'Rhapsody of Realities' daily devotional, Malcolm was actively contributing and forming a local community of Christianity with a global vision. The daily devotional itself stands for the global aspiration of the church and by financially sponsoring these pamphlets and actively disseminating them Malcolm was participating in this global aspiration. His everyday acts of faith represent his desire to transform the world. But to transform the world Malcolm first had to be transformed by the Spirit.

This aspect of Malcolm's story may not initially appear to express global horizon but there is a symbiotic relationship between everyday subjectivities and practices of faith in London and the global

stage in which they are oriented. Together they produce a dynamic experience of faith that transcends the mundane and actively produces the powerful global movements scholars of Christianity have come to recognise. Likewise, the Holy Spirit becomes both an immanent and transcendentally global actor in shaping the desires and spiritual aspirations of young church members. As with Malcolm and other's stories that appear in this thesis, these aspirations become articulated at the nexus between youth, faith, and diasporic intersections, meanwhile reifying the global frame in which they are situated. To be "in the world, but not of it" requires young Christians like Malcolm to aspire beyond the everyday and the local, to fulfil the spiritual ambitions of their ministries within contexts that are familiar to them. I now go on to discuss the ways in which global Christian practice is imbued with a divine authority that allows the distinction between this world and that which is not of it, to be sensed and staged in the everyday and towards the global.

Staging the Global

In spring 2019 Malcolm had invited me to join him and some other church members to the ministry's UK distribution warehouse in Romford, East London. We would be preparing merchandise for the upcoming 'World Evangelism Conference'. The conference, to be held at the 12,000-seater Wembley Arena was an important date in the annual calendar of the whole ministry, both in the UK and globally. There would be three days of worship and sermons from the ministry's biggest Pastors and music performers, including Benny Hinn & the late Maurice Cerullo as well as Christ Embassy pastors from around the world- and the main event, sermons and worship with Pastor Chris himself. Events like this one happen regularly, the previous having happened in 2018 when Pastor Chris had held the *Higher Life Conference* at the 02 arena in London- another 20 000-seater arena usually booked out for the likes of Beyonce of Kanye West. As I will show these events transcend the worldly and become a staging of divinity with a global orientation.

Figure 2- Higher Life Conference, 02 Arena 2018

Situated on an innocuous industrial estate, the warehouse building is the main distribution centre for the Rhapsody of Realities daily devotional in the UK, with offices and storage. Malcolm and I had visited previously to pick up copies for fellowship members to distribute while evangelising on campus- the fact Malcolm owned a car meant he was often tasked with carrying out these types of duties. Our task for the day was to count the stock in preparation for the World Evangelism Conference. Shelves full of t-shirts, caps, bags, pens, DVD's of Pastor Chris, books, and the like, all embossed with the Christ Embassy logo were ready to be counted, which the five of us who volunteered did for many hours. At the time Malcolm had found a job writing code for a tech start-up company that meant he could work remotely. He told me with satisfaction that it meant he could conduct even more duties in the church this way, and work at night. It was perfect for him as it allowed him the flexibility to put God first while as he put it "not getting lost in ministry"- a point directed at those church members who prioritised church participation at the expense of their university education or employment[21]. Again, Malcolm's caution stemmed from a desire to ensure he was

[21] At this point and going forwards, it is important to take note of the way in which church members are enclosed by the expectations of their participation, sometimes resulting in a hindrance to their university progress or employment. This often produces conflict with parents about their participation in the church.

keeping his parents happy by maintaining employment alongside his fellowship participation- even if it meant he lost out on sleep.

Figure 3- World Evangelism Conference, Wembley Arena 2019

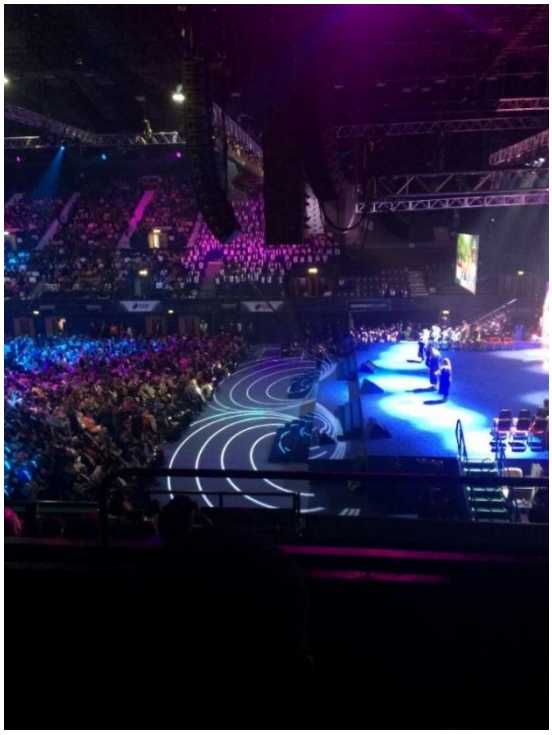

Figure 4- World Evangelism Conference, Wembley Arena 2019

Although mundane and menial, the tasks we were conducting were important to the smooth running of the event. Other members of the fellowship were tasked with helping the media department who would be covering every minute of the event, yet others were involved with different organisational aspects. These activities represent a more-than-worldly participation in the upcoming spiritual event. Their faith compelled these young people to participate and in doing so individuals, including Malcolm, dedicated their time without complaint, and with enthusiasm, in anticipation of receiving divine knowledge from their favourite Pastors, especially their man of God.

Many of the church members in London attended all three days of the event, with notepads, Dictaphones and Bible apps at the ready. To share the space with Pastor Chris and to hear his teaching in proximity, in their home city, was considered a spiritual event and a privilege that my interlocutors should not miss, an opportunity for them to witness their favourite pastors in the flesh- rather than only via a screen. I too was strongly encouraged to attend, all three 8-hour days!

As you can see in the photographs, the lights, the music, the large screens build the event into a spectacle that reinforces Pastor Chris' divine authority- a staging of power. But also, like the Global Day of Prayer, this event locates itself within Christianity's global horizon and aspiration. Even though most of the attendees were Black African or of Black African heritage, like Pastor Chris, the diversity of images, speakers on the stage and use of global imagery, including national flags speaks to the global vision and ministry, locating the spiritual experience of worshippers and the authority of P astor Chris within a universal global frame. The spiritual experience is embedded in this global imaginary in such a way that it takes on a global quality that exceeds the individual and allows the worshippers to partake in the staging of divine authority. The staging of the global, expressly represented in the flag waving ceremony transformed the arena into a space of radical alterity- a literal representation and transcendence of the nations. Here the 'nations' themselves are united by Pastor Chris, at the direction of God.

The events I describe are layered with what Birgit Meyer would call “sensational forms”, that become both points of connection and portable devices for young worshippers of the African diaspora living in London, enabling them to participate in global faith and aspire to transcend worldly markers of identity. Although Meyer is right to locate the experience of the divine in external and often unbounded media forms, the events I describe have a predictability to them, with a familiar flow, tempo, and affective rhythm which is useful here in highlighting how a global community of Christians can coalesce around these aesthetic formations. The events I describe follow a pattern, or template, giving worshippers a sense that they are agents and collective actors in these Christ Embassy events- alongside fellow Church members around the world, spiritually at least. As participants in these events, worshippers, experience the word of God in an embodied capacity.

The entanglement of word and spirit reveals how spiritual authority is endorsed, where the authority of a Pastor for example, can be affected in the embodied experience of the worshippers. This takes us beyond simple mediation (or what we might think of as a conduit) and enables an understanding of how authority becomes established experientially and as spiritually meaningful. It speaks to what Engelke calls “the problem of presence”- “how a religious subject defines and claims to construct a relationship with the divine through the investment of authority and meaning in certain words, actions, and objects” (2007:9). Similarly, Meyer notes how ‘sensational forms’ become authorised norms: “authorized modes for invoking and organizing access to the transcendental that shape both religious content (beliefs, doctrines, sets of symbols) and norms” (2011: 751). In this case, spiritual experience becomes circulated through various structures of authority and mediatised worship, pedagogy and practice which allow for the production of a global spiritual proximity- or what Aisha Beliso De-Jesus would call co-presence. Here in these moments of co-presence, whether in person in the stadium or online, global Christian subjectivity is (re)established as global and divine authority reinforced, legitimised, and distributed within this global frame.

Sensing the Global

More recently in 2021, and since ending my fieldwork, I have been receiving numerous email reminders to join the Global Day of Prayer with Pastor Chris. Since the start of the Coronavirus pandemic and the move to online worship in many parts of the world, this event has been happening every 3 months, along with various online prayer and worship events that aim to bring together the whole church worldwide. Similar online or televised worship events happened regularly prior to the pandemic so Christ Embassy were well equipped to deal with the shift to online worship. The Global Day of Prayer had been billed on one ministry webpage as the "the largest prayer event in response to unprecedented times". Members of Christ Embassy the world over, including the student members of Christ Love "join with their Man of God Pastor Chris" in a live streamed event. Along with the email reminders, as is the case with most large ministry events, my WhatsApp began to buzz with messages from church members and my interlocutors in London checking in with me and asking if I will be tuning in to the event.

There have been multiple online prayer sessions organised within the ministry to pray against the spread of coronavirus. This kind of small-scale mediated prayer has also been scaled up- where members of the campus church pray online with their parent ministry, Christ Embassy, worldwide. Church members are invited to pray with their church leader, Pastor Chris and his good friend Benny Hinn in a global prayer session which is broadcast live online. In these moments, prayer emanates sensorially and extends itself globally demonstrating an embodied disposition to exceed local and individual practices, into a global imaginary. Mediation facilitates divine experience in multiple places simultaneously and not only transforms and heals the prayerful and those of us who might not be aware we are prayed for, but also attempts to transform the world itself.

As the pandemic continued these global online and streamed prayer sessions became regular online events, effecting individual prayer routines. Although initially focused on praying against the pandemic the Global Day of Prayer event later broadened its aims to those more familiar with charismatic Christianity's global ambitions, focusing on the unincumbered spread of the gospel to all nations of

the world. As one poster reads: “As we pray, we condition the nations of the world for righteousness and prosperity, and we establish the Gospel or our Lord in their cities.” As an expression of spiritual power, these events are broadcast live on the Loveworld TV channel. As De Witte (2003) has observed in a similar context, these types of events are edited in such a way as to express global, universal desires- with the camera often focusing in on white and non-Black individuals to further express the church’s international status.

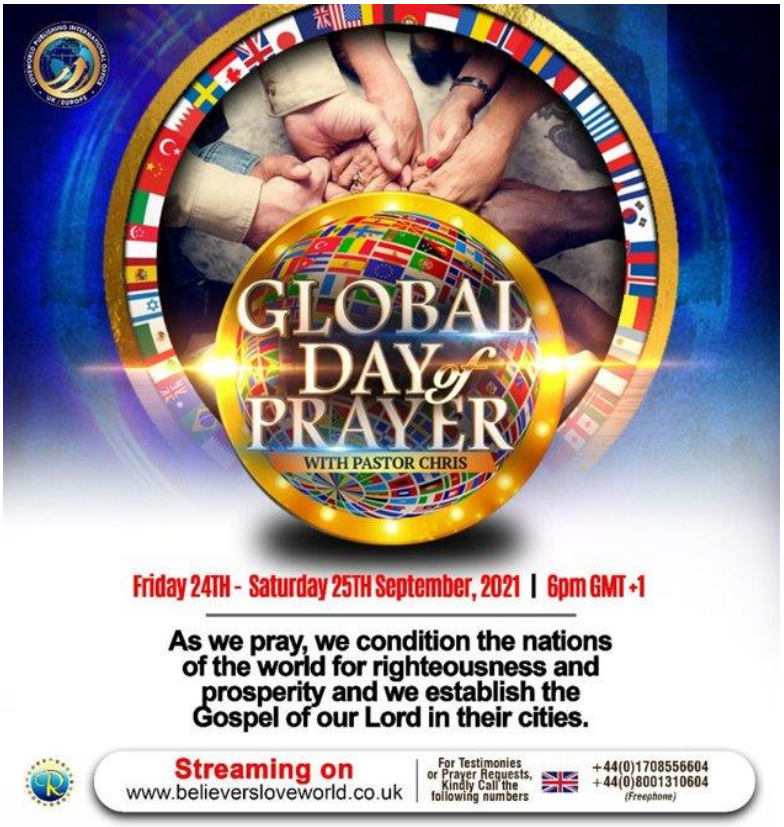

Figure 5.1/5.2- Online imagery showing global orientation of Pastor Chris' ministry.

The global, almost universal aesthetic of the imagery speaks volumes about the ability for mega-denominations such as Christ Embassy to transcend their Nigerian base and express this global aspiration, often achieving these ambitions with the use of new media as well charismatic and authoritative figures, like Pastor Chris. The online global prayer sessions, like the stadium events above are just another example of a mediatic and mediated access point to a global community of Christians and charismatic practice. Events such as the Global Day of Prayer are a spectacle that young worshippers in London can actively participate in. This becomes a spectacle of divine authority, where Pastor Chris himself becomes a human conduit for the Holy Spirit- or at least offers the knowledge required to have a relationship with God.

Participation in these events, while a spectacle, are also deeply personal and embodied moments of prayer with the Holy Spirit. I would like to dwell a little longer on what I call the spectacle of divine authority. These global events allow the conceptual space between Pastor Chris, church members,

and the Holy Spirit to collapse. Distance is traversed to allow for the proximity necessary for intimate spiritual experience. But I argue that this proximity is produced through the aesthetics of the staged spectacle of the event itself.

The concept of co-presences has the potential to open up the role of mediation in global and diasporic Christianity because it forces us to de-centre the sensing and worldly individual in our analysis, taking into account how the divine emerges as collective, transformative, global and sensory. The co-presences of embodied Christianity make diaspora bodies anew, where the embodied experience of God folds into a global discourse of Christianity. This is similar to what Beliso De Jesus describes in her ethnography of Santería practices (2015). She describes how Orisha divinities, spirits, and familial ancestors become recognised, being "on, around and in practitioners bodies" carrying with them historical and racial presences. These copresences are embedded in a transatlantic racial-historical matrix which fold temporalities into the sensing bodies of practitioners whereby, she argues, diasporic bodies are made.

It is difficult to import Beliso-De Jesus' concept of co-presences wholesale to the study of Christianity. She argues that theories of mediation rely on transcendence, itself rooted in latent Christian thought. In fact, transcendence is important for Christians and the relationship between internal and external a distinctly Christian problem (Engelke 2011, Hirschkind 2011). However rather than seen as something which exists beyond, or gets reframed as imminent practice, I think presence can also be understood as a sensory emergence which takes on transcendent qualities. The concept of co-presence also helps to unsettle the gulf between "a divine other place and an earthly here" (Beliso-De Jesus 2014- see also Mazzarella 2004)

This sensory emergence is linked in part to technology. Exceeding the layer of visible technological mediators and representations, which connect live streams in Nigeria to campus classrooms in London, is a co-presence of embodied and sensory expressions of the Holy Spirit, which fills the spaces and bodies in-between making them spiritual. As the young worshippers cultivate a relationship with

God, drawing on a divine knowledge, they train their sensory capacities beyond the carnal and material conditions of diaspora in the UK.

Filling the spaces in between, the ideas of co-presences take seriously the ontological presence and transformations of the Holy Spirit. The embodied sensorium guided by these mediated relationships with God co-produce sensory access points to a shared divine. For this younger generation of church members their faith takes on transformational qualities when they seek to transform themselves and the world around them. Cultivating a sensorium which transforms the worldly body and its surrounding becomes a way for the church members to aspire in Christ and move away from existing narratives of diasporic or "African Christianity" in the UK.

Church members did not speak explicitly about their commitment to live a divine identity as a form of active resistance to racism and marginalisation in the UK. Perhaps they did not live it that way or would or would not want to expressit to me. However, when Micha, a British-born member of Disciple Church, told me that he does not see himself a "Christian ethnic minority" but instead aspires to be someone who puts God first and expresses God all the time, I feel that he was encouraging me to take a different perspective on the relationship between the material and the spiritual. For Micha, his sense of belonging in diaspora had emerged through his participation in a global form of spirituality, that is both local and global. Thinking with co-presences to begin to understand his experience of diaspora, which emerges out of material histories of migration and concerns with belonging, but which is transformed as he expresses a global Christian outlook with an embodied sensory capacity which exceeds the mundane.

The distinction between worldly and divine is strongly articulated at Christ Love, however, worship practices are geared towards making the world spiritual. Many congregants will frame their relationship with God as based upon knowing and knowing through their embodiment of the Holy Spirit, which gives them a divine capacity whereby their carnal being is transformed to be 'Spirit like'. Often Pastors and worshippers alike would warn of the dangers of being a carnal Christian and would

tell me that those who worship to 'feel good' are doing for the wrong reasons. This showed me the limits of the body in sensing divine presence and how bodies in their carnal capacities might be an impediment to authentic religious experience.

Pastor Chris teaches his congregants that when born-again, they are now Spirit-like. Although they embody the Holy-spirit, this divine element allows them to extend beyond worldly capacities and understandings, which are manifest in the ability to perform healing, miracles and demonstrate gifts of the spirit- such as praying in tongues. Combined with the notion of epignosis- divine knowledge (discussed in the previous chapter) I think that, not only does it make a distinction between this world and the divine but points to the ways in which they are entangled and emerge through the bodies, minds, and spirits of the congregants. This is not simply the divine taking form in the world but the divine transforming the very substance of reality, even the fleshly body- to enable heavenly beings and divine action.

Each first Sunday of the month most of the church members will stay behind after the service to participate in the 'Global communion service' which is a live broadcast from Nigeria, of Pastor Chris, who gives a sermon, with prayer and worship. As the worshippers watch, some will repeat back the words of their pastor, shouting Amen, joining with the worship and prayer segments and occasionally falling under the power of the spirit. Many consider the words of their 'man of God' to carry the power and blessings of God- live and direct (see Engelke 2007). The live broadcast enables the spirit to emerge through the media but in both locations- the media facilitating the flow of the Spirit. Unanchored from geographic location and carnal material practice my interlocutors' engagements with global religious media show how the corporeal senses can take on a global divine capacity, building collective embodied relationality and authority, or co-presences, contributing to global Christian movements emerging from west-Africa.

So, we know that spiritual media forms traverse distance and mediate proximity but thinking about how the sensual intimacy of divine knowledge takes on a global form confirms the usefulness of co-

presence. This allows us to think against binaries to think about how people, things, and the Holy Spirit can simultaneously be in the world but not of it. Divine knowledge which appears to be transcendent, when combined with physical and sensual mediated forms enables a spiritual outpouring across distance, a multiplicity of co-presences.

Framing the Global

As I outlined in the introduction to this thesis, the appeal and growth of Charismatic and Pentecostal forms of Christianity are in their ability to proliferate through local contexts using a consistent- yet heterogeneous- set of symbols, signs, and affective semiotics. The transformational embodied experience of being and becoming born-again sets off a re-making of the world in which the believer is able to engage with an imaginary that not only locates the transcendent as beyond but also present in the embodied form of the Holy Spirit (also see chapter 3 for an adjacent discussion). Indeed, anthropologists have thought about the many ways that Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity is globally oriented, whether through affect (Bialecki 2015), language and embodiment (Coleman 2000), mediation (Meyer 2010), economy and value (Coleman 2004), mobility (Daswani 2010, Haynes 2017), ethics (Robbins 2004a) and politics (Marshall 2007).

Csordas' (2009) volume began to bring these conversations together to think about the entangled relationship between religion and globalisation. Csordas considers the global to be the space productive of and produced by the inter-subjective "aspirations to the sacred" of religious adherents. Drawing on Appadurai's (1990) notion of global flows and scapes, Csordas' volume takes seriously the multidirectional flow of religious phenomena within a global frame- or what I like to think of as religioscapes.

Additionally, anthropologists have noted the ways that Christianity, particularly in its Pentecostal and Charismatic forms has enabled the rapid growth of this heterogeneous religious movement globally

(Robbins 2004a, Coleman & Hackett 2015). Robbins' preoccupation with millenarian movements in Papua New Guinea (2004b) may explain some of the weight he attaches to the transcendent where Heaven exists frustratingly beyond for his interlocutors. However, in his discussion (2009a) of Csordas' (2004) claim that "alterity itself is the object of religion" he begins to locate the transcendent and the imminent within the same frame allowing for a consideration of the embodied, phenomenological, and ethical aspects of globally oriented religious ritual, practice, and experience. I would like to further pursue Csordas' claim that the "phenomenological kernel" of religion is alterity itself. When put into conversation with Robbins argument that the trans- in both transcendence and transnationalism "signals the challenge of distant or once distant alterities to people's sense of their own centrality" it allows for the recognition of how the global is key in shaping both the mundane and transcendent aspects of Christian religiosity. Robbins' work is illuminating a particular understanding of globalisation and maintains a center-periphary relationship that is informed my his Urapmin interlocutors, however, for the young Christians in this thesis, transcendence, transnationalism, proximity and distance require a slight reworking of this model. Rather than being nodes, or local/global binaries, the young Christians collapse distance into their embodied and cultivated experience of global Christian practice- or what Aisha Beliso De-Jesus would call a co-presence (2015).

The church ministries I discuss here are explicitly global in their orientation. The global aesthetics and aspirations of the church are not just metaphors for the spiritual ambitions of the ministry. Instead, and following Karla Poewe's (1989) discission on the *Metonymical Structure of Charismatic Experience,* I consider the sign rich religious experience of both churches to be metonyms for the global itself- a world made sacred. The church's rich imagery and devotion to their 'men of God'- church leadership- can be understood as metonyms for the global and the sacred. Whether the spectacle of a worship event, or the everyday worship of the church members, they engage with signs that are metonyms for the ministry's global outlook. Employing the use of religious media and forms of mediation, the church members can collapse the distance between themselves and their church leaders in Nigeria or Ghana, producing a form of immediacy, so much so that these function as signs and indexes for habitual,

embodied, and global spiritualities. Proximity and distance collapse through various spectacles and forms of religious participation and in doing so the church members actively participate and produce a form of Christian faith that is actively reenchanting the world. I consider this to be productive of a globally oriented Christian alterity.

As with Malcolm's story above, participating in these global churches also extends to the mundane and the everyday. He cultivates a spiritual sensibility that means when he carries out his Christian practice, he does so with alterity at the foreground- as a member of a born-again global church membership at its core. He wants to express his difference to others who do not share the gift of being born-again and are not exposed to the knowledge of his Pastors, and by articulating this Malcolm aims to transform himself and the world around him.

Re-staging the Global

But how do these young Christians take these global forms, and articulate their own divine authority in their local social worlds? And as young people how does their participation express distinctly youthful forms of aspiration? Just like the large scale, global oriented events I describe, church members of the campus ministries will often hold their own smaller events on their university campuses- utilising lecture theatres and classrooms. What is interesting is how these events mimic or emulate the forms of larger global events. Whether an evangelism event, where church members invite potential new members or larger events where different campus fellowships from across the country worship together, these events utilise the same aesthetic form, formats, and styles. One example is an event held on a London university campus, the *Training, Inspiration and Empowerment* conference. This conference was designed to give the young church members of Christ Love the spiritual power to do the work of evangelism on their own campuses- to share the gospel with fellow students and 'grow' their fellowships to make an 'impact on campus'. Located within the global horizon of global Christianity and the ministry's mission to continue to expand globally, the young

church members are endowed by Pastors with their own divine authority to carry out this mission on behalf of the ministry.

Figure 6- Training, Inspiration, and Empowerment Conference in a London University Lecture Theatre, 2019

But also, on a smaller scale, fellowship events on campus will utilise the same forms to appeal to new members. These images (below) are taken from a smaller event, where new church members were encouraged to engage with Pastor Chris' online teachings- and support them financially. You can see how the set-up mimics the aesthetics of Pastor Chris' television broadcasts. These events were broadcast online, just like Pastor Chris' sermons. The church members, when taking the stage are always sure to thank Pastor Chris, despite him not being present in person, again suggesting a spiritual co-presence legitimising their own spiritual performance of divine authority. For example, church members will say when taking the microphone: "I would like to thank our man of God, Pastor Chris for the opportunity".

Figure 7.1/7.2/7.3- Images show church members in London re-staging Pastor Chris' television format in a university classroom. Bottom image is a screenshot taken from a live stream.

Figure 8.1/8.2- Above image shows televised Choir on Pastor Chris' television channel. Image below is screenshot of student fellowship choir's mimetic performance in live streamed event.

What is happening, is the mimetic performance of divine authority by the young worshippers themselves. Pastor Chris' divine authority becomes distributed, or perhaps spiritually anointed, to the young church members in London. On their own stages they then harness this authority to make an impact in their own youthful setting. In this case the university campus. Their participation becomes active within this global ministry and allows them to become actors within the ministry's global horizon.

This is a form of what Michael Taussig would call mimesis. Extending James Frazer's notion of contact and imitation as the transformational, creative, and imaginative grounds for producing alterity, Taussig suggests, "the wonder of mimesis lies in the copy drawing on the character and power of the original, to the point whereby the representation may even assume that character and that power" (1993: xiii). In the example I discuss here, the mediated proximity to Pastor Chris and his perceived divine authority allows the young Christians in London to imitate his authority. They become imitations of their man of God allowing them to embody their own divine authority. There is a magic to this memetic relationship, the kind that drives globalisations forces and allows for charismatic Christianity's global influence. But for the young Christians with whom I did my fieldwork, the stakes are higher. Their proximity and spiritual imitation of 'their man of god' allows them to become men and women of God themselves.

In the eyes of the young Christians in London, Pastor Chris stands as their man of God. His divine authority and ability to spread the word of God on a global stage represents an otherness to that which is not spiritual, Christian, or born-again. Harnessing what Taussig calls the 'mimetic faculty' allows the young Christians to grasp their own divine authority and become other- as distinctly born-again. This is an aspiration, particularly for these young people who often find themselves bound by worldly markers of identity- Black, African, and diasporic, to transcend the misrecognitions of being a member of a so-called Nigerian church in London and to participate as Christians on a global stage.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have described multiple stages, where divine authority is performed, circulated, and imitated. These stages become a theatre for the articulation and realisation of global Christian ambition, aspiration, and difference. For the young Christians in London their aspirations are to participate spiritually, contribute to the formation of a global ministry, and to articulate Christian subjectivities that are not bound by place, nation, culture, or ethnicity.

The mediated forms of participation I have described cultivate a spiritual and embodied sensorium that are collective access points to a shared divine authority. For this younger generation of church members their faith takes on a transformational quality when they seek to transform themselves and the world around them- particularly on their university campuses. Cultivating a sensorium of divine authority which transforms the worldly body, and its surroundings becomes a way for the church members to aspire in Christ, to become 'other' and move away from existing narratives of diasporic or "African Christianity" in the UK. To become just like their man of God.

Global Christianity's sensational forms make it a force for political and social change and Meyer shows how 'potable' affective and sensory Christianity plays out in the globally and in the public sphere (2010). Meyer highlights the importance of mediation and aesthetics to the distribution of presence on a global stage. However, in this chapter I have tried to think about how this distribution might be decentred and have a multiplicity, enabling us to take seriously the ontology of a Holy Spirit which flows from and between sensing religious bodies.

Joel Robbins (2009a) argues that many Pentecostals and charismatics work with the space between the transcendent and the mundane, giving force to the powerful global movement it has become. He says:

> *"The axial split between the mundane real and the more highly valued transcendent one mirrors the split globalisation opens between the local and the more highly valued central or 'global'…" (2009a:63)*

Robbins goes on to say that although Pentecostals and charismatics attempt to access the transcendent from the mundane, they cannot collapse two places into one. However, I also think that "in the world but not of it" becomes a useful heuristic to think about how global Christianity emerging from west-Africa might transform the spiritual and diasporic experiences of young worshippers in London. Rather than rely on the alterity of transcendence to guide their spiritual lives as a way to navigate life in diaspora, the young worshippers of Christ Love imagine their spiritual experiences as providing affinity with believers across the globe, thus shifting the narrative of diaspora. When praying together with church members across the globe, the worshippers at Christ Love share in the blessing of the same Spirit, anointed through their collective sense of the divine.

"I don't really find purpose in anything else, that's what drives me", said Malcom at the end of one of our conversations. He articulates a divinely inspired aspiration to do the work of God. His cultivation of an embodied relationship with the Holy Spirit allows him to participate in the global flows of his church ministry. However, as I have tried to show in this chapter, Malcolm is also productive of the global, and through his religious practice conveys the alterity that lies at the heart of his religious identity. He is able to consider himself different because his church participation allows him to mimic the spiritual means for difference. He is not lacking purpose, blindly following his church leadership, Malcolm's purpose is to make his world, and the world we all share, one that is filled with the Holy Spirit.

For this younger generation of the African diaspora, heaven on earth may not be heaven at all due to the unequal terrain of globalisation's forces and their everyday racialised and ethnicised experience. But copresence allows us to look in two directions at once, both in London and beyond, the spaces and bodies between the mundane and the transcendent, where the Holy Spirit flows. Copresence

emerges through this cultivated sensorium which shows how the young Christians at Christ Love remake themselves and the world beyond the corporeal senses. Expressing this sensory knowledge of the divine the young worshippers ensure that while in the world, they are not quite of it either.

Chapter 3

Hot, Cold and Lukewarm: Spiritual authority, revelation, and the making of ethical subjects

Three Scenes

This chapter will discuss the role of revelation in fostering the 'hot' sensibilities of church members. I begin with an in-depth discussion of revelation and authority, how they are conceptualised, articulated, and performed. I use examples from both ministries, Christ Love and Disciple Church, to highlight the importance of God's word and the communications between speaker, hearer, and the divine. This provides the background to a specific discussion of the teachings of one of these churches, Disciple Church, who through their ministry-wide pedagogy, emphasise the need to remain close to God through the discernment of what is-and-is-not spiritual, by questioning the faith of others, and participation in the ministry. I will use the church's pedagogic discourse of 'loyalty and disloyalty' as a heuristic device to discuss the ethical subjectivities that are produced in the ambivalent spaces between hot and cold, loyal and disloyal Christianity and will explore how this space of ambivalence is dealt with by members of Disciple Church through the ethical and material practices of Pentecostal-Charismatic discernment. I explore the dynamics by which the word of God becomes animated through the authoritative, ethical, and material practices of those who speak, hear, and action it; meanwhile church members work to remain 'hot' and become able to spiritually discern good from evil. Whereas the previous chapter focused on the way in which divine authority is cultivated as mimesis and alterity and performed towards a global horizon, this chapter focuses on how divine authority operates to produce ethical subjects who are 'on fire for God'.

There have been calls in the anthropology of Christianity to account for the wide variations between differing forms of Christianity (Hann 2007), and within Pentecostal-Charismatic movements more specifically- which can be conceptualised as separate denominations in themselves, with a multiplicity

of semiotic ideologies (Bialecki 2011). Here I attempt to locate this variation in the sedimentation of revelation which is afforded through the teaching of the 'word of God', by examining the tensions which arise through the speaking, hearing and resulting acting-out of revelation at Disciple Church.

The aim is to provide an ethnographic understanding of the active role of the word of God. I begin with three scenes from my fieldwork where it is possible to get a sense of the Word in action and how a 'hot' Christianity is cultivated.

Scene 1:

Saturday evening, a last-minute change of venue. Phones buzz in harmony across the city giving church members the new location. "Thanks P!", "WOW!", "I'll be there!" The replies stream into the shared Watts-app group and members adjust their plans. The university where the church group usually meet is closed for the Christmas holidays and the venue has been switched to a community centre in North-London. This change does not deter people from coming. When I arrive worship is underway, and the portable P.A system crackles and buzzes as the choir praises God. The Pastor takes the microphone and begins his message. This is the moment everyone has been waiting for, and the congregation eagerly anticipate his words and receive them accordingly: James 1, Verse 8:

"A double minded man is unstable in all his ways".

"You cannot play church," stresses the young pastor. "Many of you are one person in church and another at home, you act like a Christian but what is on the inside?" It feels as though his words are directed at me. Revelation 3, Verse 16: "*So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth*."

Scene 2:

Ade offers to drive me home from the mid-week service. He got hold of my number a few weeks before and has been messaging me asking me to join the choir. His message reads:

Step into new territory. And believe it will be good. Hebrews 11:8. 'By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.' Be like Abraham and step into a new place.

It's not that I don't want to join the choir, but singing is considered a privilege, to minister the word of God and to demonstrate your love for Him; and I'm concerned that perhaps a public performance of faith is not appropriate for a visiting anthropologist. In the car I try to explain myself. Ade tells me that I have the 'Spirit of Fear'. There are also evil spirits and that to overcome them I need to spend time alone with God, to have what Disciple Church calls "quiet time". To get to know Him. He suggests that I wake up early every morning and spend time praying, listening to worship music, reading the bible, or listening to an online podcast recorded by his church's founder and 'prophet' Dag-Heward Mills.

Scene 3:

A cold evening in January. Oxford Street, a busy shopping street in central London. Around twenty members of the church gather outside the Nike store. Many are wearing blue t-shirts with the details of the church's upcoming event, pulled over the top of coats and jumpers: "Come to our salvation Sunday – 1.30pm 24th February 2019". After a short prayer we set off in small groups to evangelise and encourage people to attend the event. Emmanuel and Andre, two young men at the church, Emmanuel an undergraduate and British of Nigerian descent and Andre a master's student from the Caribbean, are moving with intent, and I'm doing my best to keep up. We snake our way up and down Oxford Street. Not stationary, like many street evangelists or Jehovah Witnesses' many Londoners will be familiar with, but mobile and seeking out young people to invite to the salvation event. Their aim is to do more than just invite the people they have stopped; they are there to save them. "Yes, this guy. Flow…" says Emmanuel. Before I can follow their next move, they have stopped a young man and I watch them flow. A typical conversation goes something like this:

“Are you a Christian?” All the people they stop on this day are young and Black and the answer to this question is, “Yes, I was raised a Christian”.

“Are you born again? If you were to die right now, would you go to heaven?” This is the important bit. Emmanuel and Andre explain the biblical imperative to be born-again. Emmanuel reels off popular scriptures. John 3:3, Hebrews 11:1. “Do you want to say a prayer of salvation now?” Those who agree bow their heads and we all repeat together. January sale shoppers rush by oblivious as salvation is shared. Emmanuel and Andre explain that this is just the beginning. That to maintain a relationship with God is to come to church. Phone numbers are exchanged, and we are on to the next one.

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So, what connects these three scenes? The scripture the Pastor shared is the key. Spoken by Jesus to John the Apostle in a vision, regarding the early church’s perceived lack of zeal, the message is to be hot or cold but never lukewarm. The message is that a Christian should be a hot zealous believer- often termed by church members as “on fire for God”- or a cold unbeliever, but the most dangerous and undesirable position is that of a lukewarm Christian. For members of Disciple Church, a lukewarm Christian knows God but chooses not to include Him in their day-to-day life, instead returning to Him only on a Sunday. To be lukewarm is to succumb to worldly and carnal desires, most commonly associated by the young members with acts of ‘fornication’, or ‘partying’, but outlined by their prophet and denominational Bishop, Dag Heward-Mills as ‘self-righteousness’, ‘enmity’, and ‘prosperity’, but generally not putting their faith above all else. [22]

This distinction acknowledges a space of ambivalence and when the pastor preaches, he questions the sincerity of the congregation’s faith and reproduces an “authoritative discourse”, which disciplines his congregation (Asad 1979:621). In this chapter I will argue that the work of faith is to moderate this

[22] Bishop Dag Heward-Mills’ denomination, Lighthouse Chapel International (LCI), disavows the so-called prosperity gospel. However, LCI teaches a ‘practical theology’ (Reinhardt 2017) which is deeply aspirational in outlook.

ambivalence through material, ethical, and practical discourses of spiritual discernment. What can be seen in the scenes I describe are the ways in which hot faith is cultivated, questioned, and performed and can be understood as an ethical subjectivity where the work of faith is to close this space of lukewarm ambivalence. Here faith takes on two roles. First, to be a sincerely hot Christian one must have an intimate and personal relationship with God. This relationship is developed and nurtured through the dynamic and authoritative communication of God's word, where revelation becomes known and embodied, stirring faith in those who hear and receive it. As a form of knowledge, (discussed in chapter 1), the word of God is considered by both ministries to be key in developing a relationship with God. Second, in seeking to maintain and demonstrate their hot faith, congregants follow the biblical impetus and ethical sensibility to share the gospel, and do 'God's work', making faith mobile so that it can potentially be received by those who are lukewarm or even cold. I argue that this process is key to the formation of Christian subjects at Disciple Church.

When I asked a young man in the church what it meant to be a hot Christian, he told me that it's about having a relationship with God, if God doesn't know you then any time spent in church would be wasted. He quoted me a scripture, Luke 13:27: "But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!'" This he tells me: "is the scariest thing he has ever heard." I asked if singing in the choir was an example of being 'on fire' for God, but he insisted that it is about a personal relationship, and there are people who sing in the choir who are lukewarm because they do not know God. This is why it is so important to know God, for if a person's actions were to be insincere their life as a Christian would be in vain and would be the "ultimate failure".

The possibility of outward expressions of belief to be deceptive, or cynical expression of a lack of inner faith suggests slippages between inward faith and outward expression. It also highlights the work that congregants do to pursue their alignment within the church. As Luhrmann (2012) shows, through the lives of her evangelical interlocutors, faith is "hard work". For members of Christ Love and Disciple Church, faith alone is not enough to live a good Christian life. One must do the work and show results.

In what follows I will discuss how the ambivalence of lukewarmness, and the ultimate question of salvation becomes an ethical disposition inflected by the animation of materials, language, media, and embedded in the performance and discernment of Christian authority. Importantly for this argument, these scenes describe the multiple ways in which hot faith rubs up against cold unbelief and becomes spiritually turbulent for lukewarm middles. I also consider my role as an anthropologist inhabiting this uncomfortable middle ground, and being required to confront the boundaries between hot and cold, belief and unbelief, self and other. The biblical impetus to be a 'hot' Christian becomes a veridical device to consider the ways in which Christian experience is motivated and performed, spoken, and heard. This chapter will show that faith and revelation come to people through the act of hearing the Word but is maintained and circulated through a complex negotiation between church authority, ethical subjectivity and the material performances of Christian sincerity.

Revelation in Motion- Hearing the Word

During my fieldwork I most often found myself observing church services, where I would become enthralled and mesmerised by the charismatic presentation of God's word, so much so that the act of listening often forced me to participate. Sometimes I would find myself listening to respected and well known 'men-of-God', perhaps listening to Pastor Chris, visiting a congregation of thousands in a huge warehouse in Barking, East London; or in London's Wembley stadium under purple lights, listening to Benny Hinn convivially recalling his escapades in the 1970's Jesus Movement; Or, to Bishop Dag Heward-Mills, live-streamed into my bedroom from an outdoor crusade in Uganda to enthusiastic audiences expectant of promised healing miracles; but mostly I listened alongside young people in London to their fellowship pastor or church Bishop who would explain, teach and inspire, using the word of God, to the eager and zealous congregants. Others have discussed their own observations of these kinds of Christian performance, listening to young street preachers in Malawi (van Dijk 1992), Pastors-in-training in Ghana (Reinhardt 2017, Lauterbach 2010), God 'live and direct' in Zimbabwe

(Engelke 2007), an urgent altar call in Fiji (Thomlinson 2014), the voice of evangelical prosperity in a South Korean choir (Harkness 2014). These examples show the charismatic performances of God's word take on a multiplicity of linguistic and material forms which must be performed and broadcast in ways that *must be heard*.

Here I attempt to take seriously the bible passage, often quoted by my interlocutors, from Romans 10:17, "*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*". Joining these sermons, I often struggled to remain a passive listener, instead finding myself transformed- by the Word- into an active and participatory hearer. While this distinction inverts the typical association between passive hearer and active listener, here I consider the role of hearing, particularly when hearing the word of God as it is preached by one of the many church leaders I have encountered. Hearing God can come in forms such as preaching, praise and worship, or in prayer, which are understood by church members as being direct encounters (c.f. Luhrmann 2012). This further highlights the relationship between the performance of God's word and its affective embodied experience. It raises anthropological questions regarding the role of ecclesiastic authority- questions which are in dialogue with already existing dilemmas raised by Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians in post-colonial contexts- when they grapple with moral discernment concerning genuine religious leadership and the presence of the devil (see Shipley 2009, also Daswani 2015). Such questions include: who is this person speaking & how do I know they are speaking God's word? Furthermore, and not unrelated, I ask: what happens to those who hear God's word? And what kinds of work go into maintaining and reproducing the somatic act of hearing and feeling?

Taking seriously the word of God and the forms of action in encourages requires an understanding of how faith is cultivated in the spirits of believers. I have been told many times by members of both Disciple Church and Christ Love that upon sharing the word a 'seed' is planted, from which faith has the possibility to grow. I was taught by Emmanuel- our fast-moving evangelist above- and a 'shepherd' at Disciple Church with the responsibility to visit members and ensure their spiritual growth is on track-

the Parable of the Sower [Matthew 13]. He explained to me that a seed will grow better in ground which is nurtured by God's word. Soft ground is a metonym for the heart or spirit of the hearer. On many occasions during our conversations, bible passages were impressively recalled to me in an attempt to cultivate the word of God in my own spirit and soften my heart. When shared through the communication of God's word, like the ground, the heart of the hearer will soften, enabling faith to blossom.

Thinking theologically for a moment, many Christians will agree that the word of God is inherent to creation itself, and Genesis 1 from the Bible describes how God spoke the world into existence. The word of God then is both singular and plural, fixed and dynamic and for many Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians the Word is considered the same now as it has always been. The ability of the Word to traverse time means that acts of apostles and prophets from the bible are also the same for Christians today, allowing for the possibility of miracles and healing in these times. Many of the members of Christ Love and Disciple Church see themselves as having the potential to emulate the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers of the past and present (including Jesus)- whom they are taught by and whom they read from the bible. [23] The possibility for the Word to be lived is produced through an embodied proximity, enabled partly through its effective communication and performance (Coleman 2009:420). Almost all the young Christians I have spoken to insist the most important aspect of their faith is 'the word', and during conversations with young members of both churches the Word of God was never openly doubted or challenged.

The knowing of God's word is framed as 'revelation', whereby the Word becomes divinely imparted by the Holy Spirit and anointed by His power. Revelation, when shared and received is cultivated in the individual spirit of the hearer and allows an anointing which is the catalyst for a relationship with God. This relationship is key to the unfolding of the revelation, and as the already faithful "increase"

[23] This passage is regularly taught at Disciple Church. This passage reaffirms the authority of those who hold these various positions as sent by God. "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" [Ephesians 4]

in faith so too does their revelation. Something I am often told by church members, particularly at Christ Love is that "you can only live according to your revelation". In line with the impetus of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity, which encourages perpetual transformation, members of Christ Love exclaim and expect spiritual "growth", an "upwards and forwards" trajectory where individuals reflect on their progress as "reaching new levels". As their faith reaches higher plateaus, so does their revelation and as faith increases so does their relative 'temperature' on the sliding scale from cold to hot. For members of both Disciple Church and Christ Love the impetus to be a 'hot' Christian appears to be embedded in the co-constitutive relationship between a personal relationship with God and the authoritative and formalised collective revelation of their ministry.

The sermons at Disciple Church struck me as a dramatized performance of God's word (see Coleman 2000:125-127). The sermon is the most highly anticipated part of the lengthy Sunday service coming after a session of praise and worship, and a testimony segment where a church member will share with the 300-or-so congregation how their life has been transformed by their relationship with God. The church's Bishop in the UK, Bishop David, is a middle-aged Ghanaian man, sent by Bishop Dag to plant churches in the UK- which he has done with great success. He has a compelling and warm, almost casual style of preaching, and what seems to me like a sharp sense of humour. He will always be introduced by one of the senior pastors to rapturous applause and every Sunday as he stands up from the front row the choir sing a confession, the words projected onto the large screen for all to join in: "I expect a miracle today, nothing is impossible to those who believe and say, I believe that God's word is still the same, and I expect a miracle today". One particular Sunday- like most Sundays- Bishop David stood up from the front row, flicked on his microphone and exclaimed, "It will be the same for you!" before leading the congregation in a prayer:

> *"Lift up your two hands to heaven, Father, thank you for this blessed opportunity to be in your presence, we lift our hands in surrender to you Lord, do as you will in our lives today, give us miracles, give us blessings, let there be a change for the better Lord, thank you for your power,*

thank you for your healing, thank you for revelation Lord, correct that which needs to be corrected in us Lord, bless us at the hearing of your word, thank you Father for the power of your word Lord, thank you for great opportunity to hear your word and to receive your word today, let your perfect will be done amongst us, Satan I curse you, I bind you, I curse every operation of yours here, and Father thank you that your kingdom shall be established amongst us, let your will be done heavenly Father, in Christ Jesus' name I have prayed and everybody shouteth, Amen." "AMEN!" "Shout another Amen." "AMEN!" "Shout another Amen." "AMEN!"

Usually, the next two hours are devoted to the fulfilment of this opening prayer involving a series of teachings taken from the literature produced by the church's leader Dag Heward-Mills (DHM). Bishop Dag's books are written in a way which can be easily digested, each chapter usually containing a series of points on a topic, with commentary and scripture to explain a spiritual point. The books are predominantly used as pedagogic material for pastoral training at Bishop Dag's Anagkazo Bible School in Accra, Ghana (see Reinhardt 2017). This provides a framework for the sermon in London, and each week Bishop David will teach from one of DHM's book, perhaps a series on the topic of '*How to make full proof of your ministry' (Heward-Mills 2018)* or *'Why Non-Tithing Christians Become Poor and How Tithing Christians Can Become Rich' (Heward-Mills 2011)*, for example. The sermon is a dynamic reproduction of the church's existing literature distributed by DHM's own publishing house and the sermon includes the sharing of scriptures, projected onto the huge screen all of which underpin the point taken from the book. Each point uses a limited number of scriptures, usually a single verse, or complimentary verses from different books of the Bible, and while the Bishop will enumerate the teaching points for the week he has the licence to make the message his own, using personal anecdotes or making the message familiar to the audience by making comparisons to daily life, or often raising a straw-man eschatological example of what might happen to those who ignore his message and who will go to hell.

What is important here is not the specific topic preached but the way in which the word of God becomes shared through the interchangeable dynamics of book-based pedagogy and performative preaching. Bishop David is considered to have a greater share of the 'anointing', being a student and friends of DHM, who in turn is considered to have unique communication with God. One young man explained to me that DHM is "one down from Jesus" in an imagined hierarchy of proximity with God. This proximity charges the sermon with a spiritual efficacy which enables the word to be communicated and received as 'the word of God'. This style of performance is then reproduced by pastors in their mid-week meetings and by church members on their campuses, with salvation rhetoric reproduced accordingly.

Coleman (2000) discusses the importance of words in charismatic Christianity, highlighting the way words become narrativized, performed, and emplaced beyond the self. He points out that during sermons, the smallest segment of the bible can be drawn upon and applied to everyday life, not only as a repetition of belief but also as something which is lived:

> *"Sermons themselves are merely the most obvious of a variety of practices in which believers use the Bible in this way, as a collection of stories that can be applied directly and indexically to the self, encouraging the believer to take a particular course of action, remain firm in faith, discover the reason for a particular event and so on…" (Coleman 2000:126).*

The sermon is a ritualised event during a Pentecostal service and dependent upon the ability of the Pastor to effectively convey a revelation of God's anointed word, as well as the congregation's willingness to accept it as such. When preached the word of God becomes grounded in performance and ritual efficacy and informed by a multitude of semiotic regimes and like in ritual, when intention and performance enable the successful production and transmission of meaning, it often results in the material and spiritual transformation of participants (see Thomlinson and Engelke 2006).

In the London churches the word is embodied in the form of the Holy Spirit, written in the Bible, delineated in pedagogic literature, narrativized in sermons, sung during worship, prayed, spoken as

poetry, or evangelised on university campuses. The word can be 'caught'. For example, when prophecy is spoken by their Bishop members of Disciple Church raise their hands to catch the words and shout, "I receive it!". The word becomes digitised as members of Christ Love will often post faith inspired messages on Instagram, some posting a #wordfortheday, which is often quoted from their daily devotional.

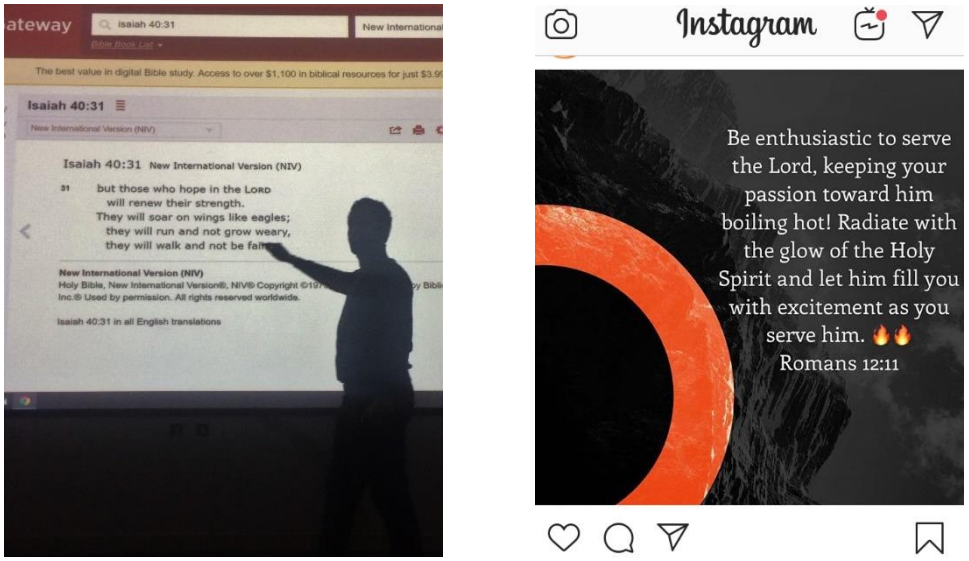

Figure 9.1/9.2- Left: Micha giving a sermon on campus. Right: Christ Love Instagram post

Upon hearing the word communicated I can recall the variety of visceral bodily responses I felt. Hearing a Pastor exclaim her limitless love for Jesus in the form of a spoken word poem I felt my chest move and my spine tingle; or listening to a Brother, usually so shy, giving his first attempt at sharing the gospel in a service I shared the way discomfort morphed into confidence; or the way my body recoiled in fear the first time I heard a worship group praying in tongues; and as I will discuss further below, the buzz of guilt as the word of god 'pricked' me into questioning my own lukewarmness. The word of God takes a multiplicity of communicative and material forms with the ability to produce a variety of physical and emotional responses[24]. What struck me the most about the kinds of Christian 'confessions' shared with me is that they are not just a mimetic re-production of the bible or their

[24] Emotions are considered to be carnal and those who worship God emotionally are thought have incorrect intentions, valuing the feeling of God above a relationship with Him. When there are outpourings of bodily emotion, crying for example, these are not considered to be worldly expressions but an outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

spiritual leaders but are a lived experience and performance of a revelation- or a particular understanding and knowledge of the word.

The Word of God and the Making of Authority

Susan Harding (2000) makes the distinction between passive hearing and active speaking when discussing the conversion rhetoric of fundamental evangelical Christians, where "speaking is believing" and reflects on her own affective response to hearing this rhetoric. This is in line with current anthropological approaches to Christian language- particularly Protestant- in which Christian subjects are formed through a combination of inner conviction and its outward projection as 'sincere' speech in what Keane (2007) calls a Protestant semiotic ideology. A semiotic ideology according to Keane "is a reflection upon, and an attempt to organise, people's experiences of the materiality of semiotic form" (ibid:21). This means that as the status and meaning given to language, texts, images, and objects, a semiotic ideology is made experiential through peoples' relationships to material forms (ibid). While Keane locates his Calvinist interlocutors' sincerity in the linguistic materiality of inner spiritual states and the outward rejection of material 'fetishes', others, such as Birget Meyer (2010, 2011), in her work on Ghanaian Pentecostalism locates these semiotic forms beyond the inner-self of the believer to take account of the mediatised 'sensational forms' which mediate and make visceral the presence of the divine in the de-territorialised and heterogeneous landscape of Ghanaian Pentecostal spirituality.

Bruno Reinhardt questions the way in which "Pentecostal networks grow into more stable institutions…that use the power of nurturance to establish more enduring allegiances and expand collectively according to mission" (2015b:268). His concerns run parallel to my own- Reinhardt's main interlocutors are students at Dag Heward-Mills' Anagkazo Bible School in Ghana and like the young members of Disciple Church in London, they seek to "catch the anointing" through the relatively stable forms of the LCI's denominational institution and spiritual practice.

Indeed Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity is a faith based upon the book and the word of God takes on an embodied quality which blurs distinctions between essentialised notions of bounded text and unbounded spirit (Keane 2008), or institution and charisma, giving fresh perspectives on the production and endorsement of spiritual authority (Kirsch 2008, see also Werbner 2011). When viewed in terms of semiotic form there lies a tension between the divinely inspired and embodied experience of God, and its formalised semiotic forms and practices (see Reinhardt 2015b).

Each ministry or denomination has its own revelation, sometimes referred to as a "vision" or the "anointing" or more generally a 'mission'. Both ministries in this thesis have a unique revelation- often considered by members to be exclusively true compared to the other and enabled by each leader's personal relationship with God[25]. Revelations tend to vary widely depending upon church, denomination, and geographical location but are increasingly formalised as large denominations like Disciple Church and Christ Love become more popular globally, particularly in these examples where the ministries' influence reaches the global north. The authority of the two leaders of these ministries "lies in their ability to transcend cultural and political borders in their mission" but also in their ability to effectively communicate an exemplary example of spiritual practice (Coleman 2009:420). For both Disciple Church and Christ Love revelations are embedded in Pentecostal-Charismatic theologies and ecclesiastic organisation as well as each man's spiritual reputation for teaching, healing, and miracles. To cultivate faith in their members in London, church leaders at Disciple Church and Christ Love, share through forms of media (see chapter 2), the ministry wide and authoritative revelation on what is often considered to be the unwavering and unfaltering word of God.

This revelation becomes circulated through various structures of authority and mediatised pedagogy which allow for the 'flow' of anointing and the production of congregations with a collective revelation. These linguistic and material forms are key to Pentecostal-Charismatic experience and

[25] To be clear, at Christ Love, Pastor Chris is considered a leader and a teacher, Bishop Dag is considered by members of Disciple Church a prophet and a spiritual father, or simply "daddy".

account for Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity's radical movement globally and continuities in form (Reinhardt 2014, 2015b, 2017).

Reinhardt again (2015a) takes note of revelation's heterogeneity and locates it in the multiplicity of the Holy Spirit's immanent forms among his Ghanaian interlocutors. He argues that "the limits of presence within the Pentecostal lifeworld are not objectively settled either by an internal authoritative component (the monopoly of a church leader to define it) or by a clear-cut distinction between a transcendental God and a disenchanted nature" (Reinhardt 2015a:419).[26] He suggests that due to Pentecostalism's propensities for 'sacred immanence', whereby those who are born-again are filled with the Holy Spirit, as well as securing salvation, worshippers are given access to an ontological nature imbued with God's grace (ibid:411-412)- which is particularly the case in Ghana (see Gifford 2004). Taking a Deleuzian approach, Reinhardt locates Pentecostal immanence as a virtual object, which is conceived as a "promise, which must be dwelt upon with due expectation and commitment" (ibid). This promise is deeply connected to Pentecostal-Charismatic eschatology and the expectation of salvation but requires the constant work of the believer in the present.

Locating the divine in a set of unstable virtualites which are multiple and requiring different forms of commitment raises the problem of authority when spirituality becomes "reproduced according to relatively stable norms and associations" and most importantly raises the emic question "who is a Christian?" (ibid, see also Garriot and O'Neill 2008), because despite the access to God granted to those who are born-again, their articulation of that access must also be recognised by others as such. This speaks to my question above: who is the person speaking God's word and how do I know it is God's word; And subsequently, what responses do these stabilised revelations encourage among church members? The spiritual responses and commitments to answering the former by Disciple Church members also helps to illuminate the latter and vice-versa. In other words, when the Spirit of

[26] It should also be noted that Bruno Reinhardt's interlocutors are members of another arm of Lighthouse Chapel International. Although I anonymise the name of the ministry with whom I conducted fieldwork, their affiliations to this wider and global denomination are important to consider.

God is circulated through the pedagogical revelations of a particular church ministry and leadership it encourages a spiritually informed response which allows them to be recognised- or not- as such. This suggests complimentary centripetal and centrifugal forces (Bialecki 2011), whereby revelation in this case is experienced both viscerally within the spirit of the believer and articulated so it "transgresses the self" (Coleman 2009).

The issue of authority is raised in Reinhardt's framework. He shows that in because authority is negotiated, devotees employ what he calls "operations of discernment", whereby the 'expectation and commitment' of faith is to seek out conduits for the flow and consumption of the anointing, or in the words of Disciple Church, to "catch the anointing". This allows for what Reinhardt calls "genres of revelation" (2015a:418) that seek to appease tensions which arise between notions of the unbounded workings of the Holy Spirit and how it is to be received by the individual. When the Word becomes congealed in authoritative revelations, of a Bishop for example, it requires actualisation in the spiritual experience of the revelation to confirm its actuality and qualify the collective identity of the church (ibid).

I would argue that through this process of spiritual coagulation, the revelations become available to those who hear- or sense them. As the Spirit is communicated, when received as such, it works to entrench the authority of the speaker. Next, I will turn to the teaching of Disciple Church as an example to understand how this ministry spiritually informs the ethical subjectivities of its members by calling their loyalty to God into question, and in doing so provokes a congregation who are hot- "on fire"- for God.

Loyalty & Disloyalty

Ecclesiastic presentation is important in cultivating the collective ethical formations of a church. When scaled up to the global, (as is the case with both Disciple Church and Christ Love) church leaders and

members (particularly at Disciple Church) are trained in the pedagogical dissemination of the ministry's own revelation (see Reinhardt 2017). In Disciple Church a great deal of work goes into cultivating a "culture" specific to this denomination. Conviviality is encouraged, calling out during the service is allowed- within reason- "You're preaching!", "I receive it!", and "Wowuzi!" are common phrases heard during a service. Pastors are referred to informally as P or P followed by the first letter of their name, for example a Pastor named Joseph would be referred to amongst the congregation as 'PJ'. This does not extend to female Pastor's however who are referred to as LP (Lady Pastor), nor does it extend to Bishop David who maintains an enigmatic distance and can only be spoken to by appointment after the service, and even the smallest personal comment from the Bishop will be considered a 'blessing'. Considering the above argument, it can be seen how this 'culture' is based in the revelation of their prophet, Bishop Dag and passes through chains of spiritual pedagogy and church fellowship, shaping the ethical subjectivities of the young members in London. In one of his many books Bishop Dag Heward-Mills sums this up:

> *"The culture of a church is a very powerful force. You may not be aware of it, but it is real. You need to develop a good culture of faithfulness, fidelity, and loyalty… In my church, we have gradually developed what I call a culture of loyalty. It is unacceptable to speak negatively about any minister. I myself have no sardonic remarks to make about my friends and pastors behind their backs. If I have anything to say I will usually just say it." (Heward-Mills 2013:36)*

Despite the conviviality of the ministry, I often experienced the power of word of God which has the power to make the hearer feel viscerally uncomfortable. The use of an impersonal "you" during preaching gave me the impression that the Bishop or Pastor was speaking directly to me. These moments were especially striking when the topic of loyalty and disloyalty came up during a service. Loyalty and disloyalty are key spiritual, pedagogic, and disciplining forms used across the LCI denomination. Bishop Dag has authored numerous books on this theme, *Loyalty and Disloyalty (2013),*

Those Who Pretend (2011), Those who are Ignorant (2016), and One of You is a Devil (2017) to name a few. The topic of 'Loyalty and Disloyalty' is summed up in one of these books:

> *"Disloyalty doesn't just happen overnight. Becoming disloyal is a process! Most people are unaware of the fact that they are becoming disloyal. Many leaders do not even notice disloyalty in their associates. In this chapter, I am going to outline the stages a person goes through when he is gradually changing into a rebel. There are two reasons why you must know these stages of disloyalty. First of all, it will help you to identify and kill any such tendency within you. Secondly, it will help you to detect disloyalty in any person you work with." (Heward-Mills 2013:16)*

The topic of disloyalty often found its way into the sermons. In this example, the Bishop of Disciple Church in London introduced his sermon on 'remembering' what God has done with a teaching of loyalty:

> *"We really need each other, all the time. And you have to remember, what everybody has done, the role that everybody has played. Ungrateful people, they are dangerous people, disloyal people, wicked, wicked bunch, wicked bunch of people, dangerous people to move with and have them in your life. Pray that you never have an ungrateful person in your life. They are heartbreakers. Ungrateful person: someone that you choose, and that person behaves as though 'I would have been chosen anyway'".*

Even the denomination's worship songs- performed by Bishop Dag's music minister, Aida, in Ghana, who will attend all his events and are also sung before the sermon in the London church, speak of loyalty and disloyalty. One song goes:

A faithful man, who can find,

Loyalty is so important

To fight those who spoil the church

Deal with all forms of disloyalty.

Don't allow those who are ignorant

To lead many people astray

Discontented always murmuring

Ignorant people are dangerous.

Disloyalty, deal with disloyalty

Deal with all forms of disloyalty

Fight it! fight it, fight disloyalty

Fight all those who spoil the church.

Don't allow the accuser

Silence him every time you can

Accusations they will weaken you

And take away your confidence.

Absalom was the one

Who attacked his very own father

Absalom was a dangerous son

He did not honour his father.

A faithful man

A faithful man, who can find

Loyalty is so important

To fight those who spoil the church.

Disloyalty, deal with disloyalty

Deal with all forms of disloyalty

Fight it! fight it, fight disloyalty

Crush all the enemies of the church

For Disciple Church, as with the whole of LCI denomination, there is a strong pedagogical focus on pastoral training and 'lay ministry' in a style distinct to the denomination and this too forms part of the culture described above (see Reinhardt 2017). This is often framed as 'working for God'. The role of work in the church is an ethical practice designed to "fight disloyalty" and lukewarmness. Members are expected and strongly encouraged by each other to take up 'ministry' in various roles, to join the choir, the ushering department or the 'Dancing Stars' to name a few, and its considered part of God's will to take up pastoral or missionary duties.

New members or 'spiritual babies' are put under an immense amount of pressure to regularly attend all church events, and online platforms such as Watts-app are ways to ensure members do not drift away. Every Sunday morning, I would receive a phone call or a message to check that I was on my way to church. Not only does this ensure that as 'spiritual babies' new members will increase their faith but by- what Disciple Church members call - "being around" they will also "flow" in the culture of the ministry, enabling them to become 'mature Christians'. By 'being around' it is expected that these newer members will hear the revelation, 'catch the anointing' and will develop their relationship with God, meanwhile ensuring they will not pollute others with any lukewarmness.

As a visitor in the space, I often felt a pang of guilt when the topics disloyalty and deviance, 'those who pretend' or 'duality' came up. Duality is also the title of an earlier book written by Bishop Dag (1997). It deals with similar themes of disloyalty and lukewarm Christianity and it discusses the importance of being removed or not being "unequally yoked" (a common charismatic term) using the Biblical character of Samson as an example of worldly entanglement with unbelievers. An extract reads:

"some of you reading this book are just like that. You are in the church and you claim to be born again. Your friends think that you are a believer, but on the other hand, you are playing around with the world. Your best friends are unbelievers, which makes you just like Samson".

Through the teachings of loyalty and disloyalty I began to question my own lukewarmess as I felt I exemplified this duality. If I were truly open to learning why a relationship with God was important for

these young people, why did I not act like a Christian when I was away from them? The revelation had its desired effect on me and through my own questioning I began to discipline myself when with members of Disciple Church. When asked what I did on Friday evening for example, I would say I stayed home, when in fact perhaps I was partying, or spending time with a loved one. When I asked what others had been doing since I last saw them, I received similar responses or a simple "you know, church stuff", "just soaking the word", "lots of quiet time". In some ways, the notion of duality is reproduced through the pressure to conform to church authority.

Often, I was asked by Micha who had the role of my Shepherd, which scriptures I had been reading for my 'quiet time' during the week, or if I had decided which ministry to join. When I would explain to him that I did not feel comfortable joining a ministry because of my position in the church he would often tell me that unless I got to know God for myself, and by this he meant by doing what was expected in the church, my research would lead people away from Christ and I would "have blood on my hands". My refusal to join a ministry of course made me disloyal, and antithetical to not only the ethics of the Disciple Church but also the ethics of anthropological practice. When I asked a young woman sympathetic to my anxiety what she thought about the insistence that members take active roles in the church, she told me that for her it was good because it would stop her slipping away from God. She continued to tell me that she "respects the anointing" of Bishop David so understands why it is important to take what he says seriously.

Taking what Bishop David says seriously is a way of proving loyalty. During one service, and in his usual, almost nonchalant style, he commented that presentation was important and the style of the beards some young men were sporting were not to his taste. The next time I saw Micha, and many others, they were clean shaven. This prompted a number of discussions. One young woman suggested that it was a way for the men to prove loyalty and "move up the ranks" but in discussions with the men they told me that because of Bishop David's spiritual "humility" they respect his opinion of them. Although this may seem like a trivial example, it speaks to a greater 'culture' of loyalty within the church and

the willingness of young Christians to prove loyalty through these forms of material practice. It is the material practices of spiritual discernment in Disciple Church I will turn to next.

Discernment as Self/Collective Discipline

Because LCI is a global institution its forms of discipline are both centralised and diffuse (Reinhardt 2018a), making the ethical practice of members of Disciple Church a form of self and collective discipline. The impossibility of knowing if someone is authentic in being 'on fire' for God is emphasised through a church pedagogy of loyalty and disloyalty as discussed above. The fact that someone might be 'pretending' or working to undermine the work of the church creates a collective ethical obligation to prevent all forms of disloyalty. This problem is nothing new for Christians and despite the access granted to God and salvation through becoming born-again, the possibility that what someone expresses outwardly does not correspond to what is on the inside again requires what Reinhardt calls the "labour of discernment" (ibid). In other words, it means that the church members do the work of looking out for traitors and disloyal members.

The anthropology of Islam provides the tools and concepts that can help unpack the unique context in which discernment and discipline are entangled in a church like Disciple Church. Beyond simply challenging the liberal suturing of agency and resistance and the framework of self-cultivation whereby religiosity is maintained according to norms and values, the anthropology of Islam, particularly in work by Saba Mahmood (2004), Amira Mittermaier (2012) and Beekers and Kloos (2018), highlights where agency might submit to forms of spiritual authority while also being contingent on the everyday. For Mittermaier, this notion of agency allows space for the unexpected intervention of the divine in ideas of self-cultivation because it is not an understanding of agency built on resistance.

Drawing on these ideas within a Christian context, Reinhardt (2018a) considers the inter-play between discipline and lenience on the Lighthouse Chapel International. He highlights how the dialectic between playful worship and strict ethical expectations and responsibility of church members is distributed collectively, in such a way as to allow for the shared spiritual growth of both individuals and the church. His analysis helps to move understandings of religious subjectivity beyond self-fashioning to incorporate both inward and outward religious practice and performance, within the church.

Like Reinhardt's interlocutors, members of Disciple Church inhabit an ontology where the presence of the spiritual is both heavenly and demonic. The possibility for the devil to hold influence is a very real problem and requires the implementation of 'spiritual discernment'. Understood as technology of the self, the labour of discernment becomes an ethical discipline (Foucault 1988) and embedded in a sensory regime of both inward and outward religious norms and practice (Hirschkind 2001, Mahmood 2001). This spiritual ontology extends beyond the church at Disciple Church to incorporate many aspects of the young people's lives. I would often be told that "these things are spiritual" when asking about friendships and relationships for example,

I found this demonstrated in a Disciple Church ushers' prayer group, which consisted of young men, who would meet on Monday evenings in a central London university. Hidden away in an upstairs classroom the group of up to fifteen-or-so young men would take turns to share prayer topics, reading a bible verse followed by around twenty minutes of praying in tongues. The young men pray for 'favour' when looking for jobs, 'humility' against the 'spirit of pride', the 'conviction' to remain separated from the world to fulfil God's calling, and 'honour' to respect their spiritual fathers (Bishop David and Bishop Dag). They also prayed for an 'increased measure' of the Holy Spirit, and for the strength to avoid 'strange women', to name a few examples. For the young men these prayer topics are firmly embedded in the church's discourse. Bishop Dag teaches about 'strange women', taking the biblical verse 1 Kings 1:11, "But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter

of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites". The teaching of 'strangeness' extends to men too; it is understood as the work of the devil encouraging the sin of fornication[27].

For the young men this became relevant in their own lives as they often expressed battles with sexual desire. I overheard one of the young men after a prayer session ask a friend to chaperone him to meet a young woman form the church because of his concerns. He was not suggesting that his friend was a 'strange woman' but was employing the work of spiritual discernment to ensure that the devil could plant the 'seed' of fornication. The prayer group employ a spiritual discernment to collectively maintain a relationship with God and rebuke the influence of the devil. Like Saint Augustine's *Confessions*, the shared prayer topics not only express an individual and worldly fallibility and encourage humility and conviction for God but also publicly voice these concerns, for the whole group to hear, in the hope that they will make collective transformations.

Members of Disciple Church express their 'born-againess' through these forms of practice. Practicing their born-againess ensures salvation of both self and other as these circulations of faith are both individual and collective. To 'tap into the anointing' as it is described at Disciple Church, is to participate in a collective revelation. To have and maintain a strong relationship with God requires the individual practice of material forms, the kind Ade described to me in the car. Knowing God is to spend time worshipping with Him via music, singing, the bible, Podcasts, online videos etc. For Ade, his relationship with God is maintained through these material forms and meant he could discern the 'Spirit of fear' in me, a demonic entity which was preventing me from singing in the choir. For many of the young members of Disciple Church, God is known, and the devil identified, through the

[27] A focus on 'strange women' highlights conservative attitudes to gender differences and roles, which is common across Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity, particularly considering "women are numerically dominant" while men hold onto leadership positions, something which is mirrored in my own research. Eriksen (2014) highlights that despite the Pentecostal possibility of egalitarianism through equal access to a relationship with God, masculine values tend to encompass feminine values. However, research has highlighted the ways in which gender difference in P-C encourages the transformation of masculinities to challenge 'patriarchal discourse' (Klinken 2011).

affordances and correspondences between these materials- a materiality which extends to bodies and spirits. If individual salvation can be assured through a personal relationship with God, it also requires maintenance to prevent 'spiritual attacks' from the devil, making these material strategies durable access points to the divine (Meyer 2006).

Despite the importance placed on individual salvation, there is also the biblical direction to share the gospel which is an opportunity to demonstrate being "on fire for God". This again takes on a number of material and linguistic forms, Watts-app groups, t-shirts, singing in the choir, and the flow of mobile bodies as they speak to strangers in the street. Public expressions and the circulation of faith is most apparent when the church group go out in public to 'outreach' (evangelise). The material body becomes involved as members are expected- and many do- to take part in activities beyond the Sunday and mid-week services. There are prayer meetings on campus during the week, 'outreach' or evangelism, choir rehearsals and dance practice. Sometimes another church or community space will be hired overnight on a Friday for 'all-night prayer', particularly if there is an important event coming up- like the Salvation Sunday event.

For members of Disciple Church encounters with those who are lukewarm- whether a young person raised a Christian but not born-again on Oxford Street, or a visiting anthropologist reluctant to join the choir, articulating their revelation is an ethical act and an expression of Christian sincerity. For Webb Keane (2007), the correspondences between material forms, act to produce moral relationships based on the value of sincerity and salvation, while for members of Disciple Church the moral value placed on personal salvation is jeopardised by those who might be disloyal and lukewarm. However, the friction that emerges in encounters with lukewarm individuals provide an opportunity for proving their own 'hot' faith and commitment.

Because religion is a historically produced concept (Asad 1993), the contingency of religious ethics and experience looks different depending on the context. In Ghana for example Girish Daswani (2013a, 2015) locates ethical practice at the incommensurable and competing interface between Pentecostal

rupture and the continuity of a traditional past, whereas his interlocutors in London are concerned with the activism implicit in sharing the gospel with a secular public. For members of Disciple Church in particular a set of denominationally institutionalised strategies are employed to maintain loyalty and personal zealousness in the face of the day-to-day problems that young members deal with. Sometimes these problems are raised through their commitment to the church, like the need to ensure they honour their spiritual fathers, but often are defined according to the worldly concerns and experiences that are part-and parcel of life as young people, particularly Black British young people, in London today (see chapter 5 for full discussion).

As an ethical practice the young members of Disciple Church articulate these morals somewhere between the explicit repetition of authoritative values and the tacit everyday judgement of acts in relation to self and others. This can be viewed as a moral economy where hot Christian subjectivities are formed, maintained, and shared. As Simon Coleman points out, the sharing of salvation can be compared to Mauss' notion of the gift, where of course there is the obligation to give, receive and return. When they are shared, revelations become available to those who hear, but also ensure the speaker is entitled to access spiritual gifts and ultimately salvation themselves (Coleman 2004). He points out:

> *"The charismatic gift should ideally be a spontaneous product of the self but may also help to reconstitute the believing person by being deployed systematically as a means of self-surveillance" (2004:438)*

This is a combination of centipedal and centrifugal forces oscillating between the intimate and individual desire for salvation and its outward communication to ensure others are also saved (Bialecki:2011). The practice of 'hot' Christianity is aspirational and locates itself in a transcendent temporality of salvation, where these linguistic forces work to enable its fulfilment. Through immanent practices, sincere and ethical Christian subjects are formed and maintained through a set of relatively stable norms. It is because Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity exists in and beyond the

self vis-a-vis the porosity of Pentecostal-Charismatic bodies, the flow and transference of spiritual and ethical sensibilities is learned and performed (Reinhardt 2014, Coleman 2004). This is a reverse entropy where the desire to express a hot faith works to heat up those around, returning to increase the 'fire' of the zealous believer. This takes us beyond the notion of a suffering subject, tortured by the problem of sincerity but instead looks at the ways in which the Christian value of 'the good' (Robbins 2013) is articulated materially at the interfaces between hot, cold and lukewarm.

Conclusion

It may seem that when the Pastor calls into question the sincerity of the congregation he is rearticulating propositional beliefs based upon internal conviction. But if we take note of the way sincerity is produced materially through the reproduction of revelation through biblical scripture and the performances of 'hot' Christianity then we can see how it is not so much about the articulation of inner belief and transcendence and future salvation as about the animation of biblically and institutionally informed ideas about how Christianity *should* be lived in the present.

Perhaps this is why I often felt so guilty when the topic of loyalty was raised during a sermon because I was unable to animate the revelation as expected. Extending the argument of hot, cold, and lukewarm, it should also be noted that anthropology has a somewhat tepid relationship with Christianity. In short, it could be argued that anthropology is a kind of lukewarm Christianity. Many critiques have noted that the discipline, which locates itself within the secular, is able to do so because the secular grew out of the religious. However, discussions which highlight the authoritative genealogy of the secular show that anthropology shares horizons with both secular and religious agendas (Lambek 2012). The boundary work of anthropology, implicitly at least, maintains a religious-secular divide but many critics have noted the deeply Christian modulations within our discipline (Cannell 2005, 2006). These Christian resonances further complicate a simplified opposition between the religious and the secular due to Christianity's enduring effect on anthropological concepts, for

example locating belief in the intellectual and individual 'inner' person, concurrent with notions of modern and secular agency. Here I refer to Talal Asad's (1993) argument: that our "conception of religion, is a modern, privatized Christian one because and to the extent that it emphasizes the priority of belief as a state of mind rather than as constituting activity in the world." It is because anthropology is lukewarm that this kind of boundary work appears quite binary. Inner sincere conviction is projected towards transcendent futures, and we struggle to identify when boundaries are challenged in the present, and a "sacred immanence" emerges (Reinhardt 2015a).

Similarly, Joel Robbins (2007) tries to disrupt the idea that belief statements are propositions of inner Christian conviction and tries to figure out a way to take seriously Christian belief. Robbins says we should take note of what people 'believe in'. The notion to "believe that" retains uncertainty where the phrase to "believe in" implies a sense of trust, and an ordering of life around the values attached to that belief. If we take seriously 'belief in', something such as the value of salvation as he suggests, then our attention should be on the way salvation is articulated as a moral endeavour. Robbins' notion of Christianity is somewhat of an ideal type but let's take his example and see if we can apply it to the hot Christianity I have described: The proposition to "believe that" being a hot Christian is most desirable is quite different from "believing in" what scripture demands. The former maintains a passive continuity where "belief that" is one option among many, whereas the latter implies the potential for hot Christianity to enable discontinuity and change as the faithful demonstrate their commitment by seeking change in others. Taking seriously what Christian informants "believe in" shifts the focus from inner states to outward action and ethical practice.

My own discomfort during sermons which questioned the loyalty of the congregation was informed by a distinctly secular and anthropological semiotic ideology of what faith is: that in order to be sincere, faith should be believed before being acted upon. Although the Pastor in the opening vignette expresses an ecclesiastic authority which at times feels uncomfortable, his cynical accusation has the effect of putting the word of God into motion, provoking the congregation into action as they seek to

deepen their relationship with God and maintain their fire, collectively enacting and deepening their faith. The questioning of loyalty among congregants is a response to the contingency of religious experience produced by the boundary work of the secular. For the young Christians at Disciple Church in London, Bishop David is responding to the uncertainties produced by the non-Christian and worldly secular where the devil operates, potentially cooling his zealous congregation. Through his own form of boundary work he provides a revelatory frame through which the practice of hot Christianity flows, despite these uncertainties (Reinhardt 2015b).

What I have shown here is that young Christians at Disciple Church confront these boundaries and seek to dissolve them through the consumption and reproduction of revelation, and the material practices of discernment. When we are forced to confront our own Christian sincerity -or lack of- as researchers, it also allows us to reconsider the ethical practices with which we become complicit and in doing so, to recognise where boundaries meet and merge, and to take part in the labour of discernment ourselves.

The transference of revelation becomes congealed in the spirit of the hearer as words take up material form as intense embodied feeling and are performed through immanent spiritual practice beyond the event of the service. In the case of Disciple Church, the revelations of their head figure, Bishop Dag, which through hierarchical relations of discipleship, preached to members in London produce a series of tensions where member's zeal for God is brought into question. This produces a relation between authorised revelation and ethical practice, which becomes expressed through a multitude of ethically grounded material practices. Put another way, words cultivate revelations which set ethical parameters and encourage the material transformation of self, bodies, and practice. The word of God becomes mobile through the congregation's ethical desire to have a deeper relationship with God and their duty to disseminate the word further.

In the case of Disciple Church, what causes the animation and consequential interaction between hot and cold Christians? Tracing the semiotic forms which animate bodies, objects, and relations back to

their source one finds the charismatic authority of the Pastor- and beyond the Pastor highly organised and pervasive, yet deliberately plastic structures of authority (Reinhardt 2015b). These conversations return to the ideas of Asad (1993, see also Asad in Iqbal 2017) who locates the religious habitus within the power relations between discursive traditions and their ability to cultivate the embodied capacities and desire of faith. The pastor's authority maintains the flow of the charismata and puts these young religious lives in motion, and it is during moments of ecclesiastic performance and congregational participation that ethical subjects are formed, authority (re)established, and everyday actions sacralised. Ethical subjectivity and Christian sincerities are produced and disciplined through a combination of language, materiality, and discourse. Through these relationships the centripetal and centrifugal circulation of God's word can be traced, from inwards to outwards and back again. Taking seriously Romans 10:17 shows how faith comes by hearing but the word of God depends on the possibility for the hearer to position themselves ethically, to discern the spiritual, locate what is communicated in a semiotic regime of Pentecostal-Charismatic meaning, and act upon those meanings collectively. Through these dynamic processes the fire of God keeps burning.

Chapter 4

The campus as a battleground: Charismatic Christian ethics and the cosmo-politics of space in, on, and of university campuses in the UK

Micha's eyes darted from side to side as we walked briskly along the long corridor of the university building. He was checking to see which rooms are available, occasionally pushing doors to see if they were unlocked. He was not really engaging in conversation as I hurried along to keep up with him. Finding a space for the fellowship to meet was taking priority, and I could sense that not having a room booking was making Micha's search more urgent. His purposefulness eventually paid off and we found the largest lecture theatre on campus unlocked- a 300-seater auditorium- more than enough space for the four members of this campus fellowship. Micha shared a message with those of us in attendance that evening- and spoke of the need to grow the fellowship, as has been instructed by his pastors, by sharing the word of God with other students on campus- but only if we got to know God for ourselves first. Prior to my arrival, he and another member of the fellowship, Sam, had been walking around the perimeter of the campus 7 times, praying for the salvation of the university and its members. They circled around the university, praying that the walls of the university, as the stronghold of the devil, would fall and embrace Jesus.

Micha studies at a university recognised for its 'liberal' and 'critical' humanities education and he often struggled to find members to join his fellowship. At this stage, there were four members, including myself. Micha sometimes admitted that evangelising at his university was difficult because the students there were largely unreceptive or critical of religion in general. But his biblical re-enactment of the battle of Jericho, praying around the perimeter of the university suggested a cosmological understanding of the space within. Like the walls of Jericho, perhaps the walls of his campus would eventually fall and those who fear God within would be saved.

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This chapter considers how a Christian ethic of proselytization becomes entangled with the politics of space and representation on university campuses in the UK. To produce spiritual spaces to meet, hold services, and evangelise to fellow students, members of the church ministries aim to form student societies to formalise their representation on campus. However, tensions emerge for the young Christians when the secular university challenges and obstructs their spiritual endeavours. For the young Christians, the horizon of the university campus emerges as a spiritual battleground, encouraging a cosmo-political praxis (Marshall 2009) and the strategic use of the campus as a space to challenge and carve out spaces of representation.

This chapter traces how young Christians interpret and engage in the politics of representation through the ethics of Charismatic Christian faith and how they articulate and cultivate spaces for self-representation through their cosmo-political praxis on campus. Until this point, this thesis has dealt with the various ways that the young church members participate in and cultivate the knowledge, ethics, and sensorium of their church ministry. The production of a sense of divine authority, shared communion, and responsibility to share the gospel informs and foregrounds their practice as young Christians. This chapter will begin to explore where their backgrounds as young people of Black and African heritages begin to shape their experiences in secular spaces beyond the church.

As I have discussed earlier in this thesis it was the evangelical practices of the young Christians whom I met on their university campuses that led me to become involved with these fellowships. Either engaging with the fellowships at various freshers' fairs, where these groups evangelise to new students, or being personally evangelised to as I frequented various university libraries in the city, I was brought into direct contact with these groups dialogically, and somewhat on their own terms. The initial conversations I had with the young Christians in these spaces were within their moral horizon which involves proselytising by "sharing the word" with all- including myself. Also, the fact I was considered by members of these churches to be a student- not an 'anthropologist'- required me to partake in the ethics of participation expected in these fellowships. Effectively I was expected to act

as a student member of the fellowship rather than a visiting anthropologist and this came with expectations of the high level of participation required in Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity.

Again, throughout my fieldwork I have been compelled to think spatially. Making Space for God is multifarious. It in both the inner- subjective and ethical space- representative of the kind of ethical and moral self-fashioning of the good we have come to recognise particularly from ethnographies in the anthropology of Christianity (c.f. Robbins 2004b, Keane 2007) as well as the Anthropolgy of Islam (Mahmood 2004, Hirschkind 2006)- which hinges crucially in this context, on being and becoming born again. But it is also- and as these ethnographies also demonstrate- a space beyond the believer- where the ontological reality and presence of God can be materially organised, represented, and experienced. This is a physical and public space for God- played out in the everyday lives of these young Christians- at home, work, in the city streets of London, ultimately extending globally towards a universal global horizon which aspires to the transformation of the world itself- where an outward ethics of born-againess is performed and articulated by various evangelical endeavours.

The university campus is one of the physical spaces which fosters many performances of born-againess and the ethics of salvation- the kind I have briefly described. But this space is also contested by the secular formation of the university itself which challenges and obstructs the spiritual endeavours of these fellowships. Furthermore, as marginalised students on their university campuses, these diasporic students of colour, although engaging with Black-led globally African church ministries, tend to articulate an identity which is Christian first and foremost and as such does not place emphasis on 'race' or ethnicity as categories of self-identification. Their evangelistic practices and desire to carve out spaces *for God* on campus are borne in part from an aspiration to transcend worldly categories of 'race' (possibly even the world itself) and to express born-again selves. So, it is here where the ethics of Christian subjectivity rubs up against the politics of representation on the university campus and does not fit neatly into the dominant secular politics of representation currently being played out in many universities, where 'race' plays a central role in the politics of representation.

Girish Daswani highlights the ways that university institutions have been key in the growth of Pentecostal and Charismatic movements in Ghana (2015). Other works highlight the public role of Christianity in Nigeria- where Christian universities play a significant role in public and political life (Marshall 2009). Both Christ Love and Disciple Church are embedded in the historical legacy of Christian movements on university campuses in west-Africa during the 1970's and 80's (both church leaders cut their teeth in these student movements). In the UK, Christian representation in universities has been well established through mainline churches, with the Christian Union long being a dominant evangelical presence on university campuses. However, the presence of nascent denomination based Pentecostal and Charismatic forms of Christianity emanating from the African continent and representing this rendering of denominational Christianity in the university is relatively new. This poses a challenge to the ways the university accommodate these church groups because they do not adopt the same cosmopolitan non-denominationalism presented by the more established student Christian networks. To maintain a presence on campus the Pentecostal and Charismatic church groups must first have their fellowships formalised as student societies on campus.

The university campuses with the largest Disciple Church and Christ Love fellowships and with recognition from Student Unions tend to be post-1960's universities. These universities are often former polytechnics and attract a wider socio-economic and ethnic diversity of students than traditional universities. This is for several reasons, which includes location, entry requirements, and the courses taught. These newer universities are often designed on green-field land with large campuses- with classrooms, residence, and facilities in the same area- rather than in buildings dispersed throughout the city. This makes them opportune spaces for the formation of various student communities.

University is a time and space where the young Christians can explore their own relationships with God for themselves, away from family obligations. For some, university is a challenging time in new surroundings, where God- who may not have been present in their lives previously becomes an

important source of comfort and support. At the same time, their participation in the student fellowships allows them to meet other young people along the lines of faith. As discussed in the previous chapter, when their participation grows, they cultivate the ethical sensibilities that distinguish them from other students who are not Christians (or members of the same ministry). Their involvement in the student fellowships becomes a political action on the campus as they participate in the politics of recognition.

I will show how for young Christians in this context, the university campus emerges as a spiritual battleground, encouraging a cosmopolitical (Stengers 2010) praxis and tactical (de Certeau 2011) use of the campus as a space to challenge and claim out spaces of representation. I use the term cosmopolitics to highlight the ways in which the cosmological and political are entangled in the politics of Christian cosmology. This is something that allows us to think about how ethico-religious world-making plays out politically for young Christians living in and of the Africa diaspora. Here I make use of the terms 'cosmopolitics' in the way that Isabelle Stengers and Bruno Latour deploy the term which differentiates the cosmological from the cosmopolitan- allowing for a common world in which "we are ready to absorb dissents not only about the identity of humans but also about the cosmos they live in." (Latour 2004:451). Similarly, I use the term tactics in the way that Michel De Certeau uses it, to refer to opportunistic spatial interventions in the face of institutional conventions (2011).

I will demonstrate the ways that these young Christians imagine, interpret, and engage in the politics of representation, thinking through space and the tactics these young Christians employ. In doing so I pay attention to the politics which are enacted in, of, and on the university campus. What this shows, is that while the urgency of proselytization springs from the ethical imagination and spiritual orientations of the young Christians' religious horizons. The frictions which occur attest to a spatialised and contested politics of representation.

The notion of a battle, 'spiritual warfare', or everyday life as a battleground where Christian faith must be defended is not unfamiliar to many of the Christians I have met. Whether in conversations or in

sermons, many of the young people expressed the sentiment that they feel that they are in a minority in the ways that they experience and express their faith. Even when comparing themselves to mainline Christians, or even their parents who attend the same church, this generation express the surety that their relationships with God are the only ones that are genuine. In the face of feelings of marginalisation along the lines of faith, this prompts some of the church members to view their evangelical pursuits and goals as part of a battle to show the world their version of the gospel.

In secular or post-secular society (c.f. Habermas 2008), particularly in Euro-American contexts, the fear from Christians that their values are being eroded by 'progressive' and 'liberal' political ideologies has been expressed since the latter half of the 20th century. One need only to look at the rise of Conservative and Christian affiliated political movements in the US, Brazil, and France to see how politics draws on a Christian moral base to challenge liberal politics and claim recognition along the lines of political and religious identity. Often these movement echo the language of warfare, and rights, to make their claims.

One religio-political context in which the notion of spiritual warfare has been ethnographically explored is in Nigeria. Ruth Marshall in her (2009) book *Political Spiritualities: The Pentecostal Revolution in Nigeria,* Marshall locates the dramatic rise of Pentecostalism and born-again Christianity alongside hope for a Nigerian nation in a post-colonial context, particularly in the faith's role in the political sphere. She shows how the temporalities of political futures and born-again horizons converge to form a political spirituality which she considers to be an irreducible practice. This challenges theories of Pentecostalism's popularity in west-Africa as either a reclaiming of African identity, or an expression of individualism within liberal capitalism. Instead, it shows how the pursuit for domination and spiritual growth is embedded in Pentecostalism's spiritual ontology of fighting against an enemy. It can also account for its rapid global spread:

> *"The complex processes of globalization at work in the elaboration and circulation of this fairly heterodox interpretation of apostolic spiritual warfare provides a fascinating insight into the*

dynamic and almost haphazard way in which charismatic Christianity grows and spreads. Rather than a specific doctrine or doctrines, one finds a bricolage, a living, moving corpus of ideas, scriptural interpretations, images, discourses, and techniques developed and circulating across a range of personal, institutional, and virtual networks and engendering an elastic, undisciplined and pragmatic processes of inspired creations, borrowings, combinations, and adaptations." (Marshall 2016:97)

While the Nigerian political Pentecostalism of salvation discussed by Marshall diverges from the exclusionary politics of American evangelicals, both forms of Christianity make demands that define an 'enemy' and challenge the 'liberal subject'. In this way, members of both churches I discuss here employ the politics of recognition to make demands on their university campuses that challenge the logic of liberal recognition and representation.

The Politics of Space and Representation on Campus

"Why can't you join the Christian Union?", Malcolm was told in a meeting with the Student Union at his university. He was furious as he played me back the conversation which he had recorded on his phone so he could send it on to his Pastor. Malcolm had been tasked with setting up a student society for Christ Love at his university. He was in his final year at this point, and while there had previously been a society which represented his fellowship it had been un-registered for a couple of years. For Malcolm, now in his final term at university he felt his time to do as his Pastors had instructed him- to 'make a difference' on campus- to set up a new society and bring new members into the fellowship was running out. I sensed his anguish. To fail in this endeavour would represent a failure to fulfil a prophecy set out to him by the Holy Spirit some months prior. The target of 10 members set by the student union however, seemed to him to be rather arbitrary and slightly unattainable considering each of Christ Love's fellowships might have 10 members at a push.

He told me that the Students Union did not understand, "that we are different to the Christian Union- that we need our own space to meet." Malcolm understood the need to have a room to worship away from the prayer room on campus. The exuberant praying in tongues and falling under the spirit would not be suitable in these shared, often quiet, and reflective spaces, suggesting he recognised the way his faith might be perceived and judged by others outside of the faith. He told me he later met with the Chaplain of his university to discuss the matter, "She doesn't even believe the bible is true, perhaps Jesus didn't even exist!" For Malcolm, not only did the Student Union's rebuttal of his application to form a society represent a secular misrecognition of the fellowship's mission, worship, and purpose, but meeting with the university chaplain highlighted how liberal forms of Christianity are more readily adopted and incorporated into the university institution.

Without formal representation through the university the fellowship would be unable to book rooms to meet, hold events, or participate at the fresher's fair which is an ideal opportunity to meet new students who might be willing to join the fellowship. This rejection, for Malcolm at least, was lived a direct refusal of his faith, identity, and his very notion of self by the university institution. The liberal secular reductionism of his spiritual and ethical world into a generalised notion of 'Christianity' suggests a politics in the university which does not take seriously the ethical and cosmological needs and desires of students like Malcolm, whose religious affiliation sits outside the norms and categories of denominational faith.[28] In addition, these fellowships are attended on the whole by Black students, leaving them open to racialised stereotypes related to Charismatic faith.

Born-again identity adds further friction to the politics of representation on university campuses particularly when it comes to conversations around 'race' and ethnicity. Many members of these fellowships distance themselves from 'worldly' markers of identity and what they consider to be some

[28] There may be other factors at play here such at the churches attitude towards non-heteronormative individuals and relationships, which although not- on the whole- explicitly discriminatory, are considered to be incommensurable with born-again faith. This issue is not unique to born-again Christians and is a question and criticism posed to some Islamic Societies on campus. University Student Unions rightly have a responsibility to protect students and staff from harm.

of the un-spiritual 'cultural' forms and practices prevalent in Black-British culture. Malcolm told me he did not want to be seen simply as a 'Black student', that he wanted to be seen for who he was- born-again and a child of God. For Malcolm, and many of his contemporaries, expressing born-again faith is an articulation of identity which exceeds and incorporates that of fleshly and corporeal markers of identity. Malcolm and many others, want to be seen, as one fellowship member put it, as "a Black person with a difference".

Access to forms of appropriate representation seem limited for these young people. They tend not to identify with the African and Caribbean societies which do have representation and recognition on many UK campuses; but which do not fully accommodate or represent those of African heritage who are first and foremost born-again. The lack of alternative suitable forms of representation makes the motivation to from a church society which epitomises the ethical values of their church affiliation and their sense of identity more urgent. Members of both Christ Love and Disciple Church refuse to associate themselves with worldly, or carnal makers of identity, instead choosing to express their Christian selves. They feel their identity is not recognised within the university campus.

Some members of these fellowships deal with the situation through seeking out positions within the Students Union. Tolu, a member of the Christ Love fellowship for example, was elected to a senior position within her Student's Union. This was not an act of submission to the cosmopolitanism of the university, but a case of trying to introduce the ethics of faith into political decision making on campus. Tolu wanted to make space for the values of born-again Christianity- especially her ministry- to be represented.

"There is an element of racism, there is discrimination due to a lack of knowledge", Tolu told me describing her colleagues' uneasy reactions to hearing her fellowship praying. For Tolu her appointment is advantageous in two ways. She is a Black woman elected to the Students Union whose voice is imperative in these political spaces, but she also articulates her ethic of faith as a way to express her spirituality and build spaces of representation for all faith groups, including her own

fellowship. She may be a Black woman living in diaspora, but the crucial aspect of her identity is that she is a Christian *before* all those other markers.

Her position comes with improved recognition and access to space for her fellowship. This kind of recognition is crucial, particularly for Christ Love for whom the campus is their church building. Since her appointment, this post-1960's campus university has become somewhat of a hub for other campus fellowships within her ministry. Tolu has also been able to book rooms where larger events and services can be held, due to increased recognition and access to space.

"Christianise the Campus": The Spatial Tactics of Spiritual Practice

For some of the young Christians their participation in the fellowship on campus, transforms the way they view their purpose at university. Rather than view their time at university as a place to learn and attain qualifications, they view it as a time to win souls and express Christian values. One member of the fellowship told me that his purpose in going to university in the first place was to share the Word. I think this exemplifies the way that born-again self-making re-structures the past through a series of ruptures. This individual's born-again purpose is to share the word of God in all his endeavours. For these young Christians the space of the university becomes a site to do that. Using the language of the church- they feel they are "well positioned" to transform the university, "make an impact" because these are spaces they inhabit as students "in the world". This is an ethical orientation to the university which relates to the ways they conceive of their place and purpose within it- "in the world but not of it".

Regardless of formal recognition from the Students Union, the campus is an important space for the fellowships. The campus is a hub, both spiritual and social for many of the young Christians I spent time with. The university building can provide church members with everything they might need to worship and participate in church activities. If suitable recognition is achieved, large lecture halls can

be booked for events where different campus fellowships within the ministry meet. If recognition is not achieved smaller unoccupied classrooms provide an intimate space for prayer sessions. Each room in the university also has ample media equipment for the effective facilitation and mediation of presence- projectors, speakers, and lighting. The campus is a key space in the formation and maintenance of these fellowships, and a platform from which they can practice and perform the many facets of their faith.

For most fellowships, there is often an urgency attached to the work evangelism, which seeks to transform the campus itself. Prayer plays a vital role in the church member's efforts to transform the university. The campus itself must be prayed for particularly when universities represent that which is considered to deviate from ethical norms of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity. Take the University of the Arts London, an arts university with campuses across London. One of the Pastors at Christ Love, Hannah, lives near to one of the campuses, and told me that every night at midnight she would stand outside the campus entrance and pray over it, casting out demonic forces. Hannah explained to me that this was because it is an arts college, that the knowledge students are taught there is carnal. "When people have so much room to think… an idle mind is the devil's workshop… people think if they can work on a theory, that is the answer to life's questions."

Frictions and Battlegrounds

Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity provides an interesting lens for exploring the relationship between ethics and politics. Typically, Pentecostal and Charismatic forms of Christianity are perceived to be distinctly a-political. But as Ruth Marshall points out, the politics of Pentecostalism is embedded in exactly what it means to be born again (2009,2016). This, Marshall argues, encourages an ethico-politics, where the ethics of Christian subjectivity become articulated in the public sphere. For Ruth Marshall, Pentecostal Christianity emerges in the public and political arena in cosmopolitan Nigeria in the form of spiritual warfare, which she describes as an ethical praxis. This praxis is in many ways

spatial. Speaking of spiritual warfare, Ruth Marshall points out the performative "construction of militant subjects and the occupation of public space" (2016:95).

The language of 'warfare' is concurrent with the Pentecostal-Charismatic construction of "militant subjects", who find themselves locked in perpetual battle with the devil, in their efforts to realise the 'Kingdom of God' (Marshall 2016)[29]. This warfare however does not manifest itself in physical battle but instead through the activist & performative mode of a global spiritual "political praxis" (Marshall 2009, 2016, see also Kirby 2017). She explains how the influence spiritual warfare theology has become a global spatial practice influenced primarily by the Lusanne Movement's notion of Spiritual Mapping[30]:

> *"The hierarchical territorialization of demonic spirits is best exemplified in the technique of spiritual mapping, and [The Lusasnne Movement] called for an epistemological shift in the ways believers should understand the ethico-political and spiritual valence of any physical entity, collectively or space; from individual persons or objects, landmarks, neighbourhoods, towns and cities, to entire cultural areas, nations and geo-political regions" (2016:100, emphasis own).*

As discussed previously, the ethical imaginary of the young Christians I worked with suggests they aspire to harness and demonstrate the transformative power of the Holy Spirit on their campuses. This evangelism on campus is often imagined as a spiritual battle- between knowing and un-knowing, the spiritual and the carnal, God and the Devil. This spiritual warfare however does not manifest itself in physical battle but instead through the activist and performative mode of a global spiritual "political

[29] Pastor's at Christ Love (and Disciple Church) occasionally invoke the language of 'warfare' as an ethical mode of spiritual praxis. However, while Marshall questions the legitimacy of some spiritual militancy, I would like to point out that the discourse of warfare proposed my Christ Love and Disciple Church does not seek a "dominion over everything" nor does it construct an explicit 'enemy' (other than perhaps a thinly veiled idea of Black youth 'culture'- see chapter 5) which Marshall finds antithetical to New Testament ethics and liberal values.

[30] The Lusanne Movement is a global evangelical movement calling for the collaboration of Christian spiritual leaders to collaborate on the aim of world evangelisation.

praxis". As I have shown this takes the form of praying, evangelising, pushing doors and seizing space, all while claiming representation as Christians.

I consider these spatial-yet-Christian practices to be tactical subversions and re-imaginings of spiritual possibilities on campuses which can be understood as a cosmopolitics. The space of the institution also dictates how these fellowships navigate and utilize the space itself. It is imperative for these fellowships to occupy spaces, to worship together and incorporate new members. The examples here, show the ways that the university campus figures in the ethical orientations of the young Christians. The ways that church fellowships navigate the space represents what Michel De Certeau would call a tactics of space, in opposition to the strategic operation of the university (in and through space) itself.

Being a charismatic Christian, particularly those living in and of diaspora on campus comes with tensions, hinderance and misrecognition. These are forces akin to what Anna Tsing calls 'frictions' "the awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference", which I think become constitutive of a cosmopolitics on campus (2005:4). The articulations of self and desires for transformation expressed by church members are bundled together as positive refusals, which are not an a-political distancing but a cosmopolitical claim to representation on their own terms. This is not so much an explicitly political spirituality, but an ethico-political praxis, nonetheless performed in the cosmopolitical space of the university. Their claims are for God, but their practices become political when they refuse liberal structures of recognition and claim new political discourse using the ethics of faith to do so.

The young Christians' experiences intersect with the experiences of young Islamic groups who seek to gain recognition and representation as Muslims in both university spaces and wider society, in the face of structural forms of racism (for example see Hoque 2019). Like young Muslims who seek recognition beyond the simple trope of multi-culturalism in the UK, the young Christians reveal the incommensurability of their praxis with liberal society where to remain 'other' on the terms of the liberal is essential for the existence and continuity of a liberal subject (Povinelli 2001). I think this adds

nuance to conversations concerning 'race' and representation in the academy- and institutions more widely- where the voices and practices of these students not only claim an ethical space for God, but also for a post-racial subject position from which to demand representation and recognition *as Christians* on the university campus. New forms of Christianity on campuses in the UK- initiated by global African churches and animated, lived and articulated by African diasporic students, with their commitment to a cosmology of salvation challenge normative, liberal, and secular conceptions of the university space and the students they represent.

The young Christians on campus, at times, engage with a cosmopolitan politics of representation, by formalising representation in the university, while at the same time engaging in a kind of cosmo-politics, where their multiple refusals to be assimilated into either the Christian Union and/or the African Caribbean societies represent an ethical orientation and commitment to realising the reality and presence of God on the university campus on their own terms. These existing categories of representation recognition simply do not work for these young Christians because in multiple ways they do not map onto the cosmological orientation of these young people. They are born-again, Children of God, "Black people with a difference".

Conclusion: Spatial reckonings

One interesting element of my research within the space of the university is the way that I was not allowed to make the usual anthropological distinctions between field and academy, and how instead the often-familiar spaces in which I inhabited became somewhat unfamiliar. The typical conceptual separation between anthropologists and their (sometimes Christian) interlocutors usually take place spatially. How do we (in the academy) understand them (in the field)? Academy and field, anthropologist and interlocutor are conceptually and spatially separated. This separation is an ethical disposition, embedded in our discipline's idea of an appropriate 'Other', who must fit within a liberal disciplinary and ethic of a 'common world' in which we categorise, recognise, and represent according to that which we share, just as much as what makes us different. I find this same logic repeated in the

politics of the university more broadly, where the young Christians I met did not fit neatly with the institution and notions of how students should be represented, recognised, and afforded space. This encouraged the young Christians here to bypass the liberal secular politics of representation and recognition to realise- if not always successfully- a university which can be for them as much as it is for God.

Anthropologists of Christianity have already acknowledged the 'borderlands' which exist between our discipline and the religious communities we research, the commonalities and differences in our ethical orientations to the world (Coleman 2015) but also the ways that Christianity has been able to occupy social and conceptual space within our own discipline (Jenkins 2012). In this vein, considering these enduring paradigms for anthropology how can we think more deeply about and accommodate the various claims to representation Christianity makes within our own discipline? Perhaps as Pastor Hannah suggested we 'have too much room to think' which could lead us away from noticing what might actually confront us. In foregrounding Christianity in anthropology, how might we also incorporate the cosmopolitical background too?

I think this poses a challenge to ways of thinking about the politics of representation more generally, where perhaps a focus on ethics can be allowed without foreclosing political motivations and realities. The challenges faced by these campus churches on their university campuses attests to the way that to participate in the politics of representation they choose to tactically de-emphasise and background one kind of politics in favour of a religious ethics. What emerges is a cosmopolitical space of action where spaces are actively made for God. How do we seriously make space for Christianity within anthropology without reproducing the same logic of liberalism that fails to fully capture the religious experience of Christian interlocutors? As suggested previously, taking notice of the religious practice and experiences of faith, and incorporating the foregrounds and background that Christians themselves articulate, might be the answer. In this case, recognising claims to representation requires being attentive to that which is foregrounded as much as that which is purposefully pushed out of

focus. Perhaps we can take a lead from these young Christians who do not just claim a space within the institution on the institution's terms- but within their own cosmological horizons seek to re-establish the university itself.

Chapter 5

"I know who I am": Born-again identity as refusal and difference

> *"The shaping and reshaping of space-time relationships within different discursive systems of representation have profound effects for how identities are narrated and understood"- Stuart Hall (2017:105)*

This chapter discusses how members of Christ Love and Disciple Church construct and articulate 'born again' identities through refusal and difference. In this context, identity is constructed at the boundaries of religion, 'race', and ethnicity, where church members express born-again selves which transcend racialised categories. This suggests that attention should be paid to the interiorities of spiritual bodies and the spiritual praxis through which identity is constructed, albeit within this Black-British context.

I was sat on a sofa in a university student union with Malcolm, waiting for the mid-week service to begin. A prominent display filled the space. It showed images of Black students and staff at the university, celebrating Black history month. I asked Malcolm what he thought about the display. He explained to me that he has never really been involved in debates around Black identity and that it was not something that interested him. He told me that by gaining knowledge from the Word, he realises his 'inheritance is in Christ' and that 'culture' can be demonic. He went on to say that Black people who do not know God resort to "identity politics to express themselves". Some of the other church members arrived, two young women. I asked them too what they thought. They differed from Malcolm when they told me they felt it was important to celebrate Black history month.

We filtered into the booked room and the service began. As usual we watched a message from Pastor Chris' back catalogue. This week it was one almost everyone had seen before: Christianity is not a religion but the "revelation of Christ in you". Pastor Simon stood up to give his sermon and had

obviously seen the display on his way in. It was hard to miss. His message produced one of the most profound and uncomfortable moments I experienced in his church:

"Christianity is not a religion… it's about God's life. When you have God living inside you, you find that life starts to make sense… You still think you are Black… who told you that you are Black? [laughter and shock erupts from the congregation]. WHO TOLD YOU? The bible says there is neither Jew nor Greek. It says that if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. So, you will stop being Black. When you relate to being Black, Black problems find you [more laughter]. Its scripture! You need to leave your race, your colour. You need to leave that behind. You say 'I used to be Black… but now I am a new creature. I used to be Nigerian but now I'm in Christ!'... And people can see! Problems that follow these people will follow you when you identify with your past."

After the service Malcom grabbed me. "See this is what I was saying!" I was confused and asked the two young women about Pastor Simon's sermon. "What do you think? Before service you told me that you both thought it is important to celebrate Black identity."

"Yes, it is but my identity is in Christ, I'm a Black person with a difference".

***

This chapter discusses the ways young members of both Disciple Church and Christ Love refuse Black and African notions of self in favour of overtly Christian or 'born-again' identities. In almost all conversations and interviews I had with members of both churches during fieldwork, they expressed a refusal to associate themselves with the categories of 'race', ethnicity, nationality, and culture. Many insisted they are a 'child of God' or 'born-again', sometimes even refusing the category of 'Christian' because of its overly 'religious' connotations'. Some would declare they are from 'Zion'; others said their "inheritance is in Christ". These refusals can be understood as the logical consequence of their ongoing religious practices as born-again Christians. Their expressions of self create a rupture in relation to ideas of of 'race' and ethnicity. Here I explore how the categories of race, ethnicity, and

diaspora are contested and transformed through collective articulations of born-again selves and identities. I go on to trace how such articulations are expressed by young Black Christians in the way they conduct themselves in the city.

Refusal, in this case, is not a negative or passive negation but can be understood as a positive declaration of difference expressed through the Word of God. It is through the Word that church members at Christ Love regularly speak their reality into being. At Christ Love this act is referred to as *'Rhema'* which is taught and understood as the "spoken and operational word of God". Like 'epignosis' (divine knowledge- see chapter 1), '*Rhema'* is considered an embodied practice of making God's word a reality. Speaking refusal into being can be encountered in sermons and teachings and witnessed in the religious practices of church members. Ecclesiastically, refusal is represented in several ways, and not only in the repetition of bible verses which eschew the 'worldly'.

The lyrics to one popular gospel song stand out. "I know who I am" is a songrecorded by Sinach, a Nigerian gospel artist, who tours worldwide alongside Pastor Chris and the Loveworld ministry. The song has been covered countless times and be can heard in worship services across many Pentecostal and charismatic denominations. The lyrics can be read as a declaration of Christian identity:[31]

We are a chosen generation

Called forth to show His excellence

All I require for life; God has given me

And I know who I am

I know who God says I am, what He says I am

Where He says I'm at; I know who I am [x2]

[31] The official YouTube music video has close to 73 million views: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=frtZ4XfoXxM

I'm working in power, I'm working miracles

I live a life of favour, 'cause I know who I am [x2]

The lyrics of this song, like most music lyrics, have myriad meanings and when sung by worshippers across the world they have the power to mediate and facilitate a declaration of an individual's relationship with God. When read ethnographically and situationally, in the context of identity formation among young Black Christians in London, the lyrics point towards the role of religion in the expression and creation of a God given self and charismatic born-again identity. In declaring a refusal of worldly categories, the young Christians are doing something akin to the lyrics in the song. They are telling us that they are the chosen generation, and they know who they are.

Thinking through identity in relation to both 'race' and religion has required me to be attentive and reflexive about how some subjectivities do not align with the material and visible exteriorities of self. When I began fieldwork, I supposed I was attending Black-majority churches with young members of the African diaspora. When I finished fieldwork it could be said that I was doing the same thing but with a new understanding of how these congregations- and the individuals within them- experience faith and self *despite* the imposed markers of difference, of ethnicity, nationality, and Blackness. In learning how the congregants form and express identity I have become aware of the malleability of the contested landscape in which church members find themselves. As mostly Black-British and the children of the African diaspora in the UK, church members find themselves articulating difference in relation to the un-spiritual but also in relation to simplified notions of what it is to be Black and the children of African parents in London.

This chapter outlines how refusal becomes spatially enacted by members of Christ Love and Disciple Church as they articulate Christian difference and identity. I will discuss how the nexus between religious practice and cultural identity in the UK can be understood as a productive site for the contestation of essentialised categories. The ethnographic material discussed in this chapter provides the grounds for further discussion in the following chapter, which will consider how 'culture' becomes

an active and contested idiom, which transforms and re-produces diaspora according to youthful Christian agendas. As we have seen in chapters 2 and 3 the desire to separate oneself from 'the world' and participate in a form of global Christianity is an ethical aspiration of members of both church groups, that is practiced in a variety of ways and often becomes articulated through a refusal of that which is considered un-spiritual. Expressions of Christian difference emerge from a Christian ethic of 'sincere speech', whereby inner conviction is made externally meaningful through material and linguistic practices (Keane 2007). But in this context, where matters of 'race' and ethnicity intersect with religious values, the articulation- and subsequent refusal- of a worldly semiotics reveals a tension between that which is imposed externally, and the subjective Christian practices invoked to challenge those impositions. These tensions reveal the mutually constitutive categories of both the worldly and the divine in the way that identities are made 'in the world' but are 'not of it'. We have seen in previous chapters how a born-again identity is shaped through the global flow of the Holy Spirit in the form of global aesthetics, images, media, and presence. Anointed words and their subsequent embodied transformations not only foster charismatic knowledge, ethical actions and sensibilities, and participation in a global community of Christianity, but also inform matters of difference and identity.

For the ethnographer however, identity is an elusive object and often finds ways to trick those looking for it into looking in the wrong places. Identity emerges visibly for a moment, only to shapeshift into another form and vanish. It is contradictory, contested, and processual. Both this and that- and neither this nor that. It tells us what it is by telling what it is not and in the same breath tells us it's not that either. It is performed on multiple stages to many audiences. To look for authentic identity among these so-called 'Black majority' congregations, based upon visible and existing categories, risks missing the invisible contours of subjectivity and the messy work of living in fleshly (as well as spiritual) bodies. In this case, charismatic Christianity and embodied transformations of born-again faith becomes a key driver in the subjective and practical formation of identity among these young, mostly Black, Christians.

Thinking about the uneven spatial terrain of 'race', ethnicity, and diaspora in London I will trace these relations through the politics of space, at -and adjacent to- the Notting Hill carnival, as many aspects of the carnival are refused, contested and re-articulated, according to Christian values. I pay attention to both the spoken and unspoken. 'Race', ethnicity, and 'born-again' identity are re-signified within these discursive spaces of contestation and cultural difference. Often it is through the idiom of 'culture' and spatial practice that members of both churches transform and challenge their relationships to Black and African ethnicities, 'tradition', and the secular (Chua 2012). By contesting the meaning of 'culture' *with Christianity* the identities of members of the churches emerge as political, ethical, and sometimes contradictory articulations of cultural difference.

This chapter asks: What articulations of identity and definitions of self does Christian practice produce for these groups of mostly Black-British youth? How is this enacted spatially in relation to other spatial formations of Black-British culture and the secular? How do articulations of Christian identity contribute to anthropological understandings of 'race', ethnicity, and identity among this cohort of the Black-British diaspora? These questions allow for a re-consideration of simple anthropological understandings of 'race' and ethnicity in relation to diasporic Christianity in the UK and require a nuanced engagement with the church member's spiritual repertoires, to take account of both 'race' and Christianity in the articulation of identity. This necessitates a conceptual move, prompted by my participants, away from notions of 'Black Churches', towards an understanding of identity which challenges functional understandings of both 'race' and religion within diaspora. This sets up a further discussion in the following chapter where the idiom of 'culture' becomes a way to articulate identity and belonging in and beyond diaspora, and question what new forms of heritage emerge for these young Christians.

Notting Hill Carnival- Secular, racial and religious (dis)entanglements in the city

I will use the Notting Hill carnival as a carnivalesque heuristic to think about the relationship between space and discourses of 'race' in London, and how the two church groups interact with this racialised and contested space of Black-British culture in different but connected ways, with both groups making space for God in the process. Thinking spatially about how church members engage with the carnival allows for a movement beyond the binaries of the worldly and the divine, the religious and the secular, Black and non-Black towards lived experiences of these spaces where these categories are entangled and re-defined. As with the work of Garbin & Strhan (2018), I take note of the ways that urban spiritualities present new challenges for ethnographers, particularly in the way that they shape and are shaped in a global city like London.

The Notting Hill carnival can be seen as a 'Black geography of place' which is physically emplaced through territorialisation in the city. It is also a symbolic space where transnational Black diasporas overlap (McKittrick and Woods 2007). Interestingly, the formations of the carnival resonate (but cannot be conflated with) formations of Black-Christianity in the UK. Like the Black geography of London, Black and African led churches in the UK are often fragmented physically but also embedded in a symbolic transnational spirituality.

Pastor Ruth, as part of her 'personal ministry' (duties and activities for God - which also includes pastoring at Christ Love, performing spoken word poetry, holding online discussions, and working for a Christian charity) holds an annual event, 'Love Power', where she invites other young Christians to join her in evangelism at Notting Hill Carnival. Each year she invites members of churches beyond the Christ Love denomination to attend an all-day training and worship event, followed by the group attending the carnival to evangelise, and share the gospel. On the same weekend in 2019, members of Disciple Church were also thinking about the Notting Hill carnival. Rather than going there to evangelise, the church leadership organised a boat trip on the River Thames after church on Sunday, seemingly to deter members from attending the nearby carnival, and the following day, some of the

young men decided to share food with the homeless on Oxford Street, choosing to stay away from the carnival altogether.

Both church groups respond to the racialised ethico-political geographies of the carnival by articulating visible Christian identities and expressing them in spaces which are imagined as secular and 'cultural' strongholds of the devil. One group, Christ Love, actively participate in the carnival, seeking to transform the other attendees by sharing the word of God. The born-again identities of these church members are practiced in continuity with existing spaces of Black-British culture as they attempt to transcend signifiers of 'race' and ethnicity. The other, Disciple Church, actively keeps away from the secular temptations offered up by the carnival, choosing to participate in alternative public activities elsewhere, but also expressing their 'born-againess' through Church activities and public performances. Both church groups confront and challenge of essentialised ideas of Blackness and participate in different spaces of London *as Christians.*

The activities of the two ministries represent two related spiritual attitudes to the Notting Hill carnival and intersect with the changing attitudes of a younger generation of Christians who, like generations of Black Christians in the UK before them, often articulate global Christian identities first and foremost (Toulis 1997). However, this younger, mostly British-born generation differ in their desire to move away from worldly cultural and ethnic entities in their willingness to embrace believers from all backgrounds- to challenge and re-shape the contours of Black & Christian identity. Here I will discuss how religiosity intersects with the cultural politics of 'race'-through-space and will trace where Christian values become active in the re-imagining of self, 'culture' and identity in relationship to the perceived evils of the secular. These distinct positions in relation to the carnival demonstrate how identity is formed, articulated, and made meaningful as difference to that which is perceived as other- to that which it 'lacks' (Hall 1996:5-6).

The relationship between 'race', Christianity and the secular is complex and is put in motion through social interactions between church members and the categories they define themselves in opposition

to. Remember here that the ethnographic literature which focuses on Christianity among Black diaspora communities in Britain ranges from the simple argument that religion is a form of spiritual compensation for the marginalised and allows for the continuation of traditional values- "religious participation as ethnic expression" (Toulis 1997), or the conflation of nationality with particular church affiliation; to more nuanced accounts which view religious participation as one choice among many for people among Black diasporas in the UK, to negotiate representation at the various boundaries of ethnic identity. These more nuanced accounts (particularly Toulis 1997) take note of the formation of identity both as it is articulated within congregations- "expressing identity of the self to the self" (ibid:209) - and how this also emerges when these identities are employed to "subvert… the criteria around which a Black identity derived from a Black experience in Britain might be constructed" (ibid) at the political boundaries of representation in secular British society. Moving away from analysis which conflates ethnicity and 'race' with religious participation, coupled with the fact that religious identity is a choice for many, allows me to shift focus to the spaces and spatial praxis where conceptions of 'race', religion and the secular become trialectially entangled, negotiated, and contested and demonstrate the production of charismatic identities among the young church members.

Trialectics is a concept introduced by Lefebvre (1981) to think of space as a triad: objective space, conceived space, and lived space. Trialectics attempts to think beyond binaries associated with western epistemologies to think through that which is 'other'. For this argument, the term trialectics seems appropriate due to the way that identity as refusal operates through difference but still acts in relation to - and cannot be disassociated from- that which is 'other'. Soja (1996) uses this concept to introduce the term 'thridspace', which through lived praxis, is produced as it transcends physical and mental conceptions of space. Refusal can be understood as the 'lived' node in this triad, working to mediate between discourse and subjectivity.

The Notting Hill Carnival is the largest street carnival in Europe. It takes place over three days every August in the north-west London area of Notting Hill, with parades, costume cabaret, and sound-systems which pump out- often at maximum volume- sounds of the Afro-Caribbean diaspora. The carnival itself has a long history, starting in the 1959 with an indoor event in St Pancras, partly as a response to the Notting Hill race-riots the previous year, which saw sustained attacks and hostility towards Caribbean migrants by mostly white young men. Organised by Trinidadian journalist and activist Claudia Jones, editor of the West Indian Gazette newspaper, the event (also televised by the BBC) celebrated Caribbean life for the Windrush generation in London. The first outdoor event took place in Notting Hill in 1966, invited by Rhaune Laslett, a resident and community activist Russell Henderson and his band of pan players took part in the first outdoor carnival.

Since the carnival's modest beginnings, it developed into a huge event which was initially firmly embedded in pan-Caribbean culture and diaspora (Cohen 1993) but over the decades has come to represent Black-British culture more widely- making the relationship between Black-Britishness and the carnival a complex one. Thinking through Paul Gilroy's assertion that "'race', ethnicity, nation, and culture are not interchangeable terms" it can be argued that despite the Caribbean beginnings of the carnival it has come to represent a Black-British culture which is "actively made and re-made" (Gilroy 1987:202). The diversity of Black British diaspora is visibly and audibly represented in the diverse range of contemporary music and contributes to what Henriques (et al. 2014) call a "uniquely British diaspora". They point out that the carnival has played a significant role in the "development and transformation of Black music in the UK". It can be argued that the carnival has come to represent not only the Caribbean diaspora in the UK but a complex transatlantic Black diaspora in the UK (Gilroy 1993).

The Carnival is an "active archive" of London's spatial 'race'-making, where the contemporary geographies of race can be historically traced (Knowles 2003:80). London is a city (among other UK cities) which delineates racialised urban spatialities, where "race and ethnicity are part of the texture

of space" (Knowles 2003:79). The ways in which London's 'inner-city' has been historically constructed "produces [sic.) specific (in-)visibilities that promote or occlude particular bodies, practices and issues" (Rhodes 2018:3244). This notion of the 'inner city' in the 1970's and 80's represented a coherent, yet contested, space for the production and dialectical articulation of racial and ethnic identity, in response to racist notions of the 'inner city', where 'race' and ethnicity has been constructed, territorialised and politically contested. However, since the 1980's there has been a systematic and symbolic fragmentation of the 'inner-city' (ibid). Reading the contemporary city space of London, it can be seen how the racialised construction of space acts to marginalise and racialise bodies, dislocating the politics of 'race' away from coherent spaces to peripheral and fragmented experience. In other words, the construction and subsequent fragmentation, the 'inner city' can be read a as political geography of 'race'.

With the increasing fragmentation of city space comes the incapacity to make permanent claims to space on the grounds of racial and ethnic identity, making the annual carnival an important political event. For three days the carnival re-territorialises the 'inner-city' as a site of symbolic space of Black-British diasporas. The carnival enables a temporary coherent and legitimate space for Black representation and the (re)production of Black British culture. The production of Black British cultural forms can be situated in the historical detachment of these forms from their ethnic and national origins, contributing to complex and dynamic expressions of Black-British identity. The 2.5 million people who attend over the course of the weekend are from a diverse variety of backgrounds, marking the event as one uniquely shaped by Londoners, but particularly Black-British Londoners. Despite the overwhelming police presence, the crowds of visitors transform the usually quiet middle-class neighbourhood into a thumping, joyful and disorienting diasporic space in which Londoners from all backgrounds participate. Temporarily the space of the carnival becomes a site of Black ownership, challenging the racialised technologies of governments and territory. As a space, the streets of the carnival briefly become a territory of Black-Britishness (Henriques et al. 2014) and the multiplicity of

Black British histories represented contribute to contested notions of ethnicity, nation, and culture and facilitate new articulations of Black-Britishness within diaspora (Gilroy 1987).

Love Soldiers & and the invisible contours of refusal

Pastor Ruth's popular online presence and her charismatic message expressing her love of Jesus, along with her deep relationship with her "sweetheart holy spirit", has earned her a following of young Christians in and beyond London, who seek her spiritual guidance. Many of the young followers who attended the small 'Love Power' event, organised by Pastor Ruth, are young Black women, most of whom live in and around the city. The 'Love Power' event was not officially organised by Christ Love, but with the permission of Pastor Simon, a university space had been booked by one of her fellowship members, and with the help of other Christ Love fellowship Pastors, a preparation and worship event took place on a London university campus the day before we were all due to attend the carnival. The event was attended by mostly regular Christ Love members but also young members of the 'main church' and a few people who follow Pastor Ruth through social media who also attend other churches in and around London. Pastor Ruth had planned the whole event, organising a day of teachings from some of Christ Love's Pastors.

Pastor Simon had been invited to share a message. He spoke at length about 'spiritual warfare' (as discussed in the previous chapter) and the need to be an 'army of love soldiers' when evangelising at the carnival, to 'make an impact in the world'. During this message Pastor Simon stressed the need for attendees to realise that the strongholds of the devil lie in 'culture', requiring them to not be entangled with the 'things of the world' but for each person to play their part by sharing the Word of God[32]. This was followed by a characteristically impassioned message from Pastor Ruth on the love of Jesus and the need to share this message with as many people as possible at the Carnival. Considering

[32] See 2 Corinthians 10:3-6 for biblical reference.

this, it seems appropriate to refer to this group of evangelists as Love Soldiers, a term they themselves embraced.

Pastor Simon continued, “your culture isn't the issue. It is where culture begins to influence your beliefs that’s the problem”. The Love Soldiers were planning to direct their political praxis towards the perceived spatial and cultural stronghold of the devil at the Notting Hill Carnival. The discourse of spiritual warfare invoked by Pastor Simon, which works to eradicate strongholds of the devil in ‘culture’, might encourage the reader to assume that these are attempts from the Love Soldiers to work against an imagined secular formation of Blackness as it exists in the carnival. However, this would misrecognise the location of the secular in relation to the carnival. It is not a homogeneous Black and secular space but instead a heterogeneous space of Blackness (plural) in the city where the secular is one among many presences. ‘Culture’ as understood by the Love Soldiers may have become a secular stronghold of the devil, but it is not inherently secular. Pastor Simon reiterated his earlier point to me in an interview, “Celebrating your culture isn’t the issue. It is where culture begins to influence your beliefs”. This is an important distinction because it opens space for Christian participation- or a space for God- within the carnival, where the secular can be contested in continuity with existing formations of Black identity. The carnival is not a warfare between Christianity and Black-British culture, instead the Love Soldiers’ aim was to strategically express cultural difference, relationally, by positioning themselves in relation to the secular social formations of culture at the carnival. From here we can see that the expression of Christian difference is coeval with the Black and ethnic space of the carnival, while seeking to transcend it through the message of the gospel.

The weather for the 2019 carnival was hot. On the final day of the carnival well known for being the biggest party day, I stood outside Notting Hill station, waiting for Pastor Ruth and her group of eager evangelists to arrive. When the August sun is shining the carnival becomes a place like no other in the UK. As a resident of London, I had attended the carnival several times before, and despite the difference in circumstances on this occasion, my previous experience of carnival as a as a space of

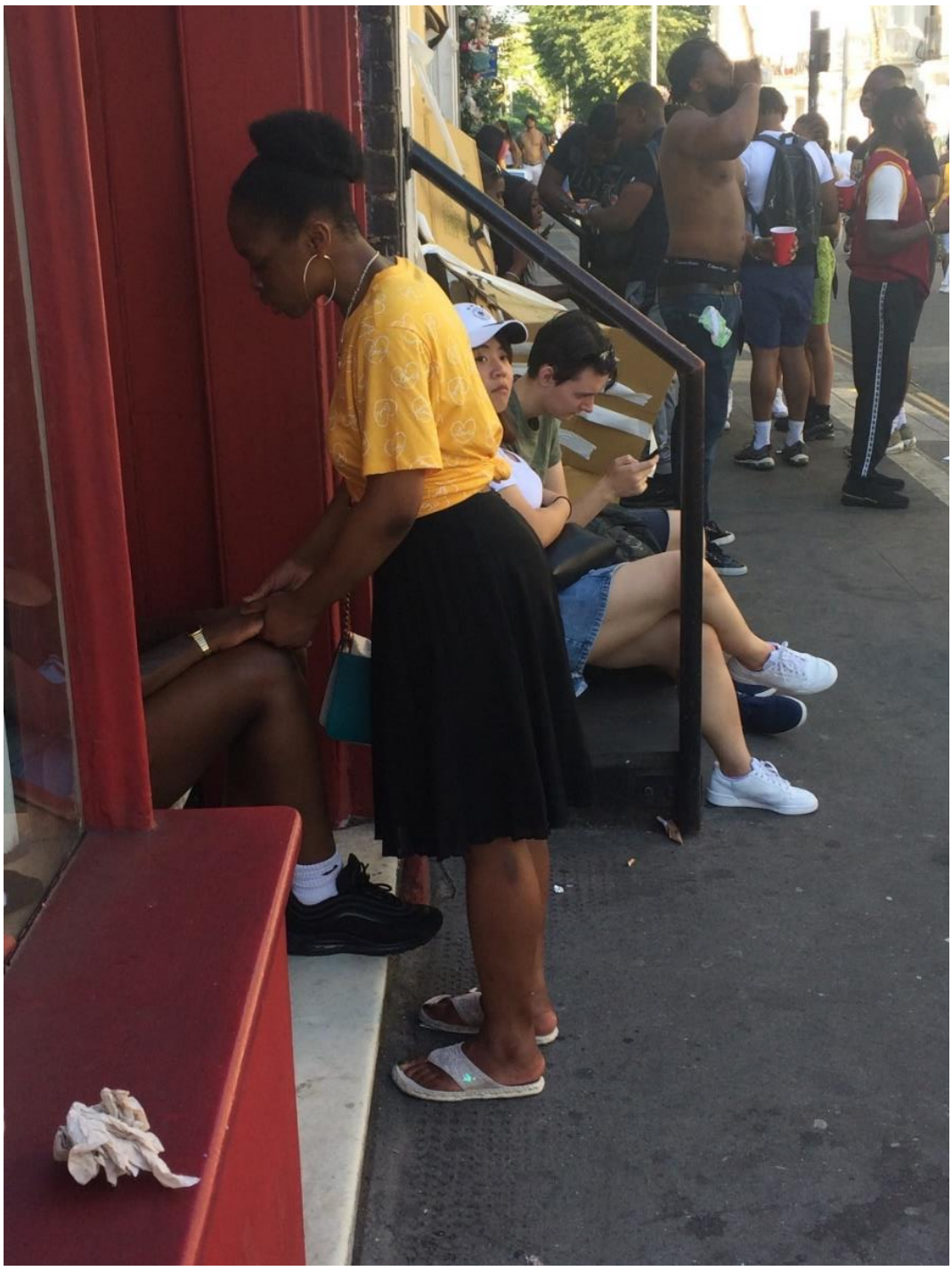
excessive revelry returned sharply in my imagination. I waited patiently for an update from Brother Malcolm to pass through the overloaded mobile network, as the party goers spewed out of the underground station, dressed in bright colours, bare skin, clutching plastic bottles of alcohol and adorned with body paint and elaborate outfits. The unique sounds of discarded cans of beer kicked along the ground combined with the screech of whistles and the occasional waft of cannabis generated a sensory atmosphere unique to this part of London at this time of year. Malcom's message finally arrived. He had dropped a virtual pin on a map which I followed, as always in fieldwork, a few steps behind and trying to catch up.

Once I found the group, the contested quality of the space showed itself in the interactions between the evangelising Love Soldiers and other people attending the carnival. The ethical and aesthetic praxis of spiritual warfare became visible in the way that the group set about fulfilling their spiritual duty to share the gospel. All the women were dressed in matching yellow t-shirts, with multiple hearts with the word 'love' written in them, the men wearing red t-shirts with 'London' printed on the front, which they had just purchased from a high-street shop. This gave the group an identifiable coherence in the mass of moving bodies, but also provided a clear message that they were claiming a spatial as well as spiritual politics. The group were spread out across one of the roads leading towards the heart of the carnival, a busy thoroughfare for the partygoers. Some of the more confident evangelists were already engaging passers-by in conversation when I arrived, following them along the street even if they did not seem willing to stop and engage in conversation. A huge number of Christ Love's daily devotional, the Rhapsody of Realities, were being carried in backpacks. If a conversation was not forthcoming, then distribution of God's written word would suffice.

The group were there to enjoy the carnival too, many also blowing whistles, dancing to the upbeat African- mostly Nigerian- produced gospel music, being played from a large portable speaker brought by one of the church members. I decided to stick with Brother Malcolm, perhaps because I knew he was rather shy (despite his burning desire to share the gospel, as we saw in the previous chapter) and

therefore my own participation could be kept to a minimum. We stood on the pavement together which was raised up from the street. I enjoyed the apparent disorder of the party as is flowed past us in the street. Malcolm seemed less impressed and was distracted by a young woman standing to his right, whom he wanted to speak to about the gospel. I gave him and an encouraging nudge before Malcolm approached her, handing me the pile of devotional pamphlets to keep hold of. I heard the young woman talking about growing up going to church with her mum but now she is not interested, even though she "respects" it. She was drawing deeply on her spliff and exhaling slowly as she paused to let Malcolm offer her a devotional. As I loitered, a white man, shirt off and beer in hand, passed me by and told me that he thought we were all "mad", but, in the spirit of the party, wished us luck. I attempted to remain passive for the next few hours, watching as the Love Soldiers stopped passers-by and engaged them in the gospel.

Figure 10.1/10.2- Love Soldiers at Notting Hill Carnival. Above: Woman is prayed for and becomes born-again in the doorway. Below: The group enjoy the carnival.



Occasionally we reconvened as a group to pray together, standing in a large circle, all holding hands, undeterred while passers-by took photos, stopped to watch or make jokes. After each session of prayer, the groups splintered off, re-energised by the Spirit, providing them with the confidence to speak to strangers. Some of the Love Soldiers spent over an hour speaking with a group of young women in the doorway of a closed shop. The young women were all visibly drunk, but clearly this

conversation sparked something in one listener/hearer (remember here that the word must be 'heard') who spoke with emotion of a childhood going to church and said she was a Christian, but (crucially) was not born-again, and had since stopped attending church. She was prayed for in the doorway and the woman agreed to become 'born again' while crying intensely.

Most of the people that the Love Soldiers felt confident in stopping to talk to were young and Black (as was the case with the Oxford Street evangelists in chapter 3). When I ask why this is, I am told that it is because the Spirit has directed them in this way, but others have also told me that it is always easier to evangelise to someone who feels familiar, where the chance that the person they speak to already has an experience of Christianity is more likely. However, although 'race' is visible in these interactions there is also an unspoken and non-visible meaning, which complicates how we understand the ways church members imagine the relationship between themselves, the secular, and the souls they seek to save. Coleman shows how proselytization is self-affirming, "it is also an attempt to convince, or even constitute, the spiritual persona of the self", in such a way that through the very act of evangelism, the love soldiers are (re)affirming a self-identity among themselves (2006:175). [33] However, to see the acts of the love soldiers as only affirming self to themselves would overlook the ways that evangelism, as a form of relational and ethical Christian practice also acts as an expression of cultural difference in the way Stuart Hall describes.

This political expression of difference takes on significance at the boundaries of identity. At the boundaries of charismatic identity, it is tempting to ground the transcendent in worldly manifestations, in this case the racialised body. In this case a line might be drawn between religious identity and ethnicity. However, this would miss what Homi Bhabha refers to as the "in between

[33] For the reader it may appear as though the tactics of the Love Soldier's evangelism are somewhat obtrusive. In many situations I have witnessed some of those who have been abruptly stopped struggle to find a way of saying "no thank-you". Simon Coleman (2006) points out that for Swedish charismatics, evangelism rarely worked at all. But when understood with the urgency that the rhetoric of spiritual warfare calls for and alongside an ethics of zealous participation (see chapter 3), I feel as though the 'Love soldiers' (and evangelistic members of both churches) can be forgiven for their occasionally clumsy methods of evangelism, especially considering that spiritual language is often compared to a seed which has the potential to grow in the heart of the hearer (ibid).

spaces [which] provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood", where new identities are initiated through cultural interactions (1994:2, see also Hoque 2019). Tracing this line in a Derridean fashion allows the categories of 'race' and religion to be read in a new way and for the concept of identity to emerge as it is constructed through their relation to these differences (see Hall 1996). The carnival is an 'in-between' space, a lived space, where the young Christians situate themselves to contest the secular aspects of culture present at the carnival. In another sense, this 'in-between' space is tactically situated between and in relation to the 'constitutive outside' of the secular and the variety of cultural identities represented at the carnival, working dialectically between them to express a born-again difference which is irreducible to the essentialist fate of 'race'.

The day following the carnival I had arranged to interview one of the Love Soldiers, Sister Tolu, who we met in the previous chapter. I asked why her church was so popular mainly among Black and African congregants despite often hearing refusals of racial and ethnic categories. She explained to me that her and others were trying to challenge the assumption that Christ Love is an African church for Black people:

S: "It's just about consciously looking out for… I'm not saying when going out for evangelism don't evangelise to the Black guy, but consciously removing that barricade from your mind that only Black people receive the message because that's not true. Yesterday, the first girl I spoke to was from Hungary and I led her to Christ. She's not Black, is she? Yesterday at carnival there was this guy, a Black guy, who my friend evangelised to. You hear all sorts of things. He said he would never give his life to Christ because Jesus was a white man and him bowing down to Jesus would be like a Black man bowing down to slavery. I'm just like… First of all, Jesus is not a white man, Jesus is a spirit… I'm not saying don't identify as African but that should not be the focus. The focus is Christ in me, me in Christ.

"After you left yesterday, we joined up with other members. We literally created our own carnival. It was so good. You know how we have a diverse range of music…we were playing all sorts of music, gospel music. It was in front of Bayswater Station, where people from inside the carnival were coming

out, they all joined this big circle, and we were dancing. It was so beautiful, and at the end we led them in prayer and shared the grace. It was phenomenal. I think that's a beautiful example of getting different people to come to church. Don't wait for them to come to church, take the church to them. Paul said: 'When I was in Rome, I appeared unto them as a Roman'. If you want to get people from the streets go to them as a Roman. Because people would rather receive the message from someone who they can relate to."

At this point in the interview, I regret to say that I was only reading the surfaces of our conversation, trying to reflect on cues from my observations the previous day. In doing so I mistook her suggestion of relatability to hint at the reason why so often when I joined both church groups in evangelism, particularly at the carnival, the church members would speak mainly with others who were Black. [34]

Tom: "Do you think that being a Black woman is an advantage in doing that?"

S: "I don't know if I think it is an advantage. I don't know if being Black gives me an advantage… I hardly take note of being Black. But I feel like sometimes, some people may not… Ok so if someone, a white person, is trained at home or from the media to think that Black people are horrible people… if I approach that person, they will be like… [rejecting expression]. So, I wouldn't say it's an advantage, the only advantage I have is the Holy Spirit."

Here, she expresses a subjectivity which eschews ethnicity, yet acknowledges racism and the politics of Black British identity. But she is also expressing the interiority of a subjectivity which is defined by an embodiment of the Holy Spirit.

This spirit-filled interiority subverts simple understandings of the relationship between Christianity and 'race' in the UK. The spiritual interactions between the Love Soldiers and their fellow revellers challenge the foundations of 'race' itself. Neither she, nor her fellow evangelists, are simply Black Christians proselytising in the Black space of the carnival but they each express an embodied Spirit

[34] Ortner might describe this is an example of 'ethnographic refusal' and a misrecognition.

who overflows and speaks to the heart of the hearer, despite those visibilities, where bodies and interiorities are permeable- a co-presence of Spirit. Christ in her, her in Christ, and hopefully Christ in them. The Holy Spirit provides her with advantage in moments of interaction with those whom she imagines are unsaved and facilitates a subjective participation in the space of the carnival, without reducing her to another racialised narrative. Reading these interactions dialectically, any simple assumptions (including my own) about the role Blackness plays when evangelising at the carnival are resisted by the excesses of the Holy Spirit as it spills over in the form of a charismatic identity. She expresses a non-identity with the markers of Black and African identity where her embodiment of the Holy Spirit inverts an affirmative dialectics. Instead of expressing a Black identity in opposition to a secular non-identity, she is expressing a non-identity with Blackness as well as with the secular[35]. Her non-identity reveals something different and far more real than external visibilities could show. It shows identity which is informed by a relationship with God and the Holy Spirit and transcends that which is of this world.

The Love Soldiers perform their Christian identities in a Black space, as visibly Black people. However, their spiritual praxis in relation to the secular acts to transform and articulate new identities which are not defined by the reductionism of skin colour, culture, or nationality but are sincerely Christian first and foremost. Their praxis at the carnival, one of public evangelism, takes on meaning at the various boundaries, between the religious and the secular and at the boundaries of London's racialised spaces of Black-Britishness and 'culture'. These boundaries symbolically merge and make visible the invisible contours of *Black and Christian* identities at an event like the Notting Hill Carnival. As the Love Soldiers publicly share the charisma of God's Word in their efforts to wage a spiritual battle, they participate in the politics of 'race' from within, despite rejecting it, participating as Christians in this space of Blackness. Through this participation, the Love Soldiers articulate Christian identities which seek to transcend the cultural absolutisms associated with racial, ethnic, and national identities (Gilroy 1987).

[35] Here I am drawing on Adorno's negative dialectics to construct my argument.

Despite being an opportunity to share the gospel, the carnival is also an opportunity for the Love Soldiers to participate in Britain's racial politics, contesting uniform notions of 'Black space' while carving out a space of representation for new spiritual identities. But what of those members of Disciple Church who chose not to attend? How do they position themselves in relation to discourses of race and culture at the carnival?

Refusing culture and visible Christianity

I first met Micha, who I introduced in the previous chapter- a member of Disciple Church- at the fresher's fair at my own university and we often spent time together on campus. One afternoon we were eating pizza in a south-London restaurant, and he asked to know more about my research. I explained that I was interested to learn how faith was important to the younger generation of the African diaspora. He rebutted me, and as mentioned in chapter 2, said that he does not see himself as an "ethnic minority Christian" but as someone who puts God first and tries to express God all the time. Micha's parents are from Ethiopia. He went on to tell me that, yes, he found it difficult fit in at Disciple Church, because there are very few members from east-Africa, but he saw Bishop Dag as an inspiration because he too has a lighter skin tone despite leading the church in Ghana. Many months later, one Sunday after service I stood chatting with a group of the church members. "Hey, you're Ethiopian, aren't you?" someone called to Micha. "I'm just a child of God", he replied smiling.

I found that I did not often get time to speak with Micha in a casual way. Usually after church services at Disciple Church he would have meetings with other leaders and shepherds, scripture exams, or he would spend a long time telling me and other new members in our group how God had helped him during the week, or how the devil had tempted him but he used his faith to overcome this, using his own experiences to practice and impart to us an ethic of zealous faith. A couple of days after the carnival Micha called me. I had not been with Disciple Church that weekend and he wanted to catch up with me to check that I was still on track spiritually. Calling me was something he regularly did, as I was now considered a member of the church and he was responsible for 'shepherding' me and a few

others. We chatted on the phone for some time, and he asked me where I had been over the weekend and how my studies were going.[36] I did not tell him I had been at the carnival. He told me he and some others in the ushers' department- all men with whom he regularly socialised with- had decided to spend their bank-holiday Monday on Oxford street, sharing food with the homeless and evangelising rather than attending the Carnival.

Slowly and skilfully Micha, as he always did during our conversations, brought the conversation round to what I had come to recognise as proselytization. He began to warn me of the dangers of deception, that we have a responsibility to do work for God, but deception comes when we mistake working for God with benefiting our own egos and that he had been praying for a greater 'measure' of the spirit. He went to explain that his prayers would give him the 'discernment' (see also chapter 3) to recognise when the devil was tempting him away. He told me that 'culture' was dangerous, and that is what leads people away from God. So, in a few simple steps, our conversation had shifted from small talk to the operations of the devil.

But the devil lays in wait, from the biggest to the smallest of talk, and Micha was telling me that something as everyday as culture was susceptible to the forces of evil. I asked him why he thought culture was bad- "Don't you think it is important to celebrate culture?" I suspect that Micha had been contemplating the Notting Hill carnival, the presence of which is hard to miss during the August bank-holiday weekend. He told me that the carnival is an example of how the devil uses 'culture' to fool us into certain ways of thinking. Lust, he told me was an issue for young men at the carnival, and that the devil used culture to influence people into drinking and fornication.

[36] Remember here that my status as researcher was often (intentionally or not) ignored, especially by members of Disciple Church, despite my repeated explanations and re-negotiations of consent. Participating in a congregation of mostly undergraduate students, I was often seen as just another student, whom many assumed also had assignments, exams, and classes. My active status as a 'researcher' then became compartmentalised, redefined according to the undergraduate experiences of the church members, and dis-aggregated from my role as a 'church member'.

Micha was not the only member of Disciple Church thinking about Notting Hill carnival. A member of the Aston branch of Disciple Church, near Birmingham, where he studies at university, has a popular YouTube blog which gets around 40k views per-video (sometimes many more). I met this young man after a service one day as we waited patiently outside Bishop David's suite in a central London hotel where the service is held every week. The young man was nervous with excitement at the prospect of meeting the Bishop personally- and I was nervous too because it was the first time I had been given the opportunity to introduce myself, despite attending for a number of months already. The young man told me that he was raised a Catholic but had recently decided to become born-again. A life changing event, he told me.

Watching his popular YouTube channel, it is possible to chart his personal transformation through the content of his videos. Videos from 2018, many of them recorded with friends, discuss issues raised by fans, from dating to friendships, and although they sometimes mention Christianity in passing, as a habitual belief in God[37]. The videos take a shift in content around the middle of 2019. The young man reveals in one of his video blogs that he has decided to become born-again, although the videos deal with similar issues as before, they are discussed now in relation to being a born-again Christian. One video discusses explicitly the Notting Hill carnival and responds to the question, 'Should Christians go?':

"This is not an attack on anyone's culture… their country or where they come from but is rather me giving advice based on the word of God. There are people who fought for carnival to touch the streets… and it is embedded in London's culture, UK culture, Afro-Caribbean culture… but one very important thing to know is that when you are in Christ, your culture, your tradition does not define you…

[37] For example, in one earlier video, the young man and his friends are discussing relationships. The question gets raised: "If this girl says to me 'I'm celibate', am I still posted?" He answers, "That's a very important question, because at the end of the day, bruv… man believe in God and that… and you know what the bible says, let's not even play ourselves… so really a true mandem should be waiting until marriage."

"I personally went to carnival, I went last year, the year before that [cuts to image of himself with a bottle of rum]. If you are from London, you know that carnival is essentially… mandem we know what we go to carnival for! Go with the mandem and that, it's a feel-good environment…. Girls, they go there to have fun themselves… Some people go 'cos its part of their culture, some go with their parents because they've always known it. There was one year it was raining... it was coming like Step Up 3 fam, mandem were grabbing wines in the rain, all sorts of madness!...

"But when we bring up Christianity, we have to ask certain questions. Is carnival godly? Is carnival a place where Jesus would be if he was alive? Is carnival something which helps me with my spiritual growth? Is carnival edifying for me? … As a Christian, what example am I setting to the rest of the world? …. If you're someone who is a Christian and is struggling with lust, it's clearly quite a tekke place… But what I want you guys to understand is that there is a difference between culture and following God's commands… what we have to do is get ourselves to a point where we say, 'okay, you know what? Carnival may be part of my culture but now that I'm in Christ, my culture is Jesus, I have died, and it is now Christ that lives in me".

The comments below the video further reinforce the importance of the young man's message to his audience:

"This video came at the right time 😭 Last year I went but this year I stayed in Church for a youth BBQ, and it went really successfully, and I had a great time but now that I'm fully in Christ I know not to put my culture over God's commands ☝🏾🙏🏾"

"Being a Christian, causes you to ask reflective questions! More times you know the answer and the Holy Spirit will convict your heart. The hard part is, not compromising yourself & being lukewarm.... my culture is Christ!"

Much can be learned from this video. Not only does the young man express a set of masculinised gender relations in his experience of carnival but he also expresses how his new-found born-again

identity, like Micha's, re-defines his masculinity and his culture along with its worldly temptations- according to biblical values. I will return to some of these issues in the next chapter but for now it is important to note how both Micha and the young video blogger express a refusal of 'culture' and its association with the Black-diaspora space of the carnival. Their refusals are complex and in rejecting 'culture' they seem to be both reifying a cultural imaginary and disassociating their experiences as young Black men from the restraints of cultural absolutism. The former being a means to achieve the latter. The attitudes of Disciple Church members differ from the Love Soldiers, who express difference in continuity with the carnival, and shows how difference for the members of Disciple Church runs contiguous to the carnival space. Rather than attend carnival to do the work of God, many, like Micha and his friends, chose to do the work of God elsewhere. But members of Disciple Church share with the Love Soldiers an impetus for such distancing which is driven by faith, and the desire to express born again distinctiveness, away from the devils' temptations and the un-saved.

Doing the work of God often means that the members of Disciple Church exploit public city spaces and articulate diverse Christian identities. An example of this occurred in the summer of 2019, in Woolwich town square, in south-east London. The church had been given permission to set up a stage and perform dance and music to promote their church. Although they had not been granted permission by the local council to preach from the stage, many other members of the church were dispersed around the area, stopping and proselytising to other young passers-by. The stage became a performance, not of Blackness, but of a superdiverse born-again identity. They express Christian identity first and foremost, which does not attempt to negate the visibility of Black bodies but incorporates the diversity of individuals who participate in the church activities. This can be described as a "superdiverse" Christianity, where the "diversification" of a diaspora community is represented and articulated as coherently Christian (Vertovec 2007).

Dancing, singing on the stage, in their distinctive red hoodies, the church members were performing their agency and in doing so re-signifying the public presence of Blackness as visibly Christian.

Woolwich town square, like any public space, is not neutral (Low 2000), and the young people's actions represent how the embodied habitus of born-again Christianity contests normative notions of Blackness in a public space. Perhaps the passers-by who stopped to watch their performances (see image) were also challenged to reconfigure their own pre-conceptions of Black youth and participate in the Christianised aesthetic that the Disciple Church members invoke when articulating their born-again identities. Doing this away from typically racialised spaces, such as the Notting Hill carnival, they express the interiority of born-again identity in a way that challenges racialised discourses of Blackness. Employing religious values to refuse reified discourses of 'race', ethnicity and culture, Micha, our YouTube blogger, and other members of the Disciple Church demand recognition by making themselves visible as a new generation of God's children.

Figure 11- Disciple Church dance group in Woolwich Town Square

Recognising refusal

The emergence of difference in Black diasporas can be traced through historical racialised discourses. However, in order to work through "this sense of difference which is not pure 'otherness'" (Hall 1990), it is important to keep in mind the way that difference (or *differance as Stuart Hall borrows from Derrida)* reflects new meanings which are in motion *(ibid).* In the scenarios and narratives I share above members of these churches articulate identities which are both in continuity with 'race', ethnicity and heritage while also utilising Christianity's inherent logic of rupture to express difference/differance to these categories. I will show how, for the young church members, the ruptures of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity take on significance when in spaces and in relation to categories the faithful seek to transform. The two church groups' religious practices are alternative, yet similarly purposeful, positions from which to articulate difference towards matters of 'race' and ethnicity. The members' articulations of identity reveal spatial continuities and contiguities to existing discourses of Black and African signification in a British context. The anthropological challenge is to recognise these actions as refusal, rather than reduce them to existing discourses.

It is important to remember that refusal emanates from the religious values, discourses, and convictions and the embodied transformation of born-againess provides the grounds from which to articulate the difference I describe above. However, recognising refusal on its own terms is tricky. Leaving the service which I described above, I was confused. But why? I think it is because the articulations of identity spoken and preached did not equate to the visibly Black individuals with whom I shared the space. They did not equate to the reading I had done prior to conducting fieldwork and they did not echo the visible politics of 'race' mobilised in the public sphere. In the current post-Brexit moment, with the resurgence of the Black Lives Matter movement in the wake of George Floyd's murder, the terms of Britishness are again being contested. Black-British identities are often articulated and mobilised according to anti-racist agendas and as a cultural politics which pushes back against assertions of white ethnic Britishness. On university campuses, in the mainstream media, and

in cultural institutions Black identities (among others) are articulated in both old and new ways, drawing on Black-Atlantic diasporic and African heritages in the politics of recognition. Indeed, in many contexts and spaces, the language and grammar of 'race' among some Black-British youth is one which articulates a "doubleness, reversal and transcoding" of national, religious, and ethnic heritages and contributes to the hybridisation of "new ethnicities" (Hall 2017).

In the context of the two churches, the discourses of 'race' and ethnic cultural heritage are often refused, both to each other and to this ethnographer. Following on from previous arguments in this thesis, this refusal seems, at least in part, to ensure ethically Christian spaces and selves are made, gained, and maintained. To expand on this and explore how charismatic belief and practice informs identity I argue that this refusal is also indictive of a "doubleness, reversal and transcoding", where 'born again' declaration and practice contributes to the subjective and spatial emergence of Christian cultural identities where the signifiers of 'race', ethnicity and diaspora are sought to be transformed and transcended.

The transformative logic of Christianity - which I discuss in earlier chapters- remains foregrounded as in their church activities and personal testimonies the church members articulate global 'born again' and visibly Christian identities in preference to Black and ethnic identities. However, religion should not be conflated with identity, where the latter is deployed to comprehensively explain the purpose of the former (Coleman and Collins 2004). As I have argued in the introduction to this thesis, in some anthropological and sociological accounts, where the relationship between religion, 'race' and ethnicity is hastily sutured, it often results in essentialised categories such as 'Black majority churches' and all too simple understandings of the role that religion plays among African diasporas in the UK. Instead, I wish to emphasise the fluctuating boundary work of the church members and the religio-cultural resources they draw on to articulate and practice their born-again identities *in relation* to 'race', ethnicity, and heritage (Coleman and Collins 2004).

For Black and diasporic Christians in the UK, the boundary work of identity is often performed and 'legitimated' (Cohen 1994:199-200) both towards insiders and outsiders (see Toulis 1997, cf. Coleman and Collins 2004). This chapter focuses mainly on the way identity is formed in relation to outsiders, with the following chapter having a stronger focus on how the charismatic formation of identity influences how young church members relate to a variety of insiders (namely family and other diasporic belongings). Among a single congregation there are diverse boundary positions which are performed in diverse ways on multiple stages. For example, some Christ Love and Disciple Church, members would insist to me in an interview or in conversation that their Nigerian heritage is not important to them and in another moment post content on social media which celebrates aspects of their cultural and national heritage. Rather than highlight this as a contradiction, attention must be paid to the ways that charismatic identity is a multifarious habitus which allows this young generation of charismatics in the UK to draw on a diverse repertoire of religious and cultural forms to express their identities. Identity then is not fixed; it is processual and contested and as Stuart Hall tells us:

> *"…identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language, and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves" (1996:4)*

The refusals of church members are not a paradox but reflect the "postmodern 'problem of identity' [which] is primarily how to avoid fixation and keep the options open" (Bauman 1996:18). In effect, refusal here is not denial, and the declaration "I know who I am" is an opportunity to contest essentialisms and embrace the unboundedness of God's word. To become other to the world, to become, and keep on becoming, 'born-again'.

For many of the young members of both churches, especially those who articulate a complex refusal of 'race' and ethnicity, this is indicative of their youthful desire to 'become born-again'; by eschewing 'race', external secular positions and some (but not all) internal notions of ethnicity in relation to

culture, family, and heritage. As Toulis (1997) shows, this does not mean that Black and ethnic identities cannot be politicised but highlights how these categories are tentative (Gilroy 1987) and identities are given meaning by the actors who articulate them. Born-again faith cultivates an ethical disposition which offers meaning to these categories.

Rather than simply point out the contradictions: that the young Christians refuse categories of 'race' and ethnicity while inadvertently rearticulating them with their externally racialised selves and in racialised spaces- or the ways that despite dismissing their church's relationship to Africa, members engage with an aesthetic discourse which emerges from Nigeria, Ghana and other African nations- or the ways that church members draw on colonial epistemologies of salvation to articulate Christian difference; instead these contradictory refusals are motivated by a desire to express Christian identity, values, and difference which become meaningfully articulated in relational ways at the boundary to that which is refused. To work through these paradoxes requires a reflexive shift on my behalf in order to respect the testimonies of my informants while also acknowledging the situations and discursive formations in which these refusals are communicated- both to each other and in response to my own preconceptions of how 'race' and ethnicity operate within the churches.

So how might we balance the visible presence of racialised discourses and ethnographic commitment to recognition? There is an inherent tension in this thesis between the emic and etic perspectives. To use only the emic articulation and understandings of Christian identity, as it is expressed by my interlocutors would result in ignoring the complex and significant role of 'race', blackness, and ethnicity in my analysis. Equally, to continue using these categories uncritically would also be an injustice and misrecognition of the young Christians' articulation of identity.

In his essay, *Who Needs Identity? (1996),* Stuart Hall, traces where and how the tricky and irreducible concepts of identification and identity emerge in relation to the subject. Hall notes how in normative and naturalistic definitions of identification are "constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person of group" (1996:2). This of course has

dangerous ramifications when directed towards racialised and ethicised bodies and Hall calls for an understanding of identification understood as a "process of articulation" and constructed *within* discourse (ibid:3-4). Hall, drawing on a range on commentary, reads identity "against the grain" in a way which does not fix the "play of difference at a point of origin" but instead notices how identity is constructed *through difference* and is thus destabilised by what is left out (ibid:5). The crux of Hall's discussion on identity, revolves around the tension between the discourses and practices which "hail us into place" and the emergence of subjectivity, "which construct us as subjects which can be 'spoken'". He argues that it is through this tension that difference and identity emerge (ibid:5-6).

On the one hand Hall acknowledges the way in which ideology and discourse operate through the process of 'interpellation', whereby the subject becomes constituted to a subject-position. This allows the subject "into the flow of discourse" and produces a position of identity despite its inadequacies. Identification emerges at the "suturing" of two poles, between discourse and the subject: between ideology and the unconscious. However, the identification of self within discourse raises the issue of the subject itself, whereby a theory of interpellation suggests there is 'misrecognition' of self, embedded deeply in the discursive and ideological. Misrecognition in this sense can be understood as a key institutional driver for oppression, where the ideological apparatus of racism operates to bind individuals to categories and identifications. Hall shows how a theory of interpellation requires the subject to be already psychologically constituted, leaving out the possibility for 'self-recognition'. To bridge the conceptual divide between the subjective and the discursive Hall draws on the work of Foucault to consider where the subject might articulate a self-recognition within a discursive formation, through the strategic deployment of 'technologies of the self'. Hall prefers the term 'articulation' (which I borrow throughout this chapter and thesis) to take account of the relation between the subject and discourse.

Claims to recognition and associated 'identity politics' are, according to Frazer (2000), presupposed on the 'recognition of difference':

> *"Recognition from others is thus essential to the development of a sense of self. To be denied recognition—or to be 'misrecognized'—is to suffer both a distortion of one's relation to one's self and an injury to one's identity." (2000: 109)*

According to Fraser, neoliberal processes of globalisation and the increased pluralisation of cultural forms and contemporary demands for recognition distract people from emancipatory agendas and prevent the redistribution of wealth and resources. Fraser sees recognition as a form of 'reification' which is often misguided. Instead, she offers a 'rethinking' of recognition based on a non-identarian politics which is instead based on status and economic class. Fraser's arguments are compelling, but her critique of 'identity' is based on a dialectical model which relies on "authentic, self-affirming and self-generated collective identity" (ibid:112). Relying on the notion of authenticity to critique the identity model does not account for what Jackson Jr. (2005), who challenges the fixity of 'authenticity', and instead describes as the 'invisibility' and 'sincerities' at play in the subjective articulation of selves that exceeds existing categories of identification- particularly Black selves. To take account of these less apparent sincerities and excesses that do not align with normative notions of identity is important here. Recognising how refusal operates in the production of identity makes it possible to recognise challenges to the reification of racialised categories.

Hall identifies discourse as inherent to identification and identity. This is important because it shows how Fraser's association of recognition with a vulgar identity politics might be missing the point that it is through a productive praxis of articulation that existing discourses can become manipulated and new identities emerge from within. Refusal might then be understood as one important facet among many, in the articulation of identity. The overlapping discourses in which we are all embedded make recognising refusal a challenging task. Acknowledging the messiness of refusal is perhaps more fruitful as it avoids reified notions of self and other, as well as fixed and seamless identities. Identities which emerge in refusal might better be understood as malleable and shifting, always in relation to that which is other, in different times and spaces, or what Hall calls the "play of difference" (1996).

Refusal is often embedded in the ethnographic method itself. For Ortner, the problem of 'ethnographic refusal' is an example of "a kind of bizarre refusal to know and speak and write of the lived worlds inhabited by those who resist." (1995:187-1988). To give an example, the spiritual excesses of lived spiritual praxis among diaspora communities are sometimes downplayed in favour of explanations of migration and belonging. Avoiding the problem of 'ethnographic refusal', means delving beyond the surfaces of categories to become witness to subjective articulations of identity and the 'play' of Christian difference. This requires a *recognition of refusal*. Refusal and recognition are conceptually entwined and not simply a rethinking of resistance (McGranahan 2016) which tends to employ a dialectical model in an attempt to understand how subjects struggle for recognition (see McNay 2008 for critique or recognition). Refusal is a conceptual approach which is thought of as generated through, and generative of, everyday social relations and lived experience:

> *"We see individuals and collectives refusing affiliations, identities, and relationships in ways that are not about domination or class struggle … but instead about staking claims to the sociality that underlies all relationships, including political ones." (McGranahan 2016: page).*

Refusal can be a productive means to challenge authoritative discourse, which does not always relate directly to systems of oppression, instead abstains from structures of power such as the state (Simpson 2007, 2017). Refusal in this case also provides a partial solution to the 'paradox of representation', where to be recognised, or conferred recognition, one must be 'visible' as 'other' (Dixon and Peachey 2012). This goes some way to acknowledge the way that individuals are agents in the articulation of identity, without ignoring the power structures by which racialised identities are often imposed (McNay 2007). The collective refusal of church members represents an agency which is not "impelled" by racism but is substantively constituted through a religious habitus, where religious practice shifts imposed 'racial identity' beyond the racism of misrecognition (McNay 2007:164-165, see also Appiah 1996).

Reified categories do not simply disappear in the refusals of church members. They surface at the boundaries of group identities which become spaces where identity emerges and is negotiated. However, for the ethnographic observer to only take note of the visibilities of these interactions would miss entirely the "excesses and invisibilities" of Pentecostal-charismatic experience and sincerities of which these Black subjectivities are made and lived (Jackson Jr. 2005). Indeed, the interactions between church members and others often appears as racially visible- what John Jackson Jr. might call "naturalized racial 'reals'"- but can be read subjectively when we take note of the spiritual bodily practices and the spiritual vernaculars of the church members, where categories of 'race' become real (or not) on their own terms (2005:33).

Conclusion: Continuity, contiguity, and difference

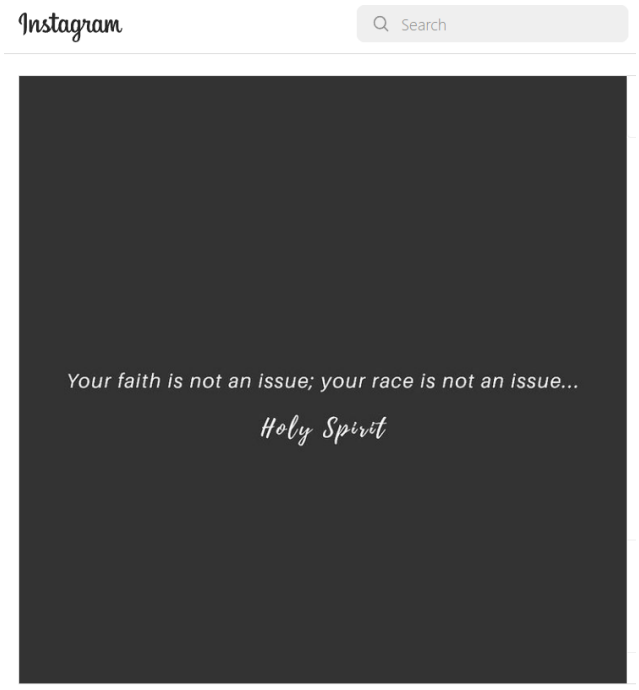


Figure 12-Instagram post from Christ Love member

This image appeared on a member of Christ Love's Instagram not long after the Carnival. Again, this statement shows how worldly categories of both religion and 'race' fail to capture the articulation of identity expressed by the young Christians. Through their religious practice, both church groups

employ an embodied born-again conviction, to perform, speak and materialise their identities into being and declare to the city that they know who they are. The spatialised refusals and participations in spaces that are prescribed along the lines of 'race', ethnicity and culture show how difference is articulated at the boundaries of identity. Stuart Hall says that "representation is not outside the event, not after the event, but within the event itself; it is constitutive of it." (1997). The event of being-born again, followed by successive events such as the Carnival is where Christian claims to representation are constituted.

Through a discussion of the Notting Hill carnival as an ethnographic space, I have shown the ways that young church members choose to engage with or avoid a Black-British cultural event through various claims to recognition *as Christians*. As a politics of difference, the young people demand to be recognised as Christians and do so by employing refusal as a tactic- refusing 'race', ethnicity, culture and secular ethics in the process. Whether doing so in continuity with the space of the Carnival or remaining outside it, we see how the young Christians position themselves outside normative structures of recognition. In both cases they actively challenge liberal, secular, and sociological categories by confounding the norms and expectation of the Carnival and city space.

The young Christians act to Christianise the city around them in the same way they aim to evangelise their university campuses. The city and the carnival are coterminous spaces, where multiple identities are made and accommodated. However, the young Christians challenge the hegemony of the liberal secular city through their refusals. Again, following Hall, this is not a static space where identities neatly fit inside particular categories but the moment in which "something escapes" (2018 [1991]). In this case it is Christianity which transforms not just the Carnival but those who position themselves in relation to it. 'Race' is done and undone in relation to the Carnival in the Love Soldiers' and dancers' refusals and implicit attempts to transform notions of 'race' and Black-British culture by declaring their Christian identities.

Again, the notion of rupture and continuity emerges, not as a binary choice, but as a historical dialectic. The young Christians, in refusing existing categories of identification, act to transform those categories and contribute to new notions of (Black)Britishness with the Holy Spirit included. They work with continuity and rupture to test the limits of worldly identities.

Chapter 6

An Inheritance in Christ: The 'Christianity of culture' and the religious (re)/(un) making of diaspora.

Diaspora?

It was almost with joy that Sister Ruby told me of how she took a flight to Lagos without her mother's permission. "I already was on the plane on the runway when she called me!" Ruby had taken the flight along with members of her Christ Love university fellowship for an annual conference held in Lagos, Nigeria, with Pastor Chris. Ruby decided to go without telling her mother because she knew her mother would disapprove of her attending the church event in Lagos- concerned that Ruby's increasing participation in the church had left her "brainwashed". Her mother, instead, attended a "white garment" church in London that Ruby had attended before joining Christ Love when at university. 'White garment' churches, otherwise known in Nigeria as Aladure churches, are a denomination of distinctly African ordained churches, where worshippers wear white garments, and are thriving among the Nigerian diaspora in London (cf. Harris 2005). Ruby, herself had never been to Nigeria before this, despite her parents being Nigerian by birth.

Ruby's infectious humour captured the situation. She feigned a thick west-African accent as she mimicked her mother's anger. This was not the first, nor the last time that I witnessed a young person in the church use humour and mockery to express their relationship to their elders. In fact, code-switching among 'second generation' diaspora can be considered a creative symbolic linguistic strategy by which to navigate multiple contexts, demands and power structures while expressing personal values- similar to the creative participation in cultural events described in the previous chapter (Hall & Nilep 2015). For Ruby in particular, her move away from her parent's church, to join Christ Love, resulted in some ongoing frictions with her parents.

"It's a part of maturing… as a child you listen to everything your parents tell you. One scripture that gets used a lot, especially if you have Christian parents. [she uses an exaggerated west-African accent] 'Honour your mother and father' [she rolls her tongue]. That one gets used so much. But the full scripture actually says, 'Honour your mother and father in the Lord'. So, if you are telling me contrary to what I know God has told me, I cannot oblige. That's why I was happy when I was at uni… it gave me the freedom to express my Christianity in the way it needed to be expressed."

Tensions between church members and their parents is common, partially, due to the levels of commitment and ministry activity demanded, and the ethical and spatial boundary work performed by the young worshippers at university, away from their family churches. The notion of the 'family church' features heavily in this chapter and is a term often used by church members to refer to places they have since rejected or distanced themselves from- particularly those who grew up in charismatic church ministries and mainline churches attended by the African diaspora in the UK.

A substantial number of young people across both ministries, especially those whose parents did not attend the wider church ministry (Christ Embassy for Christ Love and Lighthouse for Disciple Church members), mentioned that their parents were concerned that their church participation was having a negative impact on their studies and employment prospects. The friction between generations is apparent here, whether in the mockery of a parents' 'Africaness' or in the disapproval of a child's burgeoning faith in a new church. What is represented is a generational shift in the role of religiosity among a broad African diaspora in the UK. Considering the context in which diaspora creates the conditions for these frictions to occur, this chapter will explore the ways in which the young Christians navigate, challenge, and redefine aspects of heritage, culture and belonging within and beyond diaspora.

The chapter builds on the themes of the previous one, to consider how charismatic faith employs, contests and transforms the idiom of 'culture', to express difference in relation to heritage and re-

define diaspora according to youthful Christian agendas. Like the previous chapter I work with tensions that have arisen in this research concerning the relevance and importance of these categories. This chapter questions the usefulness and enduring persistence of diaspora and culture as categories of analysis as they relate to the experiences of my interlocutors. This chapter goes on to explore the differences the backgrounds of Christianity make, which are informed by aspects of life that can be considered to be embedded in both 'culture' and 'diaspora'.

As we have seen, 'culture' is a contested and loaded category for the young church members. They question the fixity and often obligatory connotations associated with the term. For the young Christians, culture is something that their parents are preoccupied with as migrants living in diaspora. In the same way that anthropologists have questioned the universality and ubiquity of culture, as well as the way it is represented (see Wagner 1981, Rosaldo 1989 for example), the young Christians questions and challenge 'culture' and the apparent forms of identity supposedly wrapped up in the term. They instead refuse and realign the term 'culture', as young people, with Christianised outlooks and subjectivities.

It is similar with the notion of diaspora. "There can be no diaspora as such without a response from a community that comes to recognize itself and to act as a collectivity", Khachiling Tölölyan writes (1996:24). For many of the young Christians I worked with, the overly academic word 'diaspora' did not always resonate. Some were unfamiliar with the word altogether. Nonetheless their practice as globally oriented Christians who aspire to transcend worldly forms of recognition binds them together as a collective. Simplified definitions of diaspora, such as James Clifford's assertion that "diaspora involves dwelling, maintaining communities, (having) collective homes away from home" (1994:318) are inadequate for describing the born-again Christians in this thesis. While the term diaspora is easy to deploy for those who have roots or belongings 'elsewhere', this does not apply to the young people in this thesis. They refuse and confound such renderings of the term, firstly through being born-again, but second (for many at least) having been born and raised in the UK and coming from a wide range

of different ethnic backgrounds. At the same time the young Christians navigate forms of belonging and kinship with family who might typically and more comfortably inhabit the category and experience of diaspora. So, the question arises, what differences does Christianity make to both internal and external understandings of diaspora?

Actions of refusal are in response to a diasporic consciousness that the young people are often expected to possess. Each individual in these churches has their own trajectory into the church ministries, as well as commitments to family, religion, and community beyond the ministry. However, these intersecting trajectories, scales, and orientations, can help unsettle static notions of diaspora that tend to view the church as a space of sanctuary, belonging and community away from 'home'. It can shift dyadic notions of diaspora that rely on territorialised notions of a 'homeland', as well as a reliance on the nation state and ethnicity in conceptualising diaspora (cf. Cohen 1997, see also Liberatore & Fesenmyer 2018, Axel 2002 for critiques).

Diaspora is of course all of these things, and studies of diaspora and the related concept of transnationalism can be conceptualised according to a set of complimentary and shifting 'scapes, scales, and scopes' (Quayson & Daswani 2013). For Quayson & Daswani (2013), diaspora, or the diasporic is a set of "contradictory convergences of peoples, ideas, and even cultural orientations… and their [the diasporic] homelands may also come to generate different attachments to the idea of nation, either by deflating romantic notions of the homeland and/or intensifying models of identification". For Daswani (2013b) putting into conversation the concepts of diaspora and transnationalism allows scholars to recognise the various "space-time" convergences that put in motion flows of connection and experiences of place within these continuums, past-future desires, and forms of ethical self-fashioning that emerge at their confluence. Again, space emerges in this chapter as a set of shifting horizons and scales. Diaspora is often conceptualised spatially as territory, not only as dispersal and movement but a set of spatial relationships, horizons and imaginaries that go beyond territory or even act to de-territorialise particular sets of relations (Knott 2010).

Anthropological accounts of older and often migrant generations of Christians, living in and of the African diaspora in the UK (and Europe), have noted the ways in which Christian identity produces various scales and scopes for living a 'good' or ethical spiritual life in diaspora.[38] In these ethnographies, each of the authors has paid attention to various and unique spiritual, spatial, ethical, transnational relations that emerge in these contexts. The ways in which their accounts take seriously the spiritual motivations for particular social formations vary. However, all these ethnographic accounts deal predominantly with migrant communities and, despite recognising how religious motivations enable participation in British society, they tend to rely too heavily on notions of ethnicity and nationality in their renderings of Christian experience in diaspora. The shift in perspective from first generation migrants to the children of migrants helps to illuminate the ways that Christianity continues to be relevant among these communities as well as showing shifting terrains of diaspora in the UK.

In their 2001 paper Hight & Lighty recognise the way in which members of the RCCG in London aspire to identify as "primarily Christian" but they revert to functionalist explanations for the role of the church. However, in the final remark of their paper they conclude, "A solid base, even a small one, will probably eventually be established and then priorities may change. Their Children will be born British. It may well be that these churches will then become a more permanent feature of British church life" (Hunt & Lighty 2001:122). In the 20 years that have passed it could be said that the more things have changed the more they stay the same. For the young members of Christ Love and Disciple Church, many indeed are born-British. However, their churches continue to remain peripheral to mainline churches, and remain associated with the African diaspora, in secular, religious, and academic domains.

[38] The notion of the 'good' (see Robbins 2013) varies according to context. See Fesenmyer 2015, Harris 2006, Hunt and Lighty 2001, Maier 2011, Doubleday 2008 for examples in the UK. See Daswani 2010 & 2015, Ukah 2003 for examples that explore transnational contexts. See Toulis 1997 for Afro-Caribbean account in the UK.

Coleman & Maier (2010:357) highlight, (quoting Asonzeh Ukah, n.d.), that the RCCG a Nigerian based, global Pentecostal church "represents 'a global church without a global appeal." In effect, ethnic affiliation currently trumps religious outreach." As I have mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, this point is mirrored to an extent in the churches I attended. Although appealing to a broader congregation of multiple African backgrounds, their congregations failed to reach out to their white contemporaries. Their aims to do so, combined with fact that they have not yet achieved this, provides yet another scale on which to consider the role of religion in shaping diasporic belongings as, not unlike older generations, the young Christians strive to shake off the labels of African, Black, and diasporic both within and beyond their church lives. In a sense their priorities *have* changed as they strive to articulate and foreground their Christian identities, albeit within a contemporary context.

An ethnographic account that perhaps most closely aligns with the concerns of the young Christians in this thesis is Ashraf Hoque's (2019) *Being, Young, Male and Muslim*. Hoque, discusses the ways in which young Muslim men in Luton, UK, eschew the Islam practiced by their parents as 'folk Islam' that is perceived as overly cultural. As the children of this migrant generation, faced with the racism of living in post 9/11 and 7/7 United Kingdom, many of these young men turn to an idealised global and de-territorialised Salafi Islam, that embraces a global community of Muslims, beyond ethnic, cultural, or national backgrounds. This, they refer to as the global *ummah*. The slippages between generational notions of belonging, faith and diaspora reveal the ways in which younger generations living in the African diaspora navigate multiple forms of belonging. It is through and with the formations of faith and commitment to church ministries beyond family and kin that they can imagine belonging beyond diaspora and in doing so reframe their place within it. This is not a simple 'break from the past', but perhaps the interplay between continuity and discontinuity (Daswani 2010, 2015).

As I have shown in this thesis, participation in the church ministries creates a set of centrifugal and centripetal relations that produce global Christian subjectivities that animate new forms of identification, relationships, and outlooks. The young Christians here might not label their practice,

consciousness, or experience as diasporic because their faith allows them to refuse identification with the categories that define 'diaspora'. As well as these foregrounds, I aim to account for the backgrounds, including the scales and scopes, which produce particular formations of belonging and identity among the descendants of the diasporic. A range of horizons open up when we consider how for the young Christians, they do the work of navigating multiple scales of relationship to home in the UK, and connections to an African heritage, and how this fits within a global Christian frame of churches based on the African continent. The notion of diaspora sits uneasily in this research. However, 'diaspora' has always been a moving target, resisting fixity, so I deploy it with care and critically.

Beyond Diaspora

The congregations of Christ Love and Disciple Church are made up of individuals representing a range of positionalities. The category of 'second generation' is slippery and insufficient. It includes those born in the UK to African parents, as well as those born abroad who move here as children. However, the category is nuanced in the university campus fellowships by international students who are citizens of African nations, people whose heritage lies elsewhere, and the non-identity of many people who do not identify with any of these categories. Likewise, a familiarity with Christian faith cannot be assumed. Some may have been raised in Christian homes, attending church as a child, only to spend some years as a teenager exploring secular endeavours. Some may have spent time as a child in a Catholic, Anglican, 'white garment' or any other Church before finding their place in the 'ministry' as a young adult. Others may have grown up in the 'ministry', making them more familiar with the ethical norms and values of the church. Many young people would tell me that while attending church as a child, they "did not know who God was" and that they did not have the personal relationship with Him that they have been able to cultivate through participation in their current churches.

Further, as I have mentioned throughout the thesis, the congregations are not limited only to those of African descent, with a significant number of worshippers of Afro-Caribbean decent, mixed British and African and Caribbean decent, as well as a handful of individuals from other backgrounds from across Europe and Asia. The opportunity for students to meet other young Christians from a range of backgrounds is embraced by the ministries, who foreground a global and universalised Christianity. This can result in interesting relationships to heritage and diaspora, for example, a young man in the Christ Love fellowship who explained to me that growing up in a middle-class family outside of London meant he barely knew anything about his Nigerian heritage until he joined the campus church and began socialising with fellow Christians who were born and raised in Nigeria. The church encourages this form of cultural exchange and to an extent cultural heritage is mediated in all of these configurations. But as Pastor Simon explained very clearly to me: "celebrating your culture isn't the issue. It is where culture begins to influence your beliefs." What ties these ministries to African diasporas in the UK, is their transnational relations to the headquarters on the African continent which produce a set of ethical and aesthetic reference points which create some sort of diasporic sensibility even if it is not recognised as such. This suggests an element of familiarity as well as difference in relation to existing formations of faith and diaspora that pushes the narrative in new directions. There is a discursive difference to explicitly 'African' churches, but a familiarity in the forms of worship and the cultural heritage of the people who attend these types of churches, creating frictions and new meanings.

Coleman and Maier (2016) in their discussion of the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) in London, UK highlight these "ambiguously constituted diasporic communities, that might themselves, depending on one's viewpoint, be seen as Yoruba, Nigerian, African and so on." The authors highlight how that at various times and scales church members imagine forms of belonging that are co-constituted by relations in a new homeland, to a previous home, and a spiritual expansion beyond these horizons. Coleman and Maier provide the conceptual tools to consider how religiosity can extend the view of the diasporic beyond territorialised notions of identity and belonging.

Considering the many anthropological approaches to religion, diaspora, and the dynamic relationship between the two, neither the category of religion nor the category of diaspora is fixed. Each has a temporal relationship to the past and the future that enables forms of religious action and participation in the present (Daswani 2010, 2015). Diaspora is a condition of flux, where continuity and discontinuity are in continual dialogue. The consciousness of diaspora is not directly invoked by my interlocutors, as they seek to avoid essentialist readings of the diasporic. To avoid both nominalist and essentialist readings of both religion and diaspora (as well as their interrelation), the term 'heritage' can be a useful heuristic to consider the ways that young people navigate this terrain.

The term, heritage, has had a resurgence in anthropological discourse in recent years, particularly concerning conversations relating to the production of culture in diasporic contexts- thanks in part to the works of van de Port & Meyer (2018) and de Witte (2019). In particular, van de Port & Meyer present a constructivist understanding of heritage which questions the way in which heritage is invented, assembled, and staged. They argue that heritage formation is in effect the "'culturalization' of politics, citizenship, economics, religion and other areas of social life, whereby 'cultural identities' and concomitant 'sentiments of belonging' are prominently brought into play in the political arena" (2018:1). What makes their project all the more intriguing is their refusal to stop at only recognising the cultural production of heritage, but instead using this as a starting point for a critical engagement with the politics of 'heritage' and the 'cultural identities' generated at this intersection. Instead of simply revealing the 'made-upness' of these cultural identities, they use it as an opportunity to question the way in which notions of and identifications with heritage- in its multiple iterations both material and intangible- are made real for the people who enact them.

In the same volume Reinhardt discusses the role religion plays in "fabricating" or constructing heritage. He phrases this as a question: "how do the processes of fabricating these social domains intersect, in practice, in terms of complementarity and dissent, of boundary-breaking and -making?" (2018b:76-77) This question fits for the purposes of this chapter, particularly as I consider how

formations of culture, heritage and belonging are reconfigured among the African diaspora in the UK. Following Reinhardt's arguments further, it can be seen in this chapter how both religion and heritage are discursive processes through which culture is re-defined and diaspora reconfigured as a means of self-recognition with and representations of heritage (ibid:75-76). Likewise, de Witte (2019) explores the way in which young people of Afro-Caribbean and Ghanaian decent in the Netherlands, construct differing, yet complimentary narratives of belonging that draw on varying relationships to African heritage and Blackness in post-colonial Netherlands. For her interlocutors 'African heritage' becomes the rubric through which to navigate a triad of belonging that re-situates both Blackness and Heritage squarely within conversations around Dutch citizenship.

Indeed, heritage and born-again faith are two sides of the continuity/ discontinuity coin, and it becomes hard work for Christians to safely navigate aspects of heritage that can be considered spiritually 'dangerous' (Zetterstrom-Sharp 2017). As we see with the case of Notting Hill carnival, Christian faith and born-againess offer alternative narratives around 'race' and Britishness as well as the aspects of these cultural events that are considered spiritually and ethically objectionable. Diaspora is the context in which I will be considering the cultural-religious production of heritage in this chapter, by focusing again on the boundary work of my informants as they negotiate multiple facets of belonging. As my discussion in the introduction to this thesis shows, there has often been a suturing together of religion, diaspora, and ethnicity in formulaic and functional ways. Born-again-identity supports an 'inheritance in Christ', allowing young Christians to unstitch the quilt of diaspora, only to re-assemble the pieces into their own narrative. Again, culture becomes the rubric through which to do this work, and while in the previous chapter I discussed this in relation to the articulation of identity in response to current formations of Black Britishness, this chapter considers how the work of culture among these young Christians reworks renderings of 'African' and 'diasporic' Christianity in the UK.

Sister Ruby's unsanctioned flight to Lagos to participate in a church event speaks to new configurations and the doubling of a homeland. Her motivations to travel to Nigeria, a 'homeland', are motivated by spirituality and participation in a set of ethical practices that extend beyond typical renderings of diaspora and transnationalism. Simultaneously she defines relations to family by refusing her mother's wishes, by attending a church that does not align with familial, ethnic, cultural, or spiritual relationships to that homeland.

The language of heritage, or indeed "inheritance", as the contested and processual ground on which senses of identity, belonging and culture are played out, becomes a useful heuristic to explore these contested categories. Considering so many of the young Christians I spent time with declare an 'Inheritance in Christ' then perhaps a turn to 'heritage'-or in the following example 'background'- can help solidify some of the ways in which this inheritance in Christ is realised. The fact that the term diaspora is not necessarily a category deployed by the young Christians themselves means that various emic categories can be used to challenge and rethink the etic ones. In doing so I further argue that looking at the way heritage is re-imagined and diaspora refigured by these young Christians can help challenge functionalist understandings of religion and/in diaspora.

Anointed Backgrounds and New Meanings

To tease out a theological and authoritative impetus for the refusal of particular categories of identification I will begin with an example where authoritative Christian discourse provides the means for church members to both refuse and recognise aspects of their heritage. In one of Bishop Dag's weekly sermon podcast's- recorded at the Anagkazo Bible School, 50km outside of Accra, Ghana- he declares, "I prophecy that the anointing will bring you out of the desolation of your background in fact your background will be an advantage!"[39] In the same message, he urges the congregation to have an

[39]See Isaiah 61:4 for biblical reference.

“international outlook” for their businesses to prosper and to forget the past-generations who were incumbered by colonialism. He invokes a global horizon, with a future orientation. He says that many Ghanaians do not have an international outlook and jokes that when Ghanaians go abroad, they “fill their suitcases with Banku”. Banku is a corn or cassava-based dough that is served with meals in Ghana. For many Ghanaians it represents one aspect of Ghanaian culture. Upon hearing this, the audience in the podcast roar with laughter. But he is preaching to a Ghanaian audience and this message should be interpreted contextually.

Bishop Dag is urging the worshippers to use their Christianity to ‘break with the past’ and with tradition (Meyer 1999). We can see elsewhere that the call to ‘break from the past’ is responsive to colonial and post-colonial histories and in this case is situated in the country’s embrace of new global forms of Christianity (Gifford 2004). One interpretation is that Bishop Dag is commenting on the fact that for the Ghanaian worshippers, their ‘background’ is embedded in the colonial history of Ghana as a nation.

However, in London, the message takes on new meanings. That same evening, I look through Instagram. The Disciple Church Instagram page has asked followers to post what they learned from Bishop Dag’s most recent message in the podcast. Members of Disciple Church in London had posted quotes from the podcast:

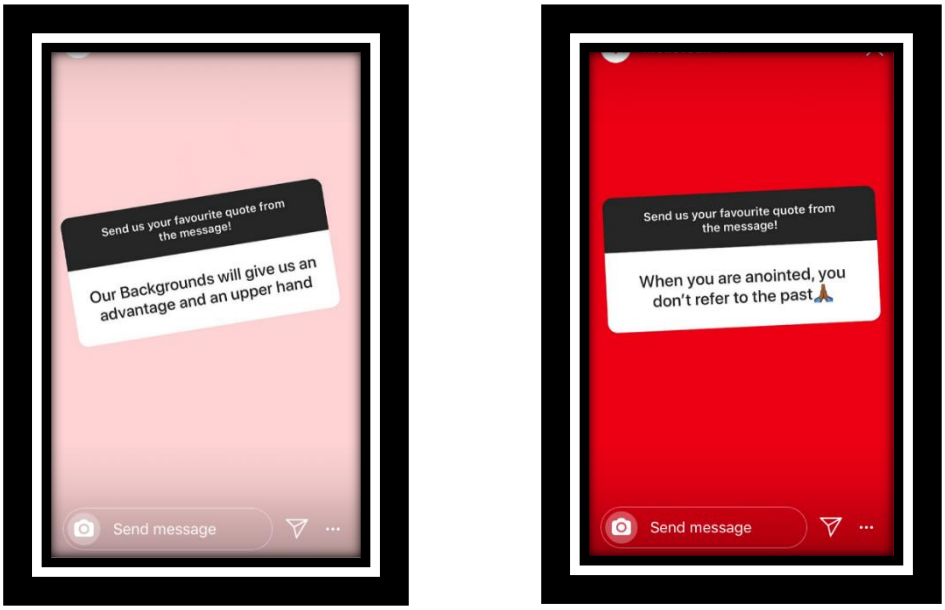


Figure 13-Instagram post from Disciple Church after Bishop Dag's sermon

These two responses, at first appear contradictory. To break from a past but to embrace a background. This message, listened to in London, can-not be interpreted in the same way it might be in a Ghanaian context. The podcast and the anointing of Bishop Dag's words move in global charismatic flows, mediated digitally, and become translated into new contexts when heard by the Disciple Church listeners. When the message flows to London, it does not arrive unchanged. In the process of travel, it distorts and shifts according to its new context. The anointing may mediate a sensory co-presence, where the listener receives Dag's distant and 'international' anointing, but the transformations facilitated are locally contextual. For the listener in London, what new meanings are produced? What does the young listener in the UK unpack from this audible suitcase arriving from Ghana? Why do these statements resonate with the listeners?

I do not know the 'background' of the anonymous Instagram users, but I could see that other members of the church had 'liked' the posts, suggesting they too relate to these statements. The church members of Disciple Church and Christ Love express a desire, like many of my interlocutors, to 'break from the past', but for a younger, British-born generation, this past (or background) is one embedded in diaspora-once-removed, as well as the material conditions of both class and 'race' in the UK.

Members of Disciple Church (and Christ Love) often, express little interest in or knowledge of their national, cultural or ethnic heritage when talking to me and for some the first time they visited their parent's country of birth was is to attend a ministry camp or conference.[40] Yet, background- understood in relation to the concepts of 'race' and ethnicity (as well as class)- finds itself to be omnipresent in British conceptions of 'identity'. For the members of both churches, living in the UK, comes with the external constraints of 'race' and similar problematic associations with 'ethnicity' and nationality. In the context of diaspora, categories of 'race', 'ethnicity' and 'culture' become blurred and wrapped up in the cultural baggage (or 'luggage' if embracing the words of Bishop Dag) of an individuals' 'background'. The church members seek to transcend worldly categories wrapped up in diaspora, not to disregard 'background' but to 'anoint' it so they are no longer carrying around cultural baggage but are made anew with a global Christian outlook.

The ability to draw on and transform the conditions of your 'background', to be a better Christian, is a virtue in Disciple Church and is what makes this denomination different from other proponents of the 'health and wealth' prosperity Gospel. Bishop Dag often makes no bones about his mixed Swiss-Ghanaian background and preaches to his congregations that his lighter skin is a God-given advantage for him, thanks to God's anointing. Similarly, during a visit to London at a large service titled, "Am I good for nothing?", which I was not invited to but watched live on YouTube, he called up the dozen-or-so white members of the congregation to join him on the stage, declaring to everyone that the folks on stage with him have an advantage to "save England". He says:

"Where you come from and what you like is very important. There was a time when I wondered about my colour, because when I'm in Ghana I'm seen as a white man, when I come to any other place, I'm a Black man… So where do I belong? But as time has gone on, I found out this is the best colour to have because everywhere I go… I fit in. I use everything I am, everything I have. Where God has put me and

[40] This is not only indicative of second-generation experiences of diaspora but also related to the socio-economic conditions of many African families living in diaspora, making visits to 'home' unfeasible or unaffordable.

where he has put me. I use it…. How many also want England to be saved? To enter and penetrate this society is no small thing…"

He continues:

"I don't want to hear about cultural differences…there are no cultural differences just human differences".

This final statement presents an anthropological conundrum, particularly given the anthropological attention given to cultural differences. However, the discussions in the previous chapters provides me with the analytical framework for looking at the relationship between culture and difference as one of productive refusal and transformation. Further, faith and born-againess become ways of re-articulating the grounds on which those 'cultural differences' are defined as things of the world.

The message, in the form of the Word of God, resonates with church members in London. In one sense, Bishop Dag is saying to the Black-majority congregation, that to win souls in England- here imagined and experienced as white- they must not rely on being Black but instead draw on their spiritual capacities. He is demonstrating that everyone, in spite their 'background' has a part to play in fulfilling the kingdom of God. "Everyone has a talent", he goes on to say, encouraging participation in the 'work' of the church. His message draws on a Christian ethic, which is to go and "teach all nations"[41] with and regardless of 'background'.

The themes of these sermons from Bishop Dag also filter down to smaller campus services such as the one I attended with Micha at his university, there were just four of us in the 200-seater lecture theatre, which we had found unlocked, and where Micha, mimicking Bishop Dag's style of delivery using the old testament story of Ham from the book of Genesis. Drawing on the centuries old and racist interpretation, he told us that Ham's curse and his exile in Africa are what have led the continent to be 'spiritually cursed'. In a strange twist, he went on to tell us that this is the cause of racism. He

[41] See Matthew 28 for biblical reference.

exclaimed to us that only in Christ can we overcome this curse. Micha then pointed me out, as the only white person in the room, as an example of how the church can appeal to all nations. Micha seemed to be telling us a similar message to that of Bishop Dag, that by taking advantage of what we have spiritually we can overcome worldly and fleshly limits.

But perhaps there is also a more radical interpretation of Bishop Dag and Micha's words, which in this British context, allows for a recognition of the spiritual inter-subjectivities of Blackness, which are not bound by external markers of 'race'. Instead, by looking at how members of Disciple Church and Christ Love seek to surpass these categories and redefine them and themselves through spiritual practice, the subjectivity and agency of charismatic experience becomes more apparent. These examples suggest a refusal of 'race', nation and ethnicity and highlight a rupture from Christian identities which are bound to diasporic forms of belonging based on place and 'race', towards the articulation of charismatic experience and identity which requires individuals to work through and against existing categories to redefine what heritage, belonging, and identity mean to them. Thinking through the ways that these young people challenge and define these categories and the concepts they use to do so can also shed light on the work they are doing to undo the problematic associations of 'race', Africaness and identity within diaspora (cf. de Witte 2019). They challenge the conflation of these categories and instead focus on where diaspora may be made or unmade through its own recognition (or refusal) as such (Tölölyan 1996).

Questioning Heritage, Finding Belonging

Joseph is a member of the Christ Love fellowship. He became involved with the fellowship when, for a period, they began holding fellowship meetings and services on his university campus, where he was studying art as a slightly older student. Joseph attended semi-regularly and although he was not a core member of the church group, everyone, including myself was friendly with him. Although Joseph's personal faith could not be denied, his lack of regular participation meant that he was often side-lined

by other members of the fellowship in social, as well as ministerial activities. For Joseph, his church participation at Christ Love was limited by several familial and social ties that lay beyond the ministry. As a peripheral member of Christ Love he often struggled to commit to the high level of participation expected from other members. This is where I feel we shared a bond. This was unusual, considering how the ethical and authoritative process of enclosure in both Christ Love and Disciple Church meant that social and fellowship activities and participation were blurred, with the result that Joseph's commitment to the ministry was often questioned by other members as much as by himself.

Joseph's story highlights in stark relief the ways that some young Christians play with and experiment with faith within the structures of participation set out the church ministries they choose to participate in. In chapter 2 we saw how the questioning and initial doubt of Malcolm set him on a path to becoming a global Christian actor, where his newfound aspirations became aligned with the vision of the Christ Love ministry and his ambitions to cultivate a relationship with God. I found during my fieldwork that most established members of the church ministries were not willing to express doubt or struggle in the ways that Malcolm did but his journey with faith, commitments to family, and aspirations for the future, nonetheless demonstrate one of the many ways that young members of these ministries grapple with new ways of defining themselves in the world, and negotiating new forms of belonging within and beyond these global congregations. As I will show, in an analogous way, Joseph's faithful pursuits and search for religious belonging within a Christian community were a way of negotiating heritage, re-aligning 'backgrounds', and establishing the possibilities of faith as a young person in, of, and beyond diaspora (Maier and Coleman 2016).

Most of the young Christians encountered in this thesis adhere strictly, and quite willingly, to the norms and ethics of their respective ministries, expressing a devout, 'zealous', and seemingly uncompromising commitment. I have come to consider their actions as an experimentation and ludic intervention in the politics of representation, articulations of 'race', and conceptions of culture, ultimately contributing to new understandings of diaspora in the UK. In a different (but related way) I

have come to understand Joseph as an exception to the ways that church members of both church groups behave. Rather than committing himself fully to one ministry, Joseph often attended multiple fellowships, bible studies, and church services. Joseph's kind invitations to me to join him in some of these experimentations (and obligations) can be considered an invite to play alongside him and learn just some of the ways young people navigate, negotiate, and transform the meanings of religious identity within diaspora and in doing so transform diaspora itself.

Joseph was slightly older than other members of the campus fellowship. He was in his late twenties, as was I. We began to meet up regularly. He invited me to a bible reading group with some friends he knew from school and college growing up in London. We would meet in coffee shops or sometimes a rented rehearsal space in a music studio. The bible study group was an important way for Joseph, to pursue faith on his own terms. In addition to this, Joseph attended his family's church where his father was the Pastor of a Pentecostal Francophone congregation in North London, which often shared worship spaces with other diasporic churches. His parents had moved to the UK from Angola when Joseph, the eldest of four siblings, was one year old. Joseph's multiple and often contradictory commitments to these various pursuits of faith highlight the ways that some young people of African heritage have to navigate commitments to family, heritage, and faith, within the shifting frame of diaspora.

The bible study group often met up in a Costa coffee shop in Chalk Farm or a rented music rehearsal space in Kings Cross where they would diligently study scriptures, worship together and pray for each other. They had all attended a church which had since closed in North London and had decided as a group to continue worshipping together. Joseph invited me on the understanding that I would not mention his attendance of Christ Love, because his closest friends in the group did not approve of the authoritarian leadership of the church, insisting that it distracted from the important matter of a relationship with God. Similarly, when at Christ Love I would not mention his bible study attendance because attending another ministry was sometimes met with apprehension from the more committed

members[42]. Disagreements about the leadership, liturgy, and theology between churches is of course nothing new but in the landscape of independent, global, and neo-charismatic churches based in Africa and serving the diaspora here in the UK, the ways in which young people navigate the landscape can be understood as a transformative praxis of faith.

Speaking with Joseph and his friends I came to realise that for them, their mistrust of the kinds of churches they were raised in often stemmed from a difference in generational concerns yet were also deeply embedded in their shared- yet heterogenous- African heritages. Particularly when it came to material matters of the present and aspirational desires for the future, the members of this group often highlighted what they perceived to be the contradictions between wealthy Pastors and their marginalised congregations across the charismatic Christian scene. One of this group, Munesu, who grew up in Zimbabwe until he was ten years old, often spoke of his mistrust of wealthy preachers, telling us all that 'fake' preachers are a big issue in Zimbabwe. For this young group of Christians, although their primary ambition was to further their relationship with God, it was also about finding and performing faith in a way that worked on their own terms.

As discussed in the introduction of this thesis the concerns of many of the young members of the church ministries discussed here were related to such issues as university studies, relationships, employment, rather than issues concerning visas, family, housing, and community that might have been more familiar to their parent's generation. These issues and aspirations often meant that young people distanced themselves from the 'family church' in which they were raised, because for them finding belonging in a new home after migration to the UK is not as urgent is it might have been for their parents. Joseph and his friends often discussed their concerns about employment and finding their way in the city, highlighting the lack of opportunities for young Black and diasporic people living in urban centres of the UK. Sometimes, one or more of the small group would send their apologies for

[42] This aligns with internal debates within church ministries about what it means to be Christian. Despite the non-denominational identity of both Christ Love and Disciple Church, each has its own identity and forms of ethical Christian practice and participation. Church members from both churches often told me I should not be joining multiple congregations during my research and that I needed to be 'settled' with one church.

not attending a meeting, due to being given inconvenient shifts in a fast-food restaurant, having to study, or simply not having enough money on their Oyster card[43] to travel to wherever we were supposed to be meeting. Many of their conversations centred around the difficulty of finding meaningful employment in the city, and they often prayed for each other for success in achieving their ambitions.

Recognition of the gap between religious participation and material conditions is where I sensed friction between this small group of worshippers and some of the larger ministries I had been spending time with elsewhere. The explicit prosperity focus of larger youth focused ministries (although the benefits God is able to provide through a strong relationship is something this small group of worshippers emphasised)[44], alongside the authoritative charismatic leadership (often incredibly wealthy Pastors), did not sit easily with Joseph and his friends, and meant Joseph and his friends had decided to explore faith on their own terms. For this small group, worshipping and fellowship together was far more important for realising their aspirations, both spiritual and material. Munesu wanted to start a church band and release music on YouTube, and Joseph found solace in the group prayers for success in his university studies.

Joseph had his own personal reasons for challenging the spiritual avenues available to him and for seeking alternatives. His father was the head Pastor of several Lingala and Francophone churches, serving some of the Congolese diaspora in London. He conducted services mostly in French. This meant that Joseph had to navigate this form of heritage in ways that he often found difficult and contradictory. He explained to me that he found the French and Lingala sermons less relatable than those delivered in English. In the summer of 2019 Joseph had recently completed his university degree and invited me to his 'family' church where he would receive a blessing in front of the congregation from his father to recognise his achievement. Joseph was reluctant to go to his father's church, where

[43] London travelcard
[44] Akin to Baptist theology

his family, and the congregation- who had known him since he was a child- would be in attendance. We met at the train station in Tottenham and briskly walked into the industrial estate north of White Hart Lane. On the way I could sense his apprehension. He explained that as the eldest son of a Pastor, there was the added pressure of being expected to follow in his father's footsteps. He was expected to become a Pastor and be an active member of the church. He 'hated' this pressure and strongly disagreed with the performativity of some Pastors, even his father. I knew that Joseph did not enjoy the altar calls at Christ Love, did not feel comfortable around the intensity of prayer and the laying of hands. However, Joseph's loyalty to his family, and respect for his father meant he continued to attend his father's church and participate in some of the youth meetings with his cousin.

We arrived at the church, behind a warehouse unit, where the service was already underway with around 20-30 people in attendance. The only young adults were members of Joseph's family. Everyone else was either older or children. Joseph's mother, sat in the front row, wearing a smart cream suit and hat. She turned and smiled at us. I recognised his brother and sisters from a previous visit to his family home. Usually, one of his sisters attended Hillsong Church, another global church based in Australia, popular among young people, both in the UK and the United States, for its diverse congregation and modern outlook. His brother, I had been told by Joseph, was usually more interested in making music than in going to church.

Joseph's father preached, switching between Lingala and French, while Joseph's cousin translated the message into English. Although hard to follow, with the microphones of both speakers booming and crackling through the PA system, Joseph's father spoke of the younger generation. "They do not know themselves" he stated. He preached of their disconnection with culture but said that more importantly they can gain a sense of identity through their faith. The Pastor, Joseph's father, seemed to understand the way in which the younger generation feel a sense of disconnect with their cultural and ethnic heritage. After all, alongside his wife, he had raised four children as Christians living in diaspora. However, as we saw in the previous chapter and the beginning of this one, perhaps the slippage

between his generation and this one is that culture has become the staging ground for young people's spiritual pursuits.

Joseph was called to the front of the church where on his knees he reluctantly received a blessing from his father and the rest of the congregation. Joseph was reflective after the service, especially as I asked how he related to the Francophone and mostly Congolese congregations. He told me he felt Angolan, and always would do, having been born there, but in the 'family' church he was surrounded by people born in Africa who are more often than not "God conscious", whereas growing up in London God was one option among many. What Joseph seemed to be explaining to me was that for him, and the friends with whom he regularly worshipped, as well as his campus fellowship friends, it was important to maintain one's relationship to one's faith on one's own terms to ensure that it remained strong. Being 'God conscious' was not necessarily the problem, but Joseph was explaining to me the difference in worldview between different generations of African diaspora. He continued to explain that for the elders in the church who had grown up in Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo and moved to the UK later in life, the church was an important aspect of community and belonging but stressed that a relationship with God should be made for oneself.

I was invited back to Joseph's family home after the service, to celebrate his graduation with family and friends, where these generational slippages continued to make themselves apparent. Joseph's mother cooked a selection of fried fish, meat, vegetables, rice, and dumplings. We all gathered around the modestly sized living room of a canal side Hackney home where Joseph, his mother, father, two siblings and a friend of his sister all lived together. Joseph's father, whom I now knew as Pastor Bernard, asked one of his daughters to play some music. She hesitated for a long time before choosing some afrobeat music from YouTube. Almost immediately Pastor Bernard switched it over to Christian worship music.

After dinner, Joseph and his friends, and siblings and some of their friends sat around the table and the conversation turned to how they all knew each other. They talked about knowing each other from

growing up in the area, all coming from Hackney and Tottenham (neighbouring areas of London). The group represented a range of diasporic trajectories, affiliations, and identities having grown up in the UK in either Caribbean or African households but through their discussion found common ground in their shared youth in London. They discussed the diversity of London and how it enables young people to mix despite ethnic, cultural, or national heritage. One young woman explained- something I often heard- that when she visits her parent's country, she gets treated like a tourist. They explained to me that their sense of belonging was different to that of the older generation who they felt preferred to keep to their own communities- national, ethnic, and cultural.

The views expressed by this group of young people around the dinner table represent just one expression of the inter-generational flows and contestations around cultural meanings in diaspora. Diaspora, like religion is not fixed and is open to change, challenge and transformation. Again, I fefer Stuart Hall, who uses the language of difference: "Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (1990:401-402). Around the dinner table this group of young people identified with a sense of belonging which is different from their parents, and regardless of their multifarious backgrounds, they found a shared difference in being young and being from London and common connections through a proximity and identification with a Christian faith.

As in the previous chapter, when identifying with a particular form of difference, be it faith or culture, 'race' was backgrounded in these conversations. For this group of young people, either around the dinner table or in Bishop Dag's sermon, Blackness (or being categorized as 'Black') in London is something which is ascribed externally, in and through the social and material conditions of the diasporic experience of living in Europe.[45] Or to say it succinctly as one church member who grew up in Ghana put it, "I wasn't Black until I moved here". Being Black or identification with Black-Britishness converged and diverged with spiritual practice. It is with foregrounds and backgrounds of 'culture' and

[45] See Fanon (2008 [1952] for a fuller discussion of the subjective experience of being ascribed with Blackness.

faith that these young people transform the meanings and importance of 'race' in diaspora, foregrounding new meanings and connections, while simultaneously questioning and repositioning old ones.

However, it is not just the young who recognise these differences. As I left and thanked Joseph's mother for dinner, she told me, having overheard the conversations, that young people embrace 'diversity', and that the 'culture' embedded in the family churches does not appeal to them. "They are not interested in culture", she said. Her astute point echoed that of many young Christians I have met along the way during my fieldwork. But for a younger generation of Black-British Christians, identity and belonging is constructed with, against, and in response to culture heritage. Heritage may also be another "fuzzy frontier of identity" (Cohen 1995) to this account of youth, belonging, culture, and diaspora but it is useful for encapsulating the ever-shifting positionalities of my interlocutors. If the foregrounds and backgrounds of Christianity include the (re)staging of culture, faith, 'race' and ethnicity (each fluctuating between front and backstage) then the stage itself is the site of heritage production. The performance is the articulation of the unfolding experience and narrative of diaspora.

The reflections and ambivalence towards ethnicity and the 'family church' expressed by Joseph's, his friends', and his siblings aligns with the activities and approaches towards the cultural event of Carnival expressed by interlocutors demonstrate in the previous chapter. There is similarity in the ways these young Christians navigate aspects of heritage and belonging according to Christianised outlooks. These attitudes stem from the unique experience of living in diaspora as the children of migrants. Joseph explained this to me:

"There is a difference between being a 'Brit' in Britain and being an 'African' in Britain. It's like I live in two different worlds. At home, I'm in a different country altogether, culturally, mentally, and religiously. Whereas when I'm at university or work I'm in a British space"

For Joseph, he has "one foot in Africa and the other foot is outside of that". Joseph's experimentations beyond the family home, including spiritual pursuits elsewhere, mark a way for him to find his own

path in life and define his own circumstances. His faith provides a moral framework that provides him with the strategies to form friendships that sustain his spiritual desires, while at the same time navigating obligations to family (cf. Daswani 2010)

This resonates with the ways in which members of Disciple Church in the previous section of this chapter realign their 'backgrounds' according to contemporary life in the UK, having mostly been raised in the UK. This can be considered an experimentation in foregrounds and backgrounds where to succeed as a young Christian, Joseph and my other interlocutors foreground their faith. In doing so, culture and Africaness get pushed into the background where they do not become unimportant, but act as a symbolic frame through which to articulate difference. Whereas for the elder generation, where faith and 'culture' were closely aligned and both foregrounded by processes of migration and experiences of diaspora[46], for Joseph, it is his experimentations with faith, that become a way for him to align and define, his own heritage, and his own belongings, on his terms.

'Background', heritage, and belonging become synonymous yet heterogeneous ways for my Christian interlocutors and their associates to negotiate a sense of identity. Joseph in particular is obliged to navigate many layers of diasporic and Christian belonging. In one sense this is temporal, as he maintains his ties to kin through national, ethnic, and cultural identity, materialised in his obligations to attend his father's church and to carry the expectations of being a Pastor's son. He is in one sense looking backwards, towards a formalised notion of belonging and heritage in diaspora. Where his ties to family, 'Africaness' are apparent. In another sense, Joseph is looking forward, using networks, of faith and cosmopolitan associations that are not bound by culture or ethnicity to find new forms of belonging. This brings into relief, not only that heritage and belonging are constructed and contested (across generations) but that they are put into action through religious practice and the affiliations they produce. It is in the process of deciding where they come from and where they belong, that

[46] I would argue that the relationship between religion, ethnicity, and culture is something overplayed by anthropologists and sociologists researching the role of Christianity among African diasporas in the UK. e.g., "African Church", "Nigerian Church", "Ghanaian church" and so on. See introduction for a full discussion.

Joseph and his friends, either in the church, or beyond, lay new ground for what it means to live in 'diaspora'[47].

Here I have chosen to share Joseph's story. But each member of the church ministries will have their own. Each will question heritage and belonging according to their own reference points and seek to refuse the narratives that do not apply to their contemporary experiences. We might even reverse the narrative here and consider the way in which the youth church might enable someone to engage with aspects of their culture and heritage which are unfamiliar to them or that they have not been exposed to through family. What unites all the young people here is that their Christian affiliations and senses of self as being born-again and having an inheritance in Christ, allows them to actively redefine culture and belonging according to their spiritual agendas. The congregation listening to Bishop Dag's message grapple with a similar conundrum, that although their church forces them to confront a so-called 'African heritage' and an ascribed Blackness in diaspora, this is un-made and re-made as a redefinition of what it means to be Black and of African descent emerges. Claiming a spiritual heritage in Christ, is an act of deciding what weight should or should not be ascribed to those labels.

The Christianity of Culture

As I have shown, many of the church members refuse an ethnic absolutism of the kind which is often associated with the tropes of cultural essentialism. Often this manifests as a refusal of both Black-British cultural and aesthetic forms (see previous chapter) as well as familial associations with cultural heritage- which were often described as being 'too cultural'. Despite often being raised in African *and* Christian homes, their spiritual identities are not embedded in notions of diasporic belonging.

[47] Here I use quotation marks around 'diaspora'. Through the discussion of the ways in which heritage is constructed and contested it leads me to the conclusion that diaspora I also not fixed but always being made and unmade.

Many of my interlocutors who grew up with African parents admit that they have inherited many aspects of culture from their families, particularly when it comes to kin and "respect for elders" and forms of everyday "behaviour", but when it comes to "mindset or internal things... it's all been God". They claim an 'inheritance in Christ' where the rupture of a born-again relationship with God informs their globalised and cosmopolitan narratives of identity[48]. By positioning themselves in relation to the continuities of intergenerational 'culture' the young Christians are able to re-define what culture means to them (Chua 2012). This does not mean that Black and African selves are dismissed totally, instead the church members enable "symbolic transformation(s)" (Toulis 1997:207-209) where existing meanings around Black, African and Christian identities are re-imagined according to contemporary global Christian values.

This raises the subject of intergenerational relations. I spent almost all of my time with this younger generation of the African (and less-so Caribbean) diaspora in their church meetings or at social events, so I am unable to fully examine the dynamics of cultural and spiritual transmission between generations. However, among the young Christians a strong narrative emerged which provides insight into the way that culture and Christian faith are perceived from the perspective of the young worshippers themselves. Many of the church members I spoke with and interviewed maintained a similar conversion narrative- or testimony. Many had been raised by Christian parents who regularly attended church and not always a Pentecostal-charismatic church. Some spent childhoods at Catholic mass, or with family at Methodist, Anglican, or white garment churches right through until their teenage years when some found that they became disillusioned and distracted by 'things of the world'. Some told me that their parents attended the same ministry, or what often gets referred to in Christ Love as 'main church', but because most of the congregants there were older and first-generation

[48] This is not to say that older generations do not participate in global Christian horizons. However, as I show in Chapter 2, the formation of the youth ministries is geared towards a universal Christian outlook and experience.

African migrants, the sermons were not relatable and tended to focus on success and prosperity in relation to employment and housing- rather than the concerns of young people.

For those who attended mainline churches with their family, they often described how the Holy Spirit was not present and they did not know the importance of being born-again. Some grasped the opportunity of not attending church as soon as it became available to them and although reluctant to discuss the details, they would describe teenage years of drinking, 'fornicating', and what one young man summed up to me as "anything you can imagine a young person does growing up in Peckham". Some mentioned feeling lost or 'empty' during this period and for those who continued to attended church, they often recalled how they did not have the 'knowledge' to appreciate it for themselves. These examples again reflect the youthful concerns and problems many of my interlocutors grapple with through and with their faith, allowing them to articulate re-newed aspirations. All those who shared their testimony with me decided to become born-again and to give their lives to God when they attend the youth and student churches, whether they attended 'main church' prior to this or not. This may in part be due to the ethical norms of church participation- where a public declaration of becoming born-again is necessary- but it also suggests that rupture is not a singular event. Instead it demonstrates how born-againess is continual and must be worked up in relation to both a past and a future.

The fear of returning to worldly and carnal desires commitments and experience, as well as a duty to prevent fellow worshippers from slipping into un-Christian behaviours, complicates the relationship between continuity and rupture and shows how these positions are "not forgone conclusions or unproblematic developments, but open-ended questions" (Chua 2012:151). Becoming born again for members of these ministries involves a complicated and ambivalent relationship to meanings around culture which are navigated along the lines of family, gender, youth, and identity. Often the desire to transcend worldly existence is never fully complete as the popular slogan "in the world, but not of it" suggests.

Members of Christ Love and Disciple Church are in a constant process of redefining what their understanding of culture is, and imagining what culture can be. This includes notions of 'background', heritage, belonging, and identity. Drawing on the work of Liana Chua (2012), this can be framed by looking at the ambivalent, and dynamic ways in which emerging forms of Christianity act as both a culture in and for themselves, as well as a means with which to re-define existing notions of culture. As Chua succinctly puts it, we can talk both of Cultures of Christianity, and the Christianization of 'Culture' (ibid). In this way, Christianity in the forms I describe in this thesis become both the means and an end for young worshippers to align themselves with theological, subjective and ethical understandings of born-againess. It becomes a way for them to situate themselves in relation to themselves- to align the many facets of their identities. Their acts of refusing what they are not and affirming what they are contributes to the formation of a Culture of Christianity. This fits with culturalist reading of Christianity that have sought to show how Christianity is often concerned with processes of rupture that emerge out of the cultural logic and symbolism of the faith itself.

As Chua points out, for her interlocutors, the Bidayuh of Malaysian Borneo, giving such weight to the dangers and misgivings of the past in order to embrace a Christian future becomes a source of anxiety concerning salvation. She shows how "they have enhanced its [the past] perceived power by attributing to it the capacity to derail their entire soteriological project" (ibid:150). Similarly for members of Christ Love and Disciple Church the aspiration and ethical praxis of born-againess is put in opposition to that which is considered un-Christian. Added to this their everyday concerns as young people to avoid worldly temptation inadvertently gives weight and agency to them. In these situations, there is an urgency to re-define existing notions of culture, familial, and social bonds, where these become Christianized. In some ways this is a form of strategic essentialism (Spivak 1988), where Christian values are foregrounded as a way to challenge representations of culture, 'race' and ethnicity. This is not to say that these representations are merely nominal, but as representations, they have the virtue of having real consequences. Religion and culture become discursively entangled.

Temporally this situates young worshippers who have become born-again in a delicate position, where the experience of everyday life, and particularly their inherited, prescribed, and imagined cultural heritage, becomes a site to define their past by imagining alternative futures. In other words, notions of heritage and belonging are drawn into the present and defined according to imagined Christian futures. Equally, the future is imagined according to the refusals and redefinitions of the past. This puts rupture and continuity in perpetual conversation, rather than opposed. Ruptures require acknowledging the (at least partial) continuity with the past.

As described in the previous chapter these refusals and redefinitions are not a negative experience. The members of Christ Love and Disciple Church are not anguished sinners akin to the Urapmin described by Robbins (2004b), defined by their rupture from a 'heathen', past but are instead dynamic and playful actors who align themselves with a vision of 'culture', heritage and belonging that suits their embodied experience of becoming and being born-again as young people in the city. Their articulations of self in relation to that which they wish to distance themselves from- 'culturally'- is a dynamic and productive act of refusal that plays with the idea and paradox of being in the world but not of it, providing a contiguity that allows for the experience of both rupture and continuity, renewal and change reconfigured notions of heritage and belonging.

Old and New Ruptures, Old and New Continuities

"What is Yoruba going to do for me?!" was Tolu's pithy response to my line of questioning after an interview with her at her university campus. Tolu is the ambitious Student Union President who strived for appropriate recognition and representation on campus as both a Black woman and a Christian. However, when I asked how she related to aspects of her upbringing that were informed by Yoruba parents, and about time at a boarding school in Nigeria she was not forthcoming. Like the majority of the young Christians I know, she explained to me that while she appreciates her "culture" it is not in relation to her spiritual relationship with God. Rather than this being a flat-out rejection of an ethnic

and cultural heritage, her response could also be interpreted as a rhetorical question. Her narrative resonates with that of Joseph. Both of her parents are church Pastors. She continued to explain to me that the older generation tend to "mix" culture and faith, but they are not truly saved. They have received a "different understanding". This 'consciousness' or 'mindset' is something fostered in both Christ Love and Disciple Church ministries. It is a mindset, or an ethical disposition, that encourages church members to redefine existing definitions of culture. The question of what Yoruba is going to do for Tolu, is in many ways a question she asks herself, and in doing so elicits a response and answer that is informed by her faith.

In this, and the previous chapter I have shown how culture becomes more than an idiom through which the young Christians articulate identity and negotiate forms of belonging that fit with their ethical values and subjectivity as born-again Christians. In many ways culture becomes the battleground through which to challenge hegemonic and external notions of identity, redefine intergenerational relationships, but also a way to redefine diasporic belongings. However, the break between past culture and new spiritualities is not a neat event. As I have shown in my ethnographic examples, Ruth, Joseph, Tolu, and the congregation of Disciple Church continually frame their present understandings of self and future horizons through recourse to the past and elsewhere, albeit with a new set of reference points.

In this chapter the past is contextualised as heritage, 'background' and cultural inheritance. For these young people and their contemporaries, the past is not necessarily historical and distant but is negotiated according to their contemporary situations as young people, as Christians, and the children of the diasporic. In the moment of the present however, that which is received- tradition, heritage, background, culture- is not static. Homi Bhabha discusses this in terms of the "beyond", as "neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past… we find ourselves in the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inclusion and exclusion" (1994:1-2). In the space beyond diaspora, the young Christians continue to make space

for God by negotiating what their heritage is going to do for them as Christians. To continue to think spatially, as I have tried to do throughout, means paying attention to the ways in which young Christians navigate the space 'beyond' or 'in-between' various positionalities to produce forms of identity and belonging that exceed the sum of their parts (ibid). For members of Disciple Church, this involves reinscribing one's 'background' with Christianised signifiers, so much so that one's background can become an advantage. For Tolu, Joseph, and Ruby, they too question their heritage, but do so in a way that allows them to be Christians coterminous with the culture, nationality, and ethnicity of their parents. As with the previous chapter where the space of the city becomes a way to negotiate 'race' and identity, what escapes this coterminous space of diaspora- 'the beyond'- are a new set of identities that contribute to the unfolding story of diaspora in the UK (see Hall 2018 [1991])

The title to this concluding section plays with Stuart Hall's 1991 essay *Old and New Identities, Old and New Ethnicities*. In his paper, Hall homes in on the possibility of a cultural politics that embraces difference, behind a unified front in the face of political and cultural hegemony. The previous two chapters have shown how the young Christians play with and assert difference as a way to navigate belonging. This is sometimes a refusal of inscribed significations of Black Britishness and the cultural forms associated with the Black British diaspora. In other moments, difference is asserted along the lines of heritage and belonging. In both cases rupture and continuity are not necessarily in diametric tension as much of the literature around born-again Christianity suggests but instead are dialectically entangled in producing Christian subjectivities, that are Black, African, British, and above all Christian. In many ways the ruptures and continuities expressed by these young people are both old and new because this is how diasporic identities have always negotiated belonging.

Post-colonial Britain and the history of migration provides fertile ground for a "multiplicity of cross-cutting notions of difference and belonging" (de Witte 2019:622). Christianity, for this group of young people, becomes a way for them to find belonging through difference and to bring into being new forms of Britishness (Littler 1995). In this case, difference is articulated at the boundaries of diaspora,

belongings, and heritage. Drawing again on Hall, this turn to the past can be understood as a re-orientation:

> *"We bear the traces of a past, the connections of the past. We cannot conduct this kind of cultural politics without returning to the past but it is never a return of a direct and literal kind. The past is not waiting for us back there to recoup our identities against. It is always retold, rediscovered, reinvented. It has to be narrativized. We go to our own pasts through history, through memory, through desire, not as a literal fact." (Hall 2008 [1991]:58)*

Rather than there being a single moment of rupture, as is often associated with conversion, rupture in this case can be viewed as being perpetual, or processual, and transformational as members of Christ Love and Disciple Church continually work to reaffirm their identities in Christ (see Premawardhana 2018). In breaking from the past, they work to redefine the past in the present and make newly anointed futures, where their inheritance is in Christ, and in doing so they contribute to the constantly shifting definitions of diaspora in a Black-British context. Culture becomes an important way of expressing alterity and difference, both an exercise in realising a cultural Christianity and Christianising existing ideas of culture (Chua 2012). However, this chapter takes this further by thinking about the ways in which Christian belonging draws on various aspects of heritage to affirm their inheritance in Christ. Perhaps Tolu wasn't just asking what Yoruba could do for her, but also what Yoruba could do for Christ in her.

Conclusion

I end this thesis in the same way I started, with the words of Pastor Katie. “The student church is a bit of a silo” she told me one day after a church service. These words were a response to my questions about what she intended to do once she was too old for the student ministry. At this point my research was coming to an end and I was reflecting on the trajectories the young people I had spent time with would take in the future. Her words surprised me. Until this point the activities and participation of church members at both Christ Love and Disciple Church seemed to be focused on connecting short-term action and participation with the distant aim of spreading the gospel to the whole world- with very little acknowledgement of the near-future- i.e., adulthood (see Guyer 2007). Instead, her acknowledgement that her activities in the church constituted a set of practices that are in some way disconnected from the linear flow of everyday life, suggested that this might all be temporary. However, I would like to consider her words in a different way, one that recognises the transformative potential of the ‘silo’ as a space which is ‘made for God’ at a strategic and informative moment in the lives of the young Christians.

Katie went on to explain that members of the Christ Love campus church fellowships are uniquely positioned to develop strong and meaningful relationships with God. It is because they have time and fewer responsibilities in terms of work and family, meaning they can find time to dedicate themselves fully to ministry activities and developing relationships with God. The same can also be said of Disciple Church members where faith folds into almost all other aspects of life.

As I have shown, both Christ Love and Disciple Church encourage and enable forms of participation that envelop church members’ everyday experiences and understandings of their social worlds. In being and becoming born-again the young people enact the knowledge that enables them to engage in the global space of Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity. This embodied and sensual framework, guided by the Holy Spirit and their church ministries, prompts forms of ethical and even political action in their social worlds.

Further, the transformations enabled when making space for God also prompt a series of challenges to and rearticulations of identity, that challenge existing categories of identification and experience. The act of becoming born again is an active and processual act that means the young Christians can reimagine their place in the world as one which is with and for God. 'Youth' is a category with potential, where young people produce, challenge, and realign cultural forms. The cultural forms of Pentecostal-Charismatic faith lay the groundwork for the young Christians to harness these forms in their local contexts.

The silo then is a radical space where young people can strategically position themselves in relation to a future where they aim to continue to walk with God. It is a space where they are able to cultivate an ethical and embodied practice of faith that realigns identities according to born-again values and horizons. In this way, the silo is an aspirational space, where the young Christians act to redefine the past, and make new futures with God.

In terms of personhood, this process shows how the practice of born-again faith in youthful contexts complicates linear and continuous forms of self-formation. Michael Lambek highlights the distinction between 'forensic' and 'mimetic' personhood. The former, he says is a product of liberal and enlightenment thinking, where ""forensic" codes identity in the sense of self-sameness and unfolding over time" (Lambek 2013:848). On the other hand, 'mimetic' personhood "codes the dimension of difference, iteration, and imitation" (ibid). Lambek makes the argument that forensic and mimetic types are "complimentary and intrinsic dimensions of selfhood and subjectivity" (ibid) and constitute the grounds for ethical life.

Lambek shows how both forms of personhood are co-constitutive, and both enact forms of continuity and discontinuity. This resonates with the ethnographic material I have presented here. The transformations and differences brought about by born-again faith allow young people to challenge normative and linear identities through the discontinuity of 'mimetic' activity. They disrupt the flow of identity using their faith to articulate subjectivities that are re-newed in Christ- to "never remain

the same". Equally, they draw on a set of forensic, continuous reference points, whether religious or cultural to enact these differences.

Becoming born-again does not make the past disappear but it carves out a space- the silo- that allows these young Christians to enable differences that align newfound religious and cultural forms with those that preceded them. This is an ethical practice, embedded in forms of refusal that empowers the young Christians to challenge and reformulate conceptions of religion, 'race', ethnicity, diaspora, and culture. All this represents a form of social change that while striving to transform the world through the dissemination of faith, is deeply indebted to prior genealogies.

Thinking about the ways that faith and identity become made and unmade for these young Black Christians shows how, far from being a complete refusal of the past, their articulations of difference are strategic reformulations that allow them to foreground their faith as a principal aspect of identity. Paul Gilroy sums this process up when discussing the transformation of Black British cultural forms (particularly musical forms):

> *"The defensive walls around each sub-culture gradually crumble and new forms with even more complex genealogies are created in the synthesis and transcendence of previous styles" (Gilroy 1987: 294).*

Gilroy identifies the processual and transformative character of Black British culture. Inherently it refuses. It refuses imposed reductionisms that ask it to remain static and measurable. The young Christians I discuss in this thesis contribute to this unfolding story but do so according to a set of forms informed by being and becoming born-again. It is in this process that they form identities that are both old and new.

This thesis has dealt primarily with the differences that Christianity makes for young Black people of African heritage, living in the UK. Being and becoming born-again, for these young people, involves a creative, mimetic, and considered practice of foregrounding their faith. They do this to challenge

normative assumptions that often misrecognise them as diasporic, racialised and embedded in a cultural heritage tied to ethnicity. However, as the tensions which have arisen in this thesis have shown, these categories do not disappear through the rupture of becoming born-again. Instead, the young Christians confront and refuse, albeit in seemingly indirect ways, the backgrounds through which their faith is filtered. They use their faith to redefine these backgrounds, to transform them, to find belonging among a global community of born-again Christians, and to make themsemves anew within the ethical frameworks of their embodied faith.

Becoming and being born-again makes a difference. Anthropologists of Christianity have shown how it makes a difference in a range of contexts. This thesis contributes this body of literature by showing the differences being born-again makes for these groups of young Black Christians in London. They inhabit a number of positionalities but can transcend them by participating in a global faith that goes beyond worldly categories. They define new forms of belonging in diaspora by putting God first.

The silo described by Pastor Katie is not a temporary space. It is a staging ground where these young Christians are able to redefine the past and aspire to the future. It has a thickness to it that is saturated with the presence and knowledge of God. It is a space for God, that exists simultaneously on the streets of London, university campuses across the UK and in the global imaginary of a community of Christians worldwide. The young people in this thesis might choose to attend one church ministry over another, with a particular ethical and practical orientation, but what they share is the desire to make their spaces for God. It is in these renewed spaces that they can articulate identity and form new belongings.

I do not know where these young people will turn next in their walk with God as they move beyond youth and encounter new challenges. Their assertion to “never remain the same” speaks to their experience as well as their aspirations. In the ways they have shown me that their faith and identities are in motion, I am sure they will stick by these words.

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