

Transforming Futures? Being Pentecostal in Kampala, Uganda

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ABSTRACT

Pentecostal Christianity has gained many followers in the developing world, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. Despite a corpus of anthropological scholarship on the impact of following Pentecostalism on identities and social change, less has been written from the perspective of the believer, and little from within the field of development studies.

In this thesis, which is based on 14 months of research in Kampala, Uganda, I explore how followers of this religion appropriate a discourse of prosperity and blessings, and how they utilise certain religious practices and relationships that are forged from the Pentecostal community in their efforts to mediate their futures and 'move on up' from a state of poverty. In particular, I discuss whether these practices and relationships can be seen as engendering transformative agency for these individuals. In doing so, I explore three themes that were prevalent in my data analysis: an everyday non-ecstatic speech act which is called 'positive confessions', ways of understanding poverty and dealing with situations of injustice, and patronage relationships between more wealthy and poorer members of the Pentecostal community.

I suggest that despite readily apparent displays of agency, in effect these religious practices and relationships do little to enable positive transformations in the lives of these believers, and instead, might actually uphold existing issues of disenfranchisement, through an emphasis on the individual as a force for change, a reorientation in ideas of time, and a prohibition of doubt and questioning. In addition, a more limited exploration of a group of non-Pentecostals sheds light on the potential for Pentecostal Christianity to be influential on the wider religious milieu than may have originally be thought, and hints at the need for a re-fashioning of our research methods when understanding the lives of those who are 'Pentecostal', in Uganda at least.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

“I want you to open your mouth; open your mouth and worship the Lord. With words of your own mouth, thank your Lord: ‘You are great; there is no one like You; You are the beginning and the end; You are worthy; You are so glorious’. Open your mouth and speak of His goodness, because in the presence of the Lord, there is deliverance, there is freedom, there is healing. Someone is being healed today; there are issues that are breaking loose today - the sickness of debts that you do not even know what to do about it. Know that there is a God; today God takes out that debt. Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah! Hallelujah!” [From prayers spoken by a preacher in a sermon on Thursday 18th October 2008, ‘Alpha Tabernacle’ ‘downtown’ lunchtime service.]¹

It was when sitting near the back of an old cinema in Kampala one Thursday afternoon that I heard the words of this ‘born-again’ (or Pentecostal) Christian prayer, as quoted above. The cinema no longer screened films for the city’s movie-lovers but instead seemed to be rented out by a succession of Kampala’s ever growing Pentecostal churches for different ‘downtown’ (or city centre) services. The cinema hall had seen better days: housed in an dusty warren of an empty disused office, when I had first come to visit the lunchtime service, I had nearly missed the entrance to the building, nestled as it was on Kampala’s main shopping thoroughfare, and sandwiched between fried chicken ‘n’ chip joints and small narrow boutiques selling second-hand shoes and bags once discarded from the closets of European women. When I entered the unnamed entrance and passed along a narrow corridor, I thought I had taken a wrong turning until, tucked under a precarious-looking broken metal stairway, I saw a table selling pirated Nigerian (or ‘Nollywood’) gospel movies and well-thumbed copies of born-again ‘inspirational’ books (including such titles as ‘The Portals of Prayer’, ‘God’s

¹ The name of the church, ‘Alpha Tabernacle’, is a pseudonym.

Little Book of Promises', and '*Olutalo Iwa Mukama*' ('Spiritual Warfare' in Luganda²), by American Evangelist Joyce Meyer), alongside born-again Christian car bumper stickers (with messages such as 'God is Able', 'Protected by the Blood of Christ' and '*Mukwano Yesu Akwagala*' ('my friend, Jesus loves you' in Luganda)). It is then that I could hear energetic 'praise and worship' music coming from up the stairs, and I was left in no doubt that some part of this dilapidated concrete building had been transformed into a church, albeit a temporary one. Following the music, I entered the rather musty and damp-smelling old cinema hall. The overhead fans whirred at different speeds, although some were completely defunct, leaving the congregation below furiously fanning themselves with tithing envelopes; and the chairs, once carpeted in blue flock flowers, were now going somewhat orange after years of accumulating the city's ever-present rusty-red dust.

Despite the scene of disrepair and faded glory, however, the sentiment from the pulpit was certainly not looking back at times past. Instead, the rhetoric was one that focused on the future: on 'victory', 'success', and 'conquest'; on 'overcoming obstacles', 'defeating the enemy', and 'winning the battle'. As seen in the quote above, the congregation were encouraged to achieve these things by 'speaking with their mouth' and praying to God, in the perceived knowledge that *at that moment* someone was being freed of their debts and another was being freed of sickness.

It was difficult to ascertain who was in the congregation on that day, but most were young or middle-aged, putting on their smartest clothes, even if the collar was a little worn and faded, or the high heeled shoes needed resoling. These were not Kampala's elite necessarily, but were more likely to be local clerical or shop workers, or one of the many unemployed residents of Kampala who would pound the city centre streets in their only suits looking for work. Taking a break from the hot midday sun, the traffic congestion of the city's roads, or the long hours in the

² Literally translated from Luganda this means 'war on behalf of God' but is used here to mean the English Pentecostal Christian term 'spiritual warfare'. This phrase can be commonly heard in Pentecostal narratives, especially those that lean towards Prosperity Gospel thinking, and refer to the 'battle' over the individual that, it is thought, is constantly being fought between the God and the Devil. See Gifford (1993) for more on the issue of spiritual warfare. The word 'Mukama' is also the Bunyoro word for 'King' (Mair, 1974:182).

office, the daily lunchtime sermons in the windowless and stuffy, but nevertheless comfortable, cinema had obviously become a regular respite for a significant number of people.

But it could also be seen that it was not just the physical contrast with the hustle and bustle of the city that was a welcome break to the congregants. As is alluded to in the extract that opened this thesis, sermon content at these lunch-time meetings in the old cinema hall suggest that by practising Christianity in this way, a whole multitude of maladies experienced by the majority in the developing world are able to be 'healed'; that through such actions as prayer, and by simply 'opening your mouth' and 'speaking of His goodness', problems can 'break loose' not tomorrow, but *today*, indeed at that very moment. The sermon extract thus suggests that a 'glorious' future is on the horizon, a future without poverty, sickness or debts, a message that must have also felt like a respite from the everyday struggles and disappointments that many residents of Kampala experience. As an outsider, and as a social scientist, however, questions were bound to follow the witnessing of such events, and hearing messages such as these. Is this rhetoric of a rose-tinted glorious future appropriated by the congregation, and in what ways? Do members of the congregation use the time of the sermon as a momentary break from everyday difficulties, as a chance to 'switch off', or does involvement in such a religious belief system have a real impact on their ideas of wealth and poverty, and of the future and how to improve it?

This thesis is therefore concerned with issues of religious identity and change in urban Uganda; more specifically on how adherence to Pentecostal Christianity (in its various forms), a religion that has in the past few decades grown considerably in many parts of the developing world (including East Africa), informs people's ideas of what their future economic lives might be like, and how adherents think it is possible to mediate towards a more comfortable and secure, and a more wealthy, future. I am concerned with how their involvement with born-again churches influences and constitutes their ideas of wealth, fortunes and misfortunes, and poverty.

Pentecostalism: an established and emerging social phenomenon in the Global South

Pentecostal Christianity has been described as not only “the predominant form of global Christianity in the 21st century” (Casanova, 2001:431), but also potentially the fastest-growing religion in the developing world (Martin, 2003:52). Generally speaking, it is seen as a form of Protestantism, and a biblically literal and conservative religion which centres its doctrine around a personal relationship with God, a divine being that is believed to bestow upon all believers the potential to experience ‘The Gifts of the Holy Spirit’ (or charismata). These are often very bodily experiences, and include the ability to speak in tongues, prophesy, conduct faith healing and exorcise demonic spirits.³ The moment(s) of conversion, which in the Pentecostal exegesis is ideally independently chosen,⁴ is often central to the construction of the identity of believers: it is not uncommon for converts to experience (and construct) a quite radical change in identity (see Stromberg, 1993), hence the faith being referred to as ‘born again’ Christianity. The decision to convert (rather than baptism) is often considered to be *the* significant moment in the life trajectory of a born-again Christian.

Pentecostalism is a movement that has developed only relatively recently. Its historical roots are identified in the ‘revivals’ of the early 1900s in Kansas and California, U.S.A, where Christians experienced charismata, and is considered to have been influenced by the Methodist Holiness movement (see Robbins, 2004).⁵ Despite its relatively recent origins, it has grown exponentially in the last few decades, especially in the developing world, in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin

³This is in addition to roles, such as teacher, pastor, apostle, prophet, and evangelist that are also believed to be talents that God gives believers through the Holy Spirit.

⁴Because of this stress on individual choice in conversion, small children are rarely baptised, but if their parents are born-again they are instead often ‘dedicated to God’ in short ceremonies, usually when still a baby. Water baptism (which usually means full immersion in water) then takes place after a person has declared their commitment to being a born-again Christian, usually when they are at least an adolescent, although baptism is not as significant a ritual in the life as a born-again convert than it is in other forms of Christianity. There are no centralised theological rules to guide Pastors and church leaders as to when converts are old enough to be able to be considered to have made a ‘free’ choice in deciding to convert. However, I heard some informants talk about having conversion experiences as children as young as seven, although it was more common to hear of people deciding to convert when they were a teenager or an adult.

⁵ Pentecostalism is widely considered to have been ‘founded’ in 1907 following the ‘Azusa Street Revival’ in the home-church of William J. Seymour, an African-American preacher (Cox, 1995; Davis, 2004:31).

America in particular (although it has also experienced growth in pockets of Asia and Europe). The Pew Forum suggests that Pentecostals / Charismatics are estimated to account for at least a quarter of the world's two billion Christians worldwide, making it the second most practised form of Christianity after Catholicism (The Pew Forum, 2006:1, 3).

The evangelism at the heart of the movement, and the amorphous way in which it develops without a spatial and doctrinal authority (Freston, 2007; Hollenweger, 2004; see also Gifford 1998:313 on Africa) in comparison to the traditional 'mission' churches of Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism (for example, self-appointed Pastors can often establish a church without external authority or regulation) has partly enabled Pentecostalism's growth in popularity. Indeed, in Africa alone, a continent that has witnessed a particularly rapid expansion of the faith, followers of Pentecostalism are thought to number between 100 and 150 million (Freston, 2007:208). Added to this, it has been suggested that the growth of Pentecostalism in the developing world has been predominantly in poor urban areas, which has led Davis to argue that Pentecostalism is now "arguably the largest, self-organized movement of poor people on the planet" (Davis, 2004:32).

The sheer diversity of what can be termed 'charismatic' or 'Pentecostal', however, means it is not possible to define Pentecostalism using simple bounded characteristics (Jeannerat, 2009:260). Certainly in part due to the lack of hierarchical and administrative structure, as mentioned above, the forms that contemporary born-again churches take (both in their theology and practice) vary considerably around the World, from more established churches such as Elim and Assemblies of God, which *can* often be more ascetic and less 'charismatic' in their worship (although not always), to more recent incarnations such as the 'Prosperity Gospel', or 'Faith Gospel', movement (which are discussed below), which can often be more 'exciting', exuberant, and encourage the accumulation of material wealth. Furthermore, what is termed 'neo-Pentecostal Christianity' in particular refers to the more recent (and growing) body of churches that are independent from established Pentecostal denominations such as the Assemblies of God (The Pew Forum, 2006:2), but which may or may not espouse a Prosperity Gospel message. It has been argued that it is this type of Pentecostalism that has been the cause of most conversions in the Global South (Freston, 2007:207), and

it is neo-Pentecostal Christianity, as opposed to the older established denominations, that is of interest here.

This is a very brief and clumsy comparison, and issues of definitions are discussed in more detail further in the thesis (particularly in Chapter Five), but suffice to say here that what constitutes 'Pentecostalism' is varied. For now however, the 'Prosperity Gospel' movement needs to be explained in more detail as it is crucial to an understanding of contemporary Pentecostalism, especially in the sub-Saharan African context, and with regards to understandings of poverty and wealth amongst its adherents.

The Prosperity Gospel movement

The Prosperity Gospel movement couples the central Pentecostal emphasis on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit with a focus on material and economic prosperity and affluence (Coleman, 2004). Churches that follow the Prosperity Gospel do still have a transcendental and Salvationist message, as with other forms of Pentecostalism, but also have a strong focus on the individual's improved well-being, both in terms of physical health and material wealth.⁶ In Prosperity Gospel Christianity, therefore, giving money to the church in the forms of tithes or offerings is often encouraged, with the promise and expectation of larger reciprocal gifts from God (Coleman, 2004:431): the idea of 'seed faith', in which multiple returns are expected of offerings, sometimes with the exact amount specified (see Coleman, 2004:425) is an example. Thus the accumulation of commodities and material wealth is central to the Prosperity Gospel message (Maxwell, 1998:364), a message which has been seen to actively encourage individual enterprise (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2000:314), and that sees wealth creation as a sign of adherents' religiosity. In these ways, churches that preach the Prosperity Gospel differ from traditionally more ascetic Pentecostal and African 'holiness' movements that preach against such 'worldliness' (Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005:105).

⁶ Indeed, to make the definitional minefield more complex, the Prosperity Gospel movement is not only referred to as the Faith Gospel movement, as already identified, but has also been termed the 'health and wealth' gospel, for not only is it preached that material prosperity is able to be achieved through a relationship with the divine, but so is good health.

As Gifford (2004a:171), explains, success “is to be experienced in every area of life” but in particular with regards to financial prosperity, which does not only mean “sufficiency or adequate wealth..... [b]ut more often, by far, it seems to mean abundant wealth” (ibid.). Indeed, as Meyer has suggested, Prosperity Gospel Christians have not been seen as ‘resisting’ the modern world, but “on the contrary, even seem to eagerly embrace capitalism” (2004:454). As the believer is ‘re-born’ after conversion, he/she is considered to be part of a Christian family that should share in what they believe was Jesus’ ability to overcome this-world suffering, including poverty (see Hasu, 2006:679), and therefore wealth is seen as a not only a blessing from God, but even as a *right* (Hasu, 2006:680).

Religion and development

Pentecostalism has been called a ‘totalising’ religion (Garner, 2000:151): for many of its followers it is not only a religion for Sundays, but is often devoutly practised on an everyday basis. However, despite this, and the fact that it is now widely accepted that culture constitutes practice (Ortner, 1984:153), and that ‘development’, or social change, can never be only externally-driven (Long, 1984), the potential impact of Pentecostal Christianity on the lives of those in the developing world has been little explored in Development Studies (although there has been extensive scholarship on the religion within Social Anthropology). Of course, an interest in the relationship between Christian religious culture in particular and economic thought is not new. Weber (1976 [1930]) most famously argued, in the ‘Protestant Ethic’, that the origins of modern capitalism were rooted within a Calvinist Christian value system,⁷ and Norman Long identified how, in ways similar to Weber’s Calvinists, the belief system of Jehovah’s Witnesses in Zambia enabled them to “evolve new socio-economic roles” (Long, 1984:172) that were compatible with the Colonial modernization of the agrarian economy. And yet, until more recently, it could be argued that the study of religion was the “missing paradigm” in Development Studies itself (Selinger, 2004:525; see also Ver Beek, 2000), despite its continuing concern with matters of

⁷ It is not only the relationship between Christian religious values and economics that has been of interest: anthropological scholarship on Islamic finance (for example, see Maurer, 2005) is testimony to the continuing interest in understanding the relationship between religious beliefs and economic thought or action.

money and economics.

As many scholars have identified (Ver Beek, 2000; Selinger, 2004; Deneulin and Rakodi, 2011), despite a special issue of *World Development* in 1980, there has been a dearth of literature on the nexus between religion and development, particularly by development economists (Ellis and Ter Haar, 2007:389). Both modernization and secularisation theories, inherently interwoven, in addition to Marxist theories, were a large part of this scholarly neglect of the role of religion (Selinger, 2004; Lunn, 2009, Deneulin and Rakodi, 2011). The overriding focus on economic growth in development, at least in the past, relegated cultural aspects of life in the developing world, including that of religion, to the back seat as part of a 'Western' assumption that religion was "no longer required in a 'developed' and 'modern' society" (Selinger, 2004:526). Secularisation was seen as the inevitable corollary of increased economic 'development' (and thus 'modernization') of the countries under the gaze of the West: increasing wealth, it was proposed, would make religion redundant (see Selinger, 2004:527).

More recently, of course, there has been quite widespread dismissal of the idea that secularisation is something that can be observed as increasing (see Selinger, 2004:527; Deneulin and Rakodi, 2011:46, 49). In many of the countries and regions that development studies and development policy have as their focus, religious institutions and religious identifications have experienced something of resurgence in popularity (if indeed, the popularity of religion in many parts of the world ever dwindled). Deneulin and Rakodi (2001:50) rightly point out, therefore, that "[s]ecularization... characterizes relatively few societies in the global South." This religious resurgence (or endurance) has thus led some scholars to call for its integration as a serious focus of interest within development studies and policy-making. Selinger, for example, argues that religion "has to be addressed if development is to be both successful and sustainable" (2004:524), and agrees with Marshall (2001) that ignoring the impact and influence of religion could have dangerous consequences. Ellis and Ter Haar (2004, 2007) have also argued that if we are going to take others' epistemologies seriously, then we also need to take seriously the idea that 'development' might therefore include a "spiritual dimension" (2007:395).

Whilst Selinger recognises that this call to take culture and religion seriously in

development studies is not necessarily new (highlighting Wolfensohn's warning in 1999 as an example⁸), she identifies that the call has not, until more recently perhaps, been heeded, and that when 'culture' is incorporated, it is "seen as side issue to economic growth" (2004:524). However, the seeming resurgence, or enduring appeal, of religion has meant that the role of 'culture' in development is starting to be addressed once more (see Lunn, 2009; Deneulin and Rakodi, 2011), so much so that Deneulin and Rakodi (2011:46) suggest that an "acknowledgement of its presence is unavoidable."

Selinger (2004) does argue, however, that religion never completely disappeared off the radar of social scientists interested in 'progression' or 'development', but that influenced by Weberian ideas of the protestant ethic, understandings of religion have been primarily conceptualised in terms of as a potentially motivating force *for the individual* (as opposed to the collective) (see also Deneulin and Rakodi, 2011).⁹ Selinger thus suggests that we need to move away from focusing on individual spirituality, and that instead, "social theory needs to progress from the current view of religion as something private, and make it a public issue instead" (Selinger, 2004:534; see also Deneulin and Rakodi, 2011:49).¹⁰

However, I suggest that it not necessarily possible, or even desirable, to separate these two facets of religion, the public and the private. To make claims about the more collective, political manifestations of religion, the spiritual sense, including issues of transcendence and cosmology, for example, also need to be understood: just as it would be short-sighted to understand religion ahistorically, it would also be myopic to understand it without an appreciation of the individual spiritual beliefs of its followers. This is not to say, however, that the private, individual

⁸ James D. Wolfensohn was then President of the World Bank, and expressed that "[h]owever you define culture, it is increasingly clear that those of us working in the field of sustainable development ignore it at our peril" (WFDD, 2001, as cited in Selinger, 2004:524).

⁹ For example, she writes about the work of Grondona (2000), who argued that certain values such as 'punctuality' and 'efficiency' were considered to be more important for sustainable development than more woolly moral codes such as 'justice' and 'love' (Selinger, 2004:534), and therefore it was suggested that what developing nations needed was a kind of 'neo-Protestant' Weberian work ethic that was thought to harbour the ethical codes which engender economic growth.

¹⁰ In this form, Selinger accepts Haynes' suggestion that 'religion' can be understood in two ways: "first, in a spiritual sense, where one is concerned with transcendence, sacredness and ultimacy, and second, in a material sense, where religion defines and unifies social, political or community-based groups or movements" (2004:524-525, following Haynes, 2002).

level can necessarily be conflated with the spiritual. Individuals can of course be motivated by religious beliefs and practices in far less ethereal ways. The Zambian Jehovah's Witnesses that Long wrote about, for example, were as much inspired by media representations of a material 'paradise', maybe even more so, than by a spiritual message (Long, 1996:44).

However, in their call for a scholarly turn in development studies that takes religion seriously, Selinger (2004), and to an extent, Lunn (2009), seem to want to assert the positive benefits that religion may bring. Tyndale (2003), for example, in a sweeping and broad generalisation, argues that faith-based communities are better able and better placed to work 'at the grassroots' with those in poverty. A strong proponent of the 'empowerment' that religion may bring, Tyndale cherry-picks examples of religious communities bringing observable benefits to their communities. Furthermore, Tyndale (2003), amongst other scholars (see Lunn, 2009), advocates for incorporating religious ethics into development policy itself, in an attempt to build a more 'holistic' vision of development, particularly because the separation between the religious and the secular spheres of life has, it can be argued, been a dualism that has existed more in 'Western' thought than in the lived lives of people in the developing World.

Such arguments, I suggest, can be seen as limited and prescriptive attempts at re-inserting the issue of religion into development studies. Instead, I suggest a more open discourse is needed, one that does not necessarily *look for* the beneficial (or negative) effects of adherence to religious belief systems, but an academic discussion that is open to assessing the relationship between religion and the contemporary world – both positive and negative - and how it may impact on 'development', or human flourishing, in its broadest sense.

Situating the research: Pentecostalism and issues of poverty

Anthropological scholarship on Pentecostalism in the developing world has grown considerably in the past two decades, far too extensively to include here. But within this growing body of literature, there are two areas that in particular are salient to this thesis, and worth outlining: firstly, scholarship dealing with Pentecostalism as somehow bringing benefits, or being 'empowering' to converts;

and secondly, scholarship dealing with Pentecostalism's discourses of poverty and social change.

Pentecostalism as a force for change?

There has been a corpus of scholarship that has suggested that conversion to Pentecostalism has real tangible benefits in reducing material poverty, or at least enabling those who follow the faith to be able to cope with it. Some more functionalist perspectives have highlighted that conversion to Pentecostalism entails positive behavioural changes that lead to improved economic wellbeing. Conversion of men in particular, and the subsequent adherence to conservative values of family and church life, and a prohibition on drinking and extra-marital relations, has been seen to enable a "discipline that many men cite as essential to reorienting their lives, stabilizing their homes, and earning a living" (Pfeiffer et al, 2007:696; see also Smilde, 1994; Brusco, 1995; Mariz and Machado, 1997; Chesnut, 1997; Maxwell, 1999), with the suggestion that the conversion of men to Pentecostal Christianity can thus subsequently benefit the whole family. Scholars have therefore also argued that women in particular have stood to benefit from conversion to Pentecostalism, especially in those societies characterised by patriarchy and masochism. An apparent emphasis within Pentecostalism on women submitting to their husbands *only* when they act in a 'Christian' manner, has led to suggestions that domestic life becomes somehow gender neutral (Cucchiari, 1990; Smilde, 1994; Brusco, 1995), and that this is in fact, "the classic source of female power in Pentecostalism" (Burdick, 1993:114). Furthermore, the apparent accessibility of religious practice (such as speaking in tongues, prophecy, faith healing, and preaching) to women as well as men (Cox, 1995) has led some to argue that Pentecostal spaces are places in which converts, particularly women, can find transformative 'power', environments and institutions where those that might have been previously 'silenced' by their marginal position(s) in society can possibly re-gain their 'voice' or space (see for example Seeley, 1984; Chesnut, 1997; Maxwell, 1999). It has been seen, therefore, as religious practice that apparently "responds to women's individual agency" (Pfeiffer et al, 2007:696, from research in Mozambique). There has been a pattern then, of asserting that women's participation in the Pentecostal church increases their 'power' or 'agency', that it is somehow 'empowering'. My own previous research on female

converts to Pentecostal Christianity from Theravada Buddhism in Thailand (Bremner, 2007) has suggested that the extent to which Pentecostalism can be seen as 'empowering' for women is limited, but these more functionalist perspectives of course remain.

Not limited to converts in marriage-like relationships, however, there have also been suggestions that participation in Pentecostal churches can lead to greater egalitarianism across different social groups, particularly between the generations (see Marshall, 1993:224-225; Martin, 2002). Furthermore, it has been suggested that involvement in Pentecostalism can enable greater mutual assistance and social capital, not only from vertical relationships with the church (see Stewart-Gambino and Wilson, 1997 with regards to Latin America) but also in terms of horizontal relationships with fellow worshippers (see also Woodberry, 2009). As Chesnut (1997:104) expresses it, "left to fend for themselves by an indifferent, if not antagonistic state, the urban poor must create their own mutual aid associations", and indeed Rohregger (2009) has suggested that the Pentecostal networks of rural-urban migrants to Lilongwe in Malawi assist in their integration into their new urban environment.

Discourses of poverty and wealth in Pentecostal churches

Aside from these more functional analyses, however, there have been other enquiries as to how Pentecostalism as a knowledge system deals with issues of poverty and wealth, specifically since much of its appeal is based in developing world countries. Evidence from Africa highlights that a dichotomous cosmology of good versus evil (Mate, 2002; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005) entails that neo-Pentecostal churches understand misfortunate events contributing to poverty as being caused by ancestral spirits, malevolent spirits that are thought to be embodied not in the individuals, but also within the continent itself (see Maxwell, 1998). Maxwell has highlighted how Prosperity Gospel movement churches thus consider increased wealth as evidence of Godly deliverance from misfortune (Maxwell, 2001:316).¹¹ This form of Christianity is one in which the Bible is thought to be relevant to the contemporary world and in which God is thought to be able to intervene and

¹¹ Indeed, Maxwell's work identifies that the Zimbabwe Assembly of God Africa (ZAOGA) ideology therefore rejects international aid as a route to poverty alleviation: to the church's leader, no matter how much money is given to Africa in aid, nothing will work as long as "Africa is remaining under the Spirit of Poverty" (Maxwell, 1998:360).

make a difference to the here and now (see Gifford, 2004a), and therefore it is no surprise that in these accounts the means to poverty alleviation are thus seen primarily through Christian means, rather than non-church institutions.

Furthermore, it has been identified that Prosperity Gospel churches propound a discourse of believers having a spiritual 'right' to material and financial accumulation (Hasu, 2006; Gifford, 2009), and the means to such 'success' and 'victory' is partly considered to be through such methods as motivation and self-belief (Gifford, 2004a:172), in addition to Pentecostal 'deliverance' (from those malevolent spirits) through rituals such as faith healing and intercessory prayers (Maxwell, 1998:358; 2001:316-317). Furthermore, scholars have identified that it is believed that it is primarily on an *individual* level, rather than a collective one, that it is believed that change can occur (Mate, 2002; Gifford, 2004a). Indeed Gifford explains that within this conceptualisation of a more individualised method of wealth generation, if a Christian is not successful, then "there is something very wrong" (Gifford, 2004a:171; see also Gifford, 2009:115 with regards to Kenya).

In these ways, both as a way of thinking about the world that can understand wealth in terms of the spiritual, and in which the individual is the primary agent of change, Pentecostalism has been seen as one of many increasingly popular contemporary institutions or social phenomena (amongst those that could be termed 'religious' and those that could not) that deal with money, wealth, and poverty through supernatural lens, potentially as a response to, and a way of coping with, the confusion of the economics of modernity and the seemingly instant riches that few acquire but that are far out of reach of the many (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2000; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005). Simultaneously contemporary Pentecostalism is also seen as product of, and not just a reaction to, modernity (Maxwell, 1998:360; Meyer 2004:459), particularly in comparison to older African Independent Churches (AICs) which were considered to attract followers due their more 'authentically African' forms of worship (Meyer, 2004:448). Indeed, Robbins (2001:902) actually calls Pentecostal Christianity a "culture of modernity", a faith which offers believers a more globalised identity, and one which is more detached from 'tradition' than the AICs.

Some scholarship has, therefore, considered Pentecostal Christianity, especially in

Africa, through more critical lens. Gifford takes a historical and critical stance regarding the rise in popularity of deliverance services, for example, and suggests that the association of the Prosperity Gospel movement with deliverance in the 1990s was “probably because the faith gospel was not delivering all that it promised” (Gifford, 2004a:172), alluding to the potential limits of the golden promises that the Prosperity Gospel offers to its followers. Furthermore, Mate has suggested that because Zimbabwean Pentecostalism attributes poverty to ‘laziness’ which, it is thought, is caused by demonic possession, it is not possible for believers “to critique poverty as a socio-political and economic process” (2002:552), a sentiment reflected by Asamoah-Gyadu, who argues that Pentecostalism in Ghana reduces congregants’ critical awareness of wider socio-economic injustices and that “[s]uch over-spiritualization of Africa’s problems often blinds its advocates to the very structural factors accounting for the misery of the continent” (2005:107).

It was from an awareness of this scholarship that has debated the potential benefits of practicing Pentecostal faith that an interest in this research topic arose, and sparked a concern with addressing how poverty, wealth, and ‘moving on up’ were experienced in a more grounded analysis of Pentecostalism in Africa, as viewed as a ‘vernacular’ religion (to use the term coined by Primiano, 1995). Although certainly in some settings the Pentecostal church attracts mainly a middle class clientele, it is also very much the case that, especially within the sub-Saharan African context, many disadvantaged people find the born-again faith compelling and persuasive, people “for whom Faith teachings provide a potent vision of personal, or sometimes collective, transformation and empowerment” (Coleman, 2004:423). The claims that Pentecostalism makes can indeed seem so *promising* to those at the bottom. This is then precisely the concern at the heart of this thesis: against the backdrop of an apparent renewed interest in development studies in understanding the role of religion, can we talk about adherence to Pentecostal Christianity in urban Uganda as being transformative for believers, as being a practice that might bring about ‘agency’? Does involvement in such a religious milieu engender relationships, concepts, and understandings about the world that are beneficial for the well-being (especially the economic well-being) of those converts?

Research Questions

The research questions that underpin this thesis are, therefore, as follows:

1. Can belief and participation in Pentecostal Christianity in Kampala be said to engender transformative 'agency' for its followers?
2. How does such belief and participation in Pentecostal Christianity have an impact on those believers' responses to poverty, wealth and their attempts to mediate their (especially economic) future wellbeing?
 - a. What are the everyday means Pentecostal Christians in Kampala use in their attempts to mediate that future economic wellbeing?
 - b. What are believers' concepts of the definitions and causes of poverty and wealth, and how do they think it is possible to move out of poverty?

This thesis is not about whether, by virtue of being Pentecostal in Uganda, believers are more wealthy or not, but it is about how being born-again may or may not give them the *means* to improve their economic well-being, in its broadest sense. However, rather than taking a purely functionalist perspective, in which it could be analysed whether these means do, or will, produce increased economic well-being, a methodologically dubious project anyway, this thesis is about exploring how Pentecostals in Uganda *perceive* their present and future, and how whether both their perception, and then the ways in which they act to mediate their futures, can be seen as engendering relationships and understandings about the world that *may* have positive outcomes.

The overall argument of this thesis is that as scholars, and development policy makers and practitioners, we need to be careful in assuming that adherence to, and involvement in, this increasingly popular religious community necessarily brings increased 'agency' or 'empowerment' to enact beneficial changes or improvements and transformations to economic well-being. Using a concept of agency understood in relation to dynamics of power, I suggest that adherence to Pentecostal Christianity, for my informants at least, did little to enable them to develop tools, resources, and relationships that might have helped to alleviate

their poverty in the longer-term. I argue that despite some evidence of psychological catharsis, and some mutual support networks, a series of practices and discourses related to their faith worked together to inhibit believers in being able to question both the this-world causes of poverty, and potential remedies, and also to inhibit their abilities to confront issues of injustice that in themselves compounded the undesirable situations that informants experienced. In this regard, and following the work of Soran Reader (2007), I suggest we need to re-assess the focus of our enquiry in social science, and especially in development studies, from an over-emphasis on 'agency' and instead allow for an analysis and subject of enquiry that recognizes 'patience', and issues of oppression and being acted on, without this making the subjects of our enquiry any less 'human'.

In agreement with Lauterbach, who argues that some studies have "overemphasized the emancipating potential of the Pentecostal churches" (2010:260), I use the case of Pentecostalism in Kampala to suggest that we should be cautious in development studies in being too ready to embrace the idea of religion, or religious institutions, as being of benefit to the economic well-being of those who follow them. The field of religious worship and religious institutions is, of course, enormously complex and varied, and it is without a doubt that some religious institutions have been of great material and psychological benefit to some followers. But without an analysis that takes into account issues of power we might well be guilty of being far too quick to see religious institutions in the developing world as an alternative to Government, and other institutions and forms of collective action, in bringing about social change for the disenfranchised.

This thesis thus explores these research questions in three separate but inter-related subject areas. Firstly, in Chapter Six, I highlight the use of particular forms of every day speech called 'positive confessions' – positive declarations (requests, and commands) about the past, present, and future, which leave no room for doubt - and the ways in which they are used by Pentecostal Christians in their attempts to control and mediate their futures. I argue that such speech forms may *seem* to be displays of agency on the part of the speaker, but instead I suggest that such apparently agentive forms are tempered by multiple authorship (of the Pentecostal audience, and of God) and restrictions on their efficacy by a divine time-scale that cannot (and should not) be questioned by the speaker, whilst at

the same time making the born-again Christian *feel* that they have control over the vagaries of life in Kampala.

Secondly, in Chapter Seven, I highlight the ways in which my informants not only conceptualised their own poverty and how they thought it was possible to move into a state of wealth, but also how they dealt with particular challenges. I argue that the ways in which Pentecostal Christians in Kampala understand wealth (or the lack of it) is complex, and not limited to 'magical' understandings, and includes more pedestrian concepts of cause-and-effect. Nevertheless, I do suggest that in addition to positive confessions and participation in the Pentecostal economy (namely giving to church), there is a belief that born-again Christians have to 'train' the mind to be the moral recipient of God's blessings. The means with which change is thought to be possible are thoroughly individualised, to the point at which if things do not quite work out as planned, it is the Christian himself who is thought to be at fault. Furthermore, through highlighting some of the challenges that I observed informants' facing in their lives, I suggest that the means they had at their disposal to deal with these problems were not only inadequate, but continued to reconstruct issues of injustice and the inability to enact change, in part due to the focus on the individual as the primary agent of change – and of misfortune.

Thirdly, in Chapter Eight I explore in more detail certain relationships that develop between members of the Pentecostal community in Kampala. I highlight a group of young men, who I call 'Career Christians', who seek to make an income through involvement in Pentecostal Christianity, as an alternative to secular forms of employment, and who can thereby be seen to attempt to climb a pyramid of patronage. I compare them to other interviewees who continued to carry out work as 'clients' to wealthy members of their church, concluding that involvement for neither group is necessarily conducive to their longer-term security or economic well-being, but instead perpetuates unequal and unaccountable patronage relations and the acceptance of neo-patrimonial forms of governance.

The research questions are broad, and the substantive chapters that seek to answer them, as outlined above, do not pretend to be able to definitively address every facet of life as a Pentecostal in Kampala that might have some bearing on whether following this religion can engender transformative 'agency'. In

particular, whereas this thesis does not take a specifically gender lens, there would certainly be scope to do so in further explorations of this topic. How the Pentecostal church deals with issues of gender-based violence, for example, is something that would be worthy of further research; likewise, I suggest there is a need for more research on the relationship between sexuality and tradition to be explored, especially in light of the recent heated debate in Uganda over issues of non-heterosexuality. However, despite the limitations of the scope of this thesis, the themes that are explored in the three substantive chapters have been chosen as they are based on analysis of grounded research in Kampala, and because it became clear from interview transcripts and ethnographic notes that they were all repetitive subjects.

Before these three main substantive chapters, however, are four shorter chapters that it has been necessary to include to contextualise the content and the argument of the overall thesis. In Chapter Two, I outline my conceptual framework, focusing in particular on issues of 'agency', and in Chapter Three, I write about the research design and methodology on which the research that underpins this thesis was based. Chapter Four 'sets the scene' as it were, by offering some general contextualisation of life in 'Kiwera' (a pseudonym), the neighbourhood of Kampala in which many of my informants (and I) lived, as an example of a fairly typical way of living for many in the city. I then continue by highlighting the characteristics of the Pentecostal church scene in Kampala more broadly, before discussing the two churches that formed something of a backdrop to the study, in more detail.

In Chapter Five, I make something of a detour in subject matter before embarking on the three main substantive chapters. One of the concerns in this thesis is that we need to be careful in making assumptions about the forms that Pentecostal practice takes, and the ways in which its followers appropriate it, and how their identities are thus formed in relation to their belief systems. Chapter Five, therefore, addresses the issue of the sheer variety of Pentecostal Christian practice in Kampala, and how it is difficult to make definitive distinctions. It goes further to identify the fluidity of religious identity in the city, using findings from interviews with those people who I interviewed who originally self-identified as non-Pentecostal to suggest that not only should we be cautious in making

definitive conclusions about 'Pentecostalism', but also that the influence of all the *different forms* of Pentecostalism in Uganda may be being more widely felt to include those that we might not initially identify as being born-again.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

As already noted in the introductory chapter, in this thesis I will argue that we need to be cautious as observers and analysts of religious institutions and religious change, and how they might relate to what we might call 'development' or 'progress', in being too quick to identify forms of religious identification, subjectivities, and practices, as somehow being 'empowering', or giving 'agency' to those individuals (or indeed, collectives of individuals). But what is meant by such terms as 'agency', and 'transformation'? All are heavily deployed terms in social science, but at the same time all are contested, multi-layered, and have differing interpretations. As Moore and Sanders point out, the concepts and theories that we use in social science "not only frame the questions to be asked, but actually construct objects of enquiry" (2006:9), and therefore we need to be careful in how we use these different concepts, such as 'agency', for the way in which we view them necessarily has an impact on our interpretations and analyses.

Transformation and the limits of agency

At the heart of my interest with Pentecostals' ways of considering their own poverty and future is a concern with the concept of 'agency', and how it relates to issues of transformation. The rise of debate about agency in social science of course grew as a result of critiques of theories of structure and domination that were seen as being too deterministic, the leviathan of structure being all-encompassing in its direction of social worlds, and which was seen as neglecting individuals' abilities to potentially shape their own lives (Giddens, 1984:16). Concepts of structure as developed by social scientists prior to practice theorists such as Giddens, Sahlins, and Bourdieu, were therefore described by Ortner as "theories of constraint" in which "[h]uman behaviour was shaped, molded, ordered, and defined by external social and cultural forms and formations: by culture, by mental structures, by capitalism" (Ortner, 2006:1-2). These criticisms

did not disappear with the coming of practice theory, however: Foucault was also criticised for treating people merely as passive, “docile bodies” (Foucault, 1977:138) upon which was shaped cultural power (McNay, 1992:3, 12; Ahearn, 2001:117), for example.¹²

These criticisms should be seen within their historical context, as part of social scientists’ interest in asserting the humanity, and indeed, the potential resistance, of the subaltern in the face of dominating powers (see Keane, 1997:674), trying to find space in that leviathan of ‘structure’ in which human beings can and do construct their own worlds on terms in some ways other to the dominant hegemonic culture, and potentially develop a consciousness of opposition to those powers that attempt to control them.

But of course, as is now well ascertained, social life is never only determined by *either* the agency of individuals *or* a dominant structure: the structure / agency division is indeed a false dichotomy. As Ortner succinctly expresses it, “history makes people, but people make history” (Ortner, 2003:277): the relationship between agency and structure is, therefore, a symbiotic one. The structure / agency nexus must be seen as state of constant relations between the two concepts along a spectrum, in which agency and structure continuously (and often unconsciously on the part of the individual) mediate to create human experiences; a dialectical rather than oppositional relationship (Ortner, 2006). Within this understanding, the peripheries of the spectrum – either complete structure or complete agency - can never be reached, and thus the limits of agency, and of structure, are ever present.

But whereas this debate is useful for understanding the relationship between structure and agency in a more abstract and broad level, a more detailed definition of agency is needed if we are to be able identify when individuals could be said to exhibit more, or possess more, agency. Ahearn’s definition of agency as “the socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (2001:112) could be useful: in defining agency in these terms, Ahearn identifies individuals’ own constructions of their worlds whilst also stressing that the possibilities for agency, and indeed for

¹² Although McNay suggests Foucault’s later volumes of History of Sexuality paid more attention to “self-determining agents” (1992:4) through focusing on how individuals disciplined *themselves* in Greek and Roman antiquity.

action, are created within wider social structures. Ahearn thus also gives a more open definition of 'act', and this definition therefore allows for more recent developments in the way that scholars have conceptualised the term 'agency'. Work such as that of Saba Mahmood on Women's mosque movements in Cairo, for example, (2001, and 2005), remind us that people can (and do) uphold forces of domination and hegemonies when alternatives are available.¹³ Not only might agents reconstruct hegemony through what Bourdieu (1990) calls 'doxa' (taken-for-granted knowledge that is beyond reflection), but they might also more consciously mould their subjectivities and identities.¹⁴ In asserting then that individuals are not simply fatalistically determined by hegemonic structures, in acknowledging some 'agency', it must be remembered that the term is certainly not necessarily synonymous with resistance (Ahearn, 2001:116; Mahmood, 2001:203).

Returning to Ahearn's definition of agency as the "capacity to act", however, it has been suggested that it is not enough to identify that people *have* something called agency and consider this to be conclusive (Parker, 2005:3). What is *done* with that agency is crucial. The question is less of one about whether an individual has agency, but of how much (not that it can be quantified), and what do they do with it? To suggest that an individual might not 'have' agency, therefore, would be misleading, and indeed it has been acknowledged that 'agency' is, in some form a universal: as Ortner says, it is "part of a fundamental humanness" (2006:136).

Instead, this thesis asks questions about whether that agency embodied within an individual is enough to be positively transformative of their social world. As acknowledged, transformation can happen through inaction or action, and thus for Ahearn's definition to work, we would need to take the concept of 'act' in a more broad sense to include both inaction as well as action. In this way Ortner's definition of agency could be more useful. She suggests we consider agency as "the making and remaking of larger social and cultural formations" (2006:134),

¹³ Using Williams' (1977:112) concept of hegemony as something that is "renewed, recreated, defended and modified" but *simultaneously* "resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not all its own" which aptly captures this sense of agency as both resisting and defending dominant structure.

¹⁴ Karp's (1986:137) distinction, therefore, between an 'actor' (whose "action is rule-governed") and 'agent' (who is "engaged in action that is constitutive"), is redundant: if Ahearn's definition of agency, as a "socioculturally mediated capacity to act" is accepted, a person can simultaneously be an 'actor' and an 'agent'.

which she sees as part of what Giddens calls 'structuration'. This concept therefore takes a more processual approach, putting 'agency' back on the continuum of structure/agency, and seeing agency less as a disembodied 'thing'.

But even if we take this approach, does this 'capacity to act' or this 'making and remaking of larger... cultural formations' entail a degree of intentionality? Do agents have to consciously decide to, or intend to, take action (or inaction) for it to be considered a display of agency? Firstly, they should not be conflated as one and the same 'entity': as Ortner rightly makes us aware, intentionality does not necessarily lead to an intended outcome anyway, for the relationship between the two is complex and external forces interrupt, intervene, and redirect courses of action (2006:132). However, at the same time I find Ortner's suggestion that to be 'too soft' on agency might miss the point, and fail to differentiate between "routine practices on the one hand, and "agency" seen precisely as intentionalized action on the other" (2006:132), certainly worth considering. In this way Ortner advocates bringing intentionality and motivations back into a conception of agency.

To understand transformation, then, we need to understand not only how agents might have strivings and motivations, but how this relates to outcomes; how these motivations and outcomes mediate along the structure/agency continuum to flourish into positive transformations, or be constrained, or develop into transformations that might uphold the hegemonic power. In these ways, therefore, it is the relationship between what could be called the agent and those externalities that needs to be analysed, and crucially it is the power at play within those relationships that needs to be understood.

Ortner's (2006) conceptualisation of agency persuasively elucidates how power is inherent to this symbiotic relationship between agency and structure. Although Ortner is an advocate of a practice theory approach, she criticises Giddens and Bourdieu, for example, for not allowing the issue of power to take "centre stage" in their writings on agency (2006:5). I find Ortner's reasons for injecting a power analysis into practice theory compelling. She suggests that practice theorists neglect to see that the individual is inherently integrated in a web of relationships – some constraining, some empowering – but instead, she suggests, the relationship between agency and structure is seen more as one between a

“heroic” individual and a “borg-like” structure (2006:130). Ortner might be too quick to suggest, however, that practice theorists did not deal with issues of power. Moore and Sanders (2006), for example, would argue that Bourdieu was indeed influenced by a Marxist materiality that indeed saw that “human make history – and indeed create themselves – but not under conditions of their own making” (2006:15, following Marx, 1963), and in doing so was strongly in favour of a potential unearthing of power structures that would have been hidden if the emphasis was more strongly on individual agency. However, despite this, Ortner still has a point in generally advocating for an understanding of structure and agency within a conception of power, and an understanding of how relationships constitute the dialectical relationship between structure and agency. Some of these relationships are, of course, “relations of (would-be) solidarity” (2006:131), but others are those that are characterised by power imbalances and inequality, and crucially Ortner suggests that these types of relationships are always present. The relationship between structure and agency must therefore always be understood as a power dynamic.¹⁵

Thinking again about agency

Despite Ortner’s well-developed and compelling argument that in order to understand the structure / agency continuum we must also be prepared to view social relationships within an understanding of power and domination, work by Soran Reader (2007) takes the issue of agency one step further, by suggesting that

¹⁵ ‘Power’ of course is not a simple bounded concept. As Ortner recognises, different ‘power theorists’ understand power on a spectrum, from Foucault’s more totalising theory in which power is “socially ubiquitous” (Ortner, 2006:7), to Scott’s “less mentally invasive” understanding in which people display forms of conscious resistance, at the other extreme. Somewhere in between Ortner places Williams’ more balanced theory, who in following a Gramscian notion of hegemony, considers power to be “never total and absolute”, something that is always part of an historical process, and hence informed and shaped by the past but also allowing for ‘emergent’ future change; an idea of power in which the agents of that change always have “at least some degree of “penetration” (if not virtually full awareness, as Scott would argue) into the conditions of their domination” (Ortner, 2006:6). It is not the aim of this thesis to delve into different concepts of power, but suffice to say here that firstly, I understand power to be simply “something to be exercised in the course of social relations” (Moore and Sanders, 2006:13), and therefore an influence in all aspects of relationships, but secondly, that a more grounded analysis is preferred, acknowledging that, as with structure, ‘power’ is both pervasive, but also never total.

the scholarly focus on agency serves in part to neglect issues of oppression and times when people can be seen as being 'acted upon' rather than displaying agentive action (or non-action).

Reader suggests that there has been an 'agential bias' in scholarship in which conceptions of personhood have been predominantly linked to ideas of agency, arguing that personhood has been conceptualised far too readily in terms of an agent who has intentional action (2007:583). She suggests that we need to look again at how we understand personhood and instead of always conceptualising persons in terms of being 'agents', Reader argues, we must also pay due consideration to issues of them being what she calls 'patients'. Reader uses this term less in the more everyday usage that would refer to patients receiving medical care, for example, but in terms of the idea of a 'patient' as an opposition to the idea of agent. 'Patience' then, in the way that Reader uses it, is the state of being acted upon, and she suggests that this is "as inalienable and central to personhood as 'agency' is more commonly assumed to be" (Reader, 2007:581).

Furthermore, this oppositional conception of agency / patience is supported in her work by further oppositional pairs, of capability / incapability, choice / necessity, and independence / dependence, all of which work together to support Reader's argument that scholarship has predominantly focused on the idea of a person as an 'agent', and therefore one that has capabilities, choice, and independence. The opposites of these – being in a state of patience, incapability, necessity and dependence – have, according to Reader, been considered as features that make an individual somehow *less* of a person.

She astutely highlights that those states of being that are seen as privations to full personhood – patience, incapability, necessity, and dependence – are in fact states that are constant in some form. At all times we can be both seen to display 'agency' but also be acted upon, we can have independent choice but also be dependent on others, and so it goes on. To Reader, this agential bias towards a denial of these 'privations' is so deeply ingrained in scholarship, however, that "even compassionate thinkers strongly committed to acknowledging dependencies and meeting needs, still think our political task must be to 'enable' anyone who is passive, suffering, subject to necessities, etc. to get a bit more agency, and to become, thereby, more of a person" (2007:580).

At the heart then of Reader's suggestion that we move away from this *search* for 'agency' in the persons we study, is a concern that those who are acted upon, who might indeed be called 'victims' are shied away from in our analysis, in our strivings to stress the 'agency' of the 'subaltern' in spite of the challenges they may face (and indeed, as if these academic writings are in themselves a process of their 'liberation'). To Reader then, to talk about someone being a patient means to "refer to the silenced and 'othered' passive aspects of personhood" (Reader, 2007:528), but in her thorough analysis of issues of personhood, patiency (as with incapability, necessity, and dependence) is not a state of being that can be *replaced* by agency; it is instead, a necessary part of being.

'Agency' and 'capabilities'

In Chapter One it was acknowledged that, following a lack of attention to the issue of religion in development studies, more recently there has been an increased interest in the subject. Part of the reason for this renewed focus has been the widespread acceptance within the discipline that a wider conception of individual progress than one based on purely quantitative indicators of economic wealth (or poverty) was needed (see Deneulin and Rakodi, 2011). Instead, less econometric-focused conceptions of human progress, from the post-structuralist era of development, such as 'human flourishing' and 'wellbeing' have become popular, of course. Such concepts acknowledge that it is not only an increase in economic wealth that development should necessarily be aiming to achieve (or indeed whether this should be an aim at all), but a multitude of factors that make life bearable, satisfactory, and hopefully even happy, for those in the developing world (and indeed, beyond). Included in those factors that are thought to increase individuals' wellbeing were religious beliefs, of course for those that held them (Narayan et al, 2000). In particular, Sen and Nussbaum's influential 'capability approach' has also taken on the issue of holistic wellbeing, and one that leaves space for religion to be considered as a potentially beneficial factor (see Deneulin and Rakodi, 2011). The basis of this approach, in which development should be trying to improve the things that supposed beneficiaries value the most, therefore

potentially leaves room for religion as a part of development.¹⁶

The focus then in the capability approach was on people having the capacity (what some could read as the agency) to do things, rather than focusing on the actual action itself. Of course, the issue of capabilities and wellbeing, and of a move away from purely econometric measures of progress (which in itself is not being criticised), was also caught up with the ‘agentive turn’, and with a disciplinary interest in asserting the apparent power of the ‘agent’ (the person), of ‘giving back voice’ to the subaltern (hence indeed the title of Narayan et al’s study was in fact *The Voices of the Poor*). It in this regard, therefore, that Reader (2007) has also criticised these ideas of capabilities. In particular, Sen’s idea of capabilities as ‘freedom’ – that for someone to have capabilities they must also be able to have the choice to put that capability into action - is criticised by Reader as again stressing an agential bias in the conceptualisation of personhood (see Reader, 2007:585), an idea of agency that is strongly related to ideas of freedom and rational choice. To Reader, this agential bias, such as displayed by Sen, “means the free choosing person is implicitly assumed to be able to know the options, to be able to contemplate them in thought, to deliberate over them, and to elect an option to act” (2007:586), something Reader finds problematic, even “pernicious” (2007:587). For in Reader’s opinion, these ideas of agency are caught up with the idea of the person as independent, someone who is less constrained by externalities and for whom “their own decision is enough to actualise the capability” (2007:588). Indeed, Wallman (in writing about behaviours of risk and health in Kampala) also suggests that notions of capability run the risk of relying “too heavily on local capacity to go it alone, and to exaggerate an individual’s power” (1996:230-231).

However, this detour with regards to capabilities is not the main point of interest, although it does raise some interesting questions about the discourse of ‘freedom’, and places further Reader’s concern with the agentive turn within the scope of development studies. Instead, the key concern for this thesis then is about how both practices and relationships that are developed by followers of born-again Christianity in Kampala may or may not create space for transformative agency. If, as Ortner has suggested, “agency is differentially

¹⁶ Even if Sen himself might not explicitly state that due to his concern about issues of religion in conflict (see Deneulin and Rakodi, 2011:48).

shaped, and also nourished or stunted, under different regimes of power” (2006:137), does involvement in born-again Christianity in Kampala ‘nourish’ transformative agency, or ‘stunt’ it?

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Epistemological concerns and introduction

As Deneulin and Rakodi point out, incorporating the religious and spiritual beliefs of *individuals* in the scope of our study calls for a reassessment of our epistemological and methodological concerns in development studies: the sheer diversity of religious meanings and identifications entails that meanings need to be understood only with their discursive contexts (Deneulin and Rakodi, 2011:46, following Casanova, 2009). In this regard, I suggest that a quantitative and positivist approach to the study of religious identification and its relations with wider social phenomena is fraught with problems of validity and interpretation. It is not enough to use proxy indicators such as church attendance to make claims about religious observance, or assertions of a belief in a spiritual being to make claims about religious identification, for example, and in such ways statistics of religion are always a broad guide, rather than a 'true' reflection of what is really believed or how people really identify.

It can therefore be seen that it is more preferable, and more valid, to research religion using a more hermeneutical and interpretative stance. Hermeneutics, what Kanbur and Shaffer describe as "the interpretive understanding of intersubjective meanings" (2007:185), acknowledges the social construction of meanings, and allows for fluidity and conflict in the meanings people attribute to their lives. However, Keesing (1987) is right to suggest that we should err on the side of caution with interpretive anthropology, as it can be "dependent on interpretive gifts, leaps of intuition, virtuosity in seeing hidden meanings" (1987:161). Simply put, he cautions against a purely interpretive approach because "[c]ultures are webs of mystifications as well as signification" (1987:161) and therefore such an approach can be based on far too subjective understandings. Keesing thus supports a more materialist and historical form of study, one that tries to understand cultural meanings, but an approach to

research that at the same time asks “who creates and defines cultural meanings” (1987:161-2). He does not reject the interpretive quest in social science, but influenced by both Bourdieu and Marx, he suggests that we incorporate analyses of power into the research process, arguing that some anthropologists “in the name of cultural relativism or interpretive detachment, have been strangely blind to the political consequences of cultures as ideologies” (Keesing, 1987:166). This manner of interpretive social science that is aware of power is therefore a necessary extension of a conceptual framework in which an analysis of power is considered central to any analysis of ‘agency’, as outlined previously.

As part of this interest in conducting research that has an awareness of power, Reader offers a useful insight. She suggests that scholarly bias towards the agentic conception, as discussed in the previous chapter, has not derived from a “study of persons as they actually are, but rather from a bias toward the active and powerful which has complex political origins” (2007:592). In this regard then, this thesis instead takes an ethnographic and adherent-centred approach to methodology, and rather than focusing on the churches, or the elite, it focuses on the believers (or followers) of born-again Christianity in Kampala, and in particular on those living with material and financial insecurities.

The fieldwork then consisted of 14 months of qualitative data collection in Kampala between September 2008 and November 2009, in addition to a scoping visit between January and April 2008. The core of the research consists of longitudinal interviews with 39 residents of Kampala who self-identified as Pentecostal, in addition to interviewing 13 residents who did not self-identify as Pentecostal, and carrying out ethnographic observation of church services and cell groups. I based sampling selection and ethnographic observation on two churches: ‘Alpha Tabernacle’, which was introduced at the beginning of Chapter One through the vignette of a lunchtime sermon, and ‘Kiweraanga Life Fellowship’. Both church names are pseudonyms. Because of the focus on the concepts of believers rather than doctrine, I also lived in the vicinity of one of the churches, Kiweraanga Life Fellowship, throughout the research period, in a local ‘slum’ neighbourhood which, as identified in Chapter One, I have given the pseudonym ‘Kiweraanga’.

The methods used, including information about transcription, my research

assistant, and ethical considerations are explained in more detail in Appendix A. Lists of interviews and church events that I attended are detailed in Appendix B and C, respectively. In this rest of this chapter I outline the reasons for using a case-study design, briefly discuss some issues of reflexivity, and outline the methodology, before moving on to Chapter Four, in which I set the scene of life in Kiweranga, in addition to the characteristics of Alpha Tabernacle and Kiweranga Life Fellowship churches.

Why a case studies method?

In research concerned with other peoples' *conceptions*, context is crucial: Flyvberg (2006:221) argues that social science can *only* theorise about "context-dependent knowledge". As this research is primarily contextual and exploratory, the case study, a research design that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context" (Yin, 2003:13), is relevant. If done well, a case study can enable a close understanding of causal processes (De Vaus, 2001:50,232; Kanbur, 2003:13). This is important as critics have argued that case study research is unable to make valid 'scientific' statements about the world. Gluckmann (2006[1961]:19) famously wrote that although the case study method was "clearly fruitful", there were still questions to be answered with regards to the reliability of case study material.

In this regard, Flyvberg's suggestion for viewing the case study (indeed the discipline of social science) as seeking a different *type* of knowledge to that of the positivist sciences, is salient. He suggests that social science should seek (and does seek) what Aristotle termed '*phronesis*', meaning "prudence or practical wisdom" (Flyvberg, 2001:2), instead of necessarily seeking universal context-free truths. Such an epistemological stance leads to context-dependent research in which an in-depth awareness of particulars, what Geertz (1973) termed 'thick description', is valued and relevant, and the case study, it could be argued, is an ideal means with which to do this.

Case studies, therefore, are well suited to situations where an idiographic rather than a nomothetic understanding is sought, and indeed, the work of Flyvberg reflects that of Mitchell, who wrote that the type of inference used in qualitative case studies is "epistemologically quite independent of statistical inference"

(2006[1956]:34). Indeed, Flyvberg makes an excellent support of case studies as being falsificationist (overturning existing 'knowledge' or hypotheses) rather than being verificationist (Flyvberg, 2001:81-84; Flyvberg, 2006:234-237), for example by finding 'black swans' that overturn existing theories (Flyvberg, 2001:77).

If heeding Flyvberg's call for a social science based on *phronesis*, concerns about generalizability from case study research are not necessarily so relevant. Instead, the potential validity of the case study, as Mitchell argues, is because "the extrapolation is in fact based on the validity of the analysis rather than the representation of the event" (2006[1956]:26). A case study can be seen then as an attempt to add to a different type of knowledge, one that is based on a sound analysis that comes from an awareness of the corpus of scholarship in which the subject is part, and the familiarity of the researcher with the subject matter, as Mitchell suggests. Generalization is certainly possible, albeit in a different form, and cases can be useful to generate, or contribute to, more generalized theory (De Vaus, 2001:234; Yin, 2003:10; Bryman, 2004:56).

The unit of the 'case' in this research could be Pentecostalism in Kampala, the neighbourhood, or indeed, each individual interviewee. In some ways it is all three. As mentioned, I based the research around two churches, incorporating an additional church to the one located in my neighbourhood. Whereas I suggest that both are *exemplary* cases of neo-Pentecostal Christianity in Kampala, I chose two because the sheer variety of churches that come under the umbrella term of 'Pentecostalism' in the city meant that I wanted to include both participants that went to a church that espoused the Prosperity Gospel to a greater extent, and participants that went to a church in which this discourse was not so obviously evident. However, neither churches are 'extreme' examples of born-again churches in Kampala, and I suggest therefore that similarities across the congregation sample of both churches might be somewhat representative of other followers of neo-Pentecostal churches in the city (and potentially urban sub-Saharan Africa).

Reflexivity

The issue of case studies being verificationist or not is also relevant to the issue of impartiality in case study research. Ethnography, and non-positivist social science,

is often criticised for being based too extensively on the subjectivity of the researcher, and for *verifying* their existing presuppositions. In this regard, in agreement with Bourdieu (1999), self-reflexivity on the part of the researcher is necessary in understanding how their own existing belief systems, what Sen called a view “from a delineated somewhere” (1993:127), can influence the research process and outcomes, and how the researcher’s identities (as a European, as a women, as a non-Christian, for example) can influence relationships with informants (and also their own approach to research). Of course, it must be acknowledged that there are inherently unequal power dynamics in the interview setting, especially in which there is a difference in the economic means of those involved. The interviewer is setting up the rules of the game, and there is, therefore, asymmetry in “linguistic and symbolic goods” (Bourdieu, 1999:609). Self-reflexivity is therefore necessary to “reduce as much as possible the symbolic violence” inherent in interviews (ibid.).

Bourdieu suggests further two potential ways to ease this unequal power dynamic: through “social proximity” and “familiarity” (1999:610). He argues that the researcher has to situate herself in the setting that is being researched, to try to grasp the circumstances of the respondent through having both a thorough knowledge of the subject area, and an “attentiveness to others, a self-abnegation and openness rarely encountered in everyday life” (1999:614). In this way, therefore, I read Bourdieu as calling for qualitative work that involves not only self-reflexivity, but also a commitment of time, and of getting to know informants as much as possible. In these ways, therefore, whilst I am aware of the partiality inherent in such context-based research, issues of the power dynamics between researcher and researched further supports the validity of longer-term case study research, such as this, as being ways of coming to have rich understandings. I suggest that the choice of multi methods that are outlined above helped ensure this richness, and allowed for triangulation.

In addition, it should be noted that although an awareness of positionality is important in all research, when studying religion the issue of the transcendent brings an added difficulty, both for interpretive social science and development studies as a whole (whether of the more positivist or intepretivist persuasion) (see Deneulin and Rakodj, 2011:52). It was not an uncommon response, either in

the process of this research or in previous research in which I have spent time trying to understand Christians, for those that knew about my interest in Pentecostal Christianity to be slightly incredulous at my attempts to understand them. For many Evangelical, Fundamentalist, or Pentecostal Christians, of course, a very different epistemology lies at the heart of their attempts to have knowledge of the world compared to those of the social scientist. Our 'bibles' of knowledge are very different to theirs. This is, however, an epistemological quagmire that can never be resolved, and is of course, reflected in our search to understand many world belief systems, not only Christianity. In the course of our analysis of social phenomena that cannot be quantified, we will of course interpret that phenomena to some extent through our own lens, but I suggest that an interpretive method, whilst being aware of issues of power, can at least attempt to understand that social phenomena as those experiencing it might do, as much as possible (Deneulin and Rakodi, 2011:52).

Methodology

The basis of the data collection was a qualitative ethnographic multiple-case study of people residing in urban Kampala, with two neo-Pentecostal churches forming the broad physical scope of the study. As mentioned above, the churches themselves (whether the discourse or institution) were not the explicit focus of the data collection; rather my interest primarily lay in those who attended church, who self-identified as Pentecostal or 'born-again'. It has been acknowledged that studies of Pentecostal Christianity in Africa have focused too much on the church as a 'self-contained' institution (Jones, 2009:160) and / or have lacked a view from the perspective of those 'below' (Engelke, 2004). In this regard the research on which this thesis is based was an attempt to rectify this imbalance, being in agreement with Engelke that the views of those who follow Christianity are 'necessary' in understanding religious change.

Despite this focus on the adherents to Pentecostal Christianity rather than the institutions, however, I still felt it necessary to have a physical space that was connected to the faith as a base for the research, in addition to the neighbourhood of Kiweranga, and this is why I choose to focus on the

communities of two churches. The reasons for this were not necessarily about having knowledge of the inner workings of church structure, administration or doctrine, but instead about having places in which I would be able to initially meet informants, where I might be able to carry out ethnographic observation, and spaces in which I might expect to have the opportunity to regularly meet existing informants outside of the interview space, by chatting before and after sermons, and by generally 'hanging out' at church.

The following methods were used:

- Ethnographic observation of church events, including Sunday and mid-week services, Bible cell groups, and other events; and through living in the vicinity of one of the churches, in the neighbourhood of Kiweranga;
- Longitudinal research with a cohort of 39 believers through three semi-structured interviews for each person, including life history narratives;
- Semi-structured interviews with a further 20 Pentecostals. Most of these were initially interviewed with a view to be included in the main cohort of interviewees that were interviewed three times. It was expected that some attrition would occur and therefore I interviewed more people for the first interview, hoping that in the end I would have a cohort of around 40 for the longitudinal study;
- Semi-structured interviews (two per person) with 13 residents of the Kiweranga neighbourhood who self-identified as having religious beliefs that could not be described as Pentecostal or born-again.¹⁷

Lists of interviews, and church sermons and events, can be found in Appendices B and C.

¹⁷ Those who could be termed non-religious (i.e. atheists or agnostics) were not included in this group simply because I never met any, and people who self-identify as such are very rare in Uganda. Indeed, in telling others that I was agnostic (verging on atheist) brought about reactions not only of disbelief and surprise, but more often pity. As my research assistant herself asked me when I was interviewing her for the job, if I did not have a religion, then where did I belong? Religion, identity and feelings of belonging are inextricably linked in Ugandan society, and it is therefore no surprise that the cohort of interviewees that were not Pentecostal (or 'born-again') identified as members of other religious traditions, namely Anglicanism, Catholicism, Islam, and Jehovah's Witness.

Triangulation

Although the importance of triangulation for increasing the validity of research has often been valued in positivist social science, it can also benefit qualitative enquiry (Bryman, 2004:275). This, then, is a key reason for the multi-method approach to this research: carrying out not only longitudinal semi-structured interviewing with Pentecostals themselves, but also by interviewing non-Pentecostals, and carrying out ethnographic observation in church, in Bible cell groups, and in the local neighbourhood.

Furthermore, I suggest that such methodological triangulation becomes particularly necessary in any research on Pentecostal Christianity as the importance on speech in Pentecostalism in both constructing a born-again identity and in performing that identity (see Keane, 1997, 2002; and also Coleman, 2004:430) means that there can be concerns about whether interviews are a 'true' reflection of interviewees' thoughts, motivations and beliefs, or whether the discourse of the interview is more performative than it might otherwise be. From previous experiences of interviewing Pentecostal Christians in other research, I have found a very high willingness amongst believers for being interviewed as many have seen the interview as an opportunity to spread the Gospel and convert me, the researcher. Thus interviews are full of 'testimonies' of how they see that God has changed their lives, and the concern was that interviews might be seen as an opportunity to 'perform' their role as a good Pentecostal. However, with the extended length of time I knew many informants, in addition to a certain line of questioning that did not focus explicitly on religious beliefs, I suggest that the interviews became less of a performance, and more of a naturalistic conversation.

Conclusion

In Appendix A I talk in more detail about the methods used in the research, and about issues such as the use of a research assistant, and ethical considerations. However, suffice to say here, conducting research in a sprawling metropolis such as Kampala has its limitations. Just as with many cities, the more people packed in to a square mile, the less people seem to know each other, or indeed have the

physical public space in which to ‘hang-out’, the favourite pass-time of the budding anthropologist wanting to get to know her subjects. And yet, as time went on I did feel that I got to know a good number of my interviewees and others. The interviews were invaluable as an opportunity for more concentrated enquiry, but equally as useful were both the cell groups that Mable, my research assistant,¹⁸ and I attended from both churches (and particularly the relaxed moments of communal discussion after the more scripted Bible study session), and the everyday chance meetings I had with people I knew in the neighbourhood of Kiweranga, where I lived.

The research on which this thesis is based, therefore, was not an all-encompassing account or explanation of either of the churches, or a cell group, a neighbourhood, or any individual informant. However, in feeling at home in Kiweranga, as the months that I lived there moved into years, I would like to think that, despite my status as an outsider, and as a non-believer (despite my informants’ earnest attempts to convert me!), I did get to know quite well what motivated the people that I spent time with in Kampala – what made them happy and content, what difficulties they faced and how they thought it was possible to change their lives for the better. It is on the basis of such understandings that the following chapters are written. I hope therefore that however limited this knowledge may be, that it is based on interviews and data collection that were as valid as they could be, and that it contributes in some way to our understandings of Christianity in Kampala, maybe even ‘Christian’ Africa. In this way, I agree with Bourdieu’s idea of what social science can be, or should be. He writes that social science “can have nothing to do with the totalizing excess of a dogmatic rationality, at one extreme, or with the aesthete’s resignation to nihilistic irrationality, at the other. It is content with the partial and temporary truths that it can conquer against the common perception and the intellectual doxa” (1999:629). Before turning to my substantive chapters, in which I discuss in detail some of those ‘partial and temporary truths’, some background information is needed to better situate the physical, social and religious landscape of Kampala, and Kiweranga in particular, in which my informants lived.

¹⁸ Mable was my research assistant throughout my period of research. Although her main role was one of translation, as she accompanied me most days on fieldwork, her polite demeanour was instrumental in enabling us to gain the trust of informants. I write more about Mable in Appendix A when I talk in more depth about her role.

CHAPTER FOUR

LIVING AND BELIEVING IN KAMPALA.

To better situate the substantive chapters that follow, some background information is necessary, specifically with regards to the everyday living standards and life opportunities that are typically experienced by the interviewees on which this thesis is based, and about Pentecostalism (or born-again Christianity) in Kampala, including introducing the two churches that most informants attended. This chapter therefore attempts to serve this purpose.

Kiweranga: life in an urban slum in Kampala

After the coming to power of the incumbent President Yoweri Museveni in 1986, following years of insecurity, state-led violence and conflict under the Amin and Obote administrations, Uganda was generally considered to be a nation of relative political stability and economic growth (McGee, 2004:500-501, Kappel et al, 2005:28), and to many donors the country was, at this time, seen as a development success story (Hansen and Twaddle, 1998:10). However, in more recent years, scholars have argued that Uganda's economic growth has not been 'pro-poor', but has instead caused a wider gap between wealthy and poor Ugandans (Kappel et al, 2005:32; Lwanga-Ntale, 2006).

In the more impoverished urban areas, particularly in Kampala, people often experience economic insecurity due to factors that can be exacerbated by living in the city. Unemployment in the city is high: recent figures from 2009 suggest that 13.3% of the population of Greater Kampala (Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), 2010a) was unemployed at that time, with the figure rising to 18% for youths aged 15-24 (ibid.). Furthermore, those that do work often have little choice than to work in low-paid and insecure jobs with few, if any, workers' rights, with a massive proportion of Kampala's workforce (53.1%) working in the informal sector (UBOS, 2010a).

The difficult situation that many of Kampala's residents thus find themselves in is

exacerbated by a lack of land on which to grow crops to supplement their income (if indeed they have one), and insecure tenancies (and therefore a high incidence of land evictions) in cramped and substandard accommodation. Furthermore, despite the OECD in 2008 declaring that Uganda was experiencing high economic growth and low inflation (OECD, 2008:601), since that time the Ugandan economy has weakened (see Ssewanyana and Bategeka, 2010; OECD, 2011), and inflation has at times moved into double digits, causing rising commodity prices for everyday goods, such as rice and sugar, that the residents of Kampala need to buy.

In addition to this, despite the Government's provision of Universal Primary Education (UPE) across the country, Kisira (2008) has identified that there is a lack of UPE schools in urban and peri-urban areas of Uganda, something reflected in the experience of my interviewees, and so parents usually have to find money for school fees for their children. Family obligations not only to those in the city but also to kin back in the village, who often have unrealistic expectations of the amount of money that can be earned in the city (Lwanga-Ntale and McClean, 2004), put added pressure on the meagre income of many in Kampala. Indeed, the multitude of factors that can negatively affect quality of life for those in the city has led Kappel et al to suggest that recently, "the poor in urban areas appear to have fared particularly badly" (2005:49).

Furthermore, the population of Kampala has grown considerably in recent years, spreading into peri-urban areas (Makita et al, 2010), but also adding to the pressure of land and causing over-crowding in the urban centre and suburbs, especially in poor slum areas of the city. Although its growth may have slowed somewhat in the 1990s relative to the general population growth rate (see Potts, 2006:83), and in-migration might have been a small component of growth (Potts, 2009:257), the trend still shows that the population of the capital is still increasing.¹⁹ This population growth has caused more unplanned settlements to be built, mainly in the valleys of Kampala's many hills. Closer to the swampy areas,

¹⁹ In 2010 Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS) put the projected mid-year 2011 population of 'Kampala City' at 1,659,600 people (UBOS, 2010b), an projected increase of 39% on the population at 2002 (UBOS, 2002). The boundary of 'Kampala City' is smaller than the urban sprawl of the city into neighbouring districts, however, and we can safely suppose that the real population of the city is far larger than this. The point however, is to indicate that the population is growing.

and often illegally encroaching on the protected wetlands, these settlements are where the vast majority of the city's more poor residents live. The neighbourhood in which I lived, Kiweranga, was somewhat typical of these low-income suburbs, situated lower down in the valley and encroaching onto the wetlands that flowed into Lake Victoria only a few miles away.

According to informants, only a few decades previously, the land on which the structures that collectively formed the neighbourhood of Kiweranga had been built was of mixed use, although none of it was residential. The higher part, further away from the wetlands, was partly uncultivated bush with patches of cultivation,²⁰ and the lower part consisted of wetlands. Local stories told of how in the 1970s this bush area provided shelter for atrocities committed by Idi Amin's soldiers, who lived in nearby barracks. Later, after Museveni came to power, a new artery road was built nearby, and as the population of city swelled and people were looking for new places to build homes, houses were quickly erected on land either side of the main road, and Kiweranga became a residential neighbourhood. The change from peri-urban to urban settlement had been fairly recent: Jackson, a local resident who purchased land in the neighbourhood in 1990, when the area was still quite sparsely populated (and mainly consisted of structures very close to the new road), explained that the area was only connected to the national electricity grid in 1996 or 1997 (although this did not mean that all residents after had electricity, and still many households in the neighbourhood were not connected).

Now the neighbourhood of Kiweranga has grown considerably, and reflects life in other poorer neighbourhoods of Kampala. As with other slum areas of the city, Kiweranga is mixed ethnically (see Wallman, 1996 with regards to Kamwokya), and although I came across more Baganda than any other ethnic group (which is unsurprising considering Kampala is in the Buganda region), I also met and interviewed people from the Acholi, Bagisu, Bakiga, Banyankole, Banyarwanda, Banyoro, Basoga, Batooro, Iteso, Jophadhola, Kumam, Langi, Lugbara, Nubian and Sabine ethnic groups, from across the country. Some of these peoples had migrated as children or adults, or had been involved in a cyclical migration pattern, whereas others were born in Kampala but to parents from a non-

²⁰ Jackson moved to the area in 1990, when residential construction was nascent, and remembered coffee cultivation on the site.

Baganda ethnic group.

Increasing population has meant the area is heavily congested with buildings, mostly one-roomed homes (*'muzigos'* in the local vernacular) made of locally made mud bricks, often in rows.²¹ Without urban planning, the 'roads' that weave down from the main tarmac artery road consist of unpaved pathways. A few are wide enough for vehicles to pass, but usually only four wheel-drives can make it as the pathways are uneven and when it rains the ground becomes muddy and often impassable. Often pathways cross open sewage trenches that have been dug to take rainwater down to the swamp at the bottom of the slum. Pedestrians usually have to jump across these trenches to access the path on the other side, although sometimes makeshift bridges are constructed using planks of wood, or on rare occasions, iron rods and cement over the wider trenches.

Organised waste disposal is non-existent, and so solid waste is often thrown into the ditches, clogging them up, and causing both water pollution and increasing the risk of flooding. Other residents burn their solid waste, and most evenings around dusk the smell of burning plastic fills the air of Kiweranga. Sanitation is also lacking. Although pit latrines are built, they are not always built deep into the ground and heavy rains can cause some to leak. Once a pit latrine is full, it is boarded up and another built beside it, clearly not a sustainable solution to human waste management, with land in the area already scarce. Although residents of some better muzigos have shared usage of a pit latrine with their neighbours, others do not have access at all,²² unless they can afford to pay 100 shillings to use a public latrine, a situation echoed in the work of Wallman (1996). Instead, residents dispose of their faeces using what is known as a 'flying toilet' – in a *buveera* (plastic bag) thrown into the wetlands,²³ or into the trenches.

Furthermore, Kampala has a lack of piped water supply (Collignon and Vézina, 2000), and in Kiweranga although most residents have access to water from one of a series of standpipes, these standpipes are privately owned, and residents

²¹ Wallman gives an excellent description of similar types of housing in Kamwokya, another slum neighbourhood in Kampala, including detailed drawings of houses, outbuildings, and wells (1996:37-46).

²² See Nuwagaba, 2006:159 who remarks that this is particularly the case on 'mailo' land which has been built on without planning. See footnote below regarding the issue of *mailo* land.

²³ Bryceson also refers to this with regards to Kampala and Nairobi (2006:24).

need to pay 100 shillings (approximately USD 5cents) to fill a 20 litre jerrican of water.²⁴ If the residents cannot afford to pay for this water (and Nawaguba (2006:160) suggests that the majority of poor residents of Kampala cannot afford to pay for the water they need), there is a public well available,²⁵ but for many people of Kiweranga it is quite a walk to the well, and busy working people do not necessarily have the option to go there, especially if they return to the area after dusk. Furthermore, studies of similar neighbourhoods in Kampala have found that poor sanitation, like that in Kiweranga, leads to contaminated spring water, and it could therefore be safe to assume the same is likely in this area (Haruna et al, 2005). Indeed, whether the water is sourced from a standpipe or a well, for it to be safe to drink the water needs to be boiled. With the cost of charcoal and paraffin, the two most common sources of fuel for cooking in Kiweranga, becoming increasingly expensive, many residents told me that they drink water without boiling it, putting them at greater risk of water-borne diseases, such as cholera.²⁶

Despite these living conditions, rental prices in Kiweranga are higher than average, and seem to be increasing. In early 2008, when I started fieldwork in the neighbourhood, the going rate for a *muzigo* was 50,000 shillings per month (approximately US\$25), but by the time I left in late 2009 it was around 70,000 shillings, a 40% increase in 18 months. The proximity of the neighbourhood to the main tarmac road, and therefore quick links by public transport to both the city centre and Kampala's industrial area, the fact that the slum is not a large one in comparison to some in Kampala, and perhaps because it neighbours two very affluent residential areas, has actually made the suburb increasingly popular. It is considered an 'up and coming' slum, a slight cut above others in Kampala such as Katwe and Kisenyi, which are much larger and have reputations for crime. However, Kiweranga's popularity is unlikely to be the only factor pushing up rental prices. Available land that owners are willing to sell (whether outright or with a leasehold-type 'agreement') are in short supply, causing "unrealistically

²⁴ Indeed, Collignon and Vézina (2000) identified that 59% of Kampala's residents do not have piped water to their homes or residential compounds, and rely on privately-owned or traditional sources of water, as reflected in Kiweranga.

²⁵ I heard verbal reports that the well allowing access to this natural spring was paid for by Kiweranga Life Fellowship.

²⁶ Indeed, although during my stay in Kiweranga there was not a cholera outbreak, there was in other parts of the city, in conditions similar to this neighbourhood.

high” land prices for plots in the city (Nuwagaba, 2006:158).²⁷ It seems unsurprising therefore, that the cost of land is also pushing up rental prices, squeezing further the ability of the urban poor to reside in decent and affordable housing.



Plate 1. Typical one-roomed dwellings in Kiweranga, made with locally-made mud bricks, and built on encroached wetlands. Photo taken by author.

²⁷ The historical Buganda ‘land issue’ that stems from the 1900 Buganda Agreement also seems to have influenced land issues, and therefore quality of life, in Kampala’s slums. Under this colonial agreement, when Uganda was a British Protectorate, some land was ascribed to the Kabaka (the King of the Buganda Kingdom), whereas the around 60% to 70% (Nuwagaba, 2006:151-158) was designated ‘*mailo*’ land and assigned to wealthy upper-class Baganda, but with usufruct rights. Not only did this then commoditise *mailo* land, but it has led to a complicated system of land ownership in which to ‘own’ land in Kampala for the non-elite invariably means paying for an agreement of leasehold land use. *Mailo* landholders who are willing to sell are in short supply, and significantly, the majority of private *mailo* land is held in areas that have not been subject to urban planning on the part of Kampala City Council (Nuwagaba, 2006:151-6).

The lack of housing supply thus increasingly causes local people to illegally encroach further on to Kampala's protected wetlands area with the building of more residential structures (see Nyakaana et al, 2007) at the bottom of the valley, further degrading Kampala's already polluted natural resources, and resulting in poor accommodation that is prone to flooding. Indeed, when walking to visit interviewees further down in the encroached wetlands of Kiweranga, it was normal to have to step over many hastily-built and rudimentary flood defence walls made with concrete or sandbags, as the threat of flooding in Kampala's wet climate is ever-present. Plates 1 and 2 are somewhat representative of typical housing conditions in Kiweranga. In the first, one roomed muzigos can be seen, whilst the second illustrates both a drainage channel leading to the wetlands, that in drier days would be seen clogged up with solid and human waste. It also shows a variety of different housing structures, although it is unlikely that the more comfortable looking home has piped water. In both photographs the proximity to the wetlands is evident, and indeed these photographs were taken in areas prone to flooding, on encroached wetlands.



Plate 2. A drainage canal leads down through Kiweranga to the wetlands, past a number of residences, some more comfortable than others. Photo by author.

The living conditions and lack of planning in Kampala's suburbs therefore negatively impact on its residents in numerous inter-related ways. The lack of adequate sanitation has implications for physical health, and therefore the abilities of Kampala's residents to maintain income-generating activities; the lack of available land for urban farming entails reliance on a cash economy in which commodity prices are prone to sudden increases and leaves residents without a fall-back option for food security,²⁸ and decreasing housing stock coupled with increasing rental prices (without a corresponding rise in wages or profits) leaves residents insecure and increasingly priced out of decent housing.

However, it is obviously not only the poor state of physical living conditions that cause hardship for those who reside in Kiweranga. A multitude of less than desirable social and health phenomena also impact negatively on the ability of residents to successfully move into positions of economic security, stability and human flourishing. As in many urban centres across sub-Saharan Africa, the scourges of HIV/AIDS, malaria, lack of mental health provision, domestic violence, limited reproductive health choices, weak and corrupt local or central government services, and above all, unemployment, insecure and underpaid formal employment or a reliance on the informal employment sector, were all documented in my research as contributing factors to the hardship of life in Kiweranga. Much could be written about such social malaise, but in this introduction to life in the neighbourhood, I want to focus in particular on issues of employment, for as will become evident in the substantive chapters, seeing involvement in Pentecostal Christianity as both an alternative livelihood or as a means to improve livelihoods, was a prevalent theme.

With high levels of unemployment, and insecure working environments that do little to protect workers, finding employment and then keeping it is rare in Kampala for the average resident. It is no exaggeration to suggest that for the less educated, it can be extremely difficult to find secure employment that not only pays a living wage, but also an employer that pays on time and does not default on wage payments. In Uganda, what are informally called 'papers' (educational

²⁸ Although Kampala was previously recognised as having more urban farms than other sub-Saharan African cities (Nuwagaba, 2006:162), and has been documented as one of the ways that urban residents maintained their food security during Amin (Amis, 2006:170), nowadays "increasing pressure on urban land and rising house prices have led to diminishing land for urban agriculture" (Bryceson, 2006:58).

certificates) are crucial in securing formal employment and many people I interviewed had not had the opportunity to attain a level of education that was needed to secure those necessary 'papers'.²⁹

Few of my informants were in formal employment, and many perceived the lack of school certificates to be a principal cause of their inability to get a job in the formal sector. However, as acknowledged, formal employment counts for only a minority of jobs in Kampala, and many people compete for what small positions are available. Instead, most residents of Kiweranga were involved in the informal economy. Some would set up small informal businesses, often at the side of the street, perhaps selling small amounts of perishable groceries, or if they could get some more capital, something non-perishable such second-hand clothes and shoes. Others would gain employment in the informal sector; such as working as a domestic worker, a labourer, a waitress at a roadside café, or as a conductor on a 'taxi' (the local name for the privately-owned public minibuses), in jobs that had little or no security and were not regulated. Other would work for friends or neighbours, sometimes for 'in-kind' payments such as food and lodging. Being employed in this way was the norm for the majority of those whom I interviewed that could be described as being employed.

It is within this context of living with not only economic insecurity but of wages (if received) never being able to meet needs, of very often being behind in rent and school fees, and of frequent obstacles to improvements in living standards and human flourishing, that the involvement of my those that I interviewed (both those who lived in Kiweranga and those that lived in similar settlements in the city) in born-again churches needs to be understood. With this in mind, this chapter now turns to an outline of the forms that Pentecostalism takes in Kampala, before providing an introduction to the two churches that provided a backdrop to this research and from where most informants that self-identified as born-again practised their faith.

²⁹ Other informants were unable to collect their school examination certificates because of arrears in school fees.

Being born-again in Kampala: An introduction to the Pentecostal church scene in the city

Pentecostal Christianity in all its guises has flourished in sub-Saharan Africa, and its many incarnations add an extra layer of complexity to the expanding definition of what Pentecostalism is, and what it represents. A history of the growth of born-again Christianity on the African continent is far too wide a focus for this thesis, but suffice to say that African Pentecostalism has been seen to be creating its own distinct identity in comparison to other global forms. Whereas earlier Pentecostal churches in Africa, could be directly linked through administration, leadership, and theology, to North America in particular, neo-Pentecostalism in sub-Saharan Africa has been, notwithstanding some enduring links to the 'West', generally seen as an African-led movement. Indeed reverse mission and 'church-planting' has now been documented (see Jeannerat, 2008: 252 regarding the spread of Nigerian churches to Europe and the U.S.A). In these ways therefore, Anderson has argued that the growth of the newer African Pentecostal churches should be seen as an African interpretation of Pentecostalism (Anderson, 2002).

The global flows of Pentecostalism are, therefore, certainly no longer unidirectional, and in particular African pastors regularly preach their interpretation of born-again Christianity in countries of their former colonial powers (see Englund, 2001; Maxwell, 2001; Coleman, 2004). Neo-Pentecostalism in particular, with its unstructured form of growth, has thus been seen to be at the one time very much African-led and African-managed, and simultaneously seen as still a product, for want of a better word, of 'Americanisation', with the concomitant spread of supposedly 'Western' concepts of 'freedom', enterprise, neoliberal economics, and laissez faire governance (see Comaroff and Comaroff, 2000; Maxwell, 2005:28; Freston, 2007:206-207).³⁰ African Pentecostalism does not exist in a cultural bubble, and as part of a globalising discourse, the influence of the rhetoric of evangelical and prosperity gospel preachers from the 'West', primarily from the U.S.A, cannot be ignored (see Gifford, 1993, for Liberia; Gifford, 1998:167, with regards to Uganda; and Hasu, 2006:684 for Tanzania), but as Coleman (2002:11) argues, there has been a shift from a more "a linear to a more chaotic vision of cultural creation and transmission".

³⁰ Indeed, Barker (2007), in a compelling article, suggests that Pentecostal thinking fosters neoliberalism, and that there is a symbiotic relationship between the two.

Contemporary Pentecostal churches in Uganda do not differ from this more 'chaotic vision' of a form of Christianity that is concurrently both culturally African and also at times, 'Western'. Although precursors to contemporary Pentecostalism have been in Uganda since the 1930s' Anglican '*balokole*'³¹ revival which originated in neighbouring Rwanda (Gifford, 1998:152, Hasu, 2006:681), it has only been since the mid-1980s that Pentecostal churches have become more prominent (Gifford, 1998:153), partly due to religious suppression under Idi Amin's rule in the 1970s, which was followed by an opening up of Uganda's religious scene by Museveni after his inauguration as President in 1986. Although Gifford identifies earlier Pentecostal churches in Uganda as being planted and overseen by Western 'parent' churches (often American or Canadian), there has since been a "mushrooming" of these neo-Pentecostal 'home-grown', Ugandan-led, churches (Gifford, 1998:157), that as mentioned above have become popular throughout sub-Saharan Africa, and many of which preach a Prosperity Gospel message. Indeed, Gifford (1998:168), writing more than a decade ago, asserted that, "the Faith Gospel has reached Uganda and is strengthening its grip"; and from living in the city and simply hearing about new churches being 'birthed' around Kampala, one could make the conclusion that this 'mushrooming' has certainly not abated since that time. Of course, this is hardly a statistical representation of the growth of the religion in Kampala or Uganda. The Uganda Bureau of Statistics do not keep records of those that identify as 'born-again' or Pentecostal, however, although a Pew Forum report in 2006 did claim that Pentecostalism is now followed by more than 20% of the Ugandan population. Furthermore, there is evidence that Pentecostal Christian forms of worship are being incorporated into mainstream Protestant and Catholic churches (Jones, 2005:507), potentially extending the scope of Pentecostal discourse and practice in Uganda even further.

³¹ '*Balokole*' means 'the saved people' or 'the saved ones' in the local language, Luganda. Interestingly, Middleton's work on the Lugbara (1999 [1960]) identified that when the '*Abalokole*', what Middleton called "a separatist Christian sect" (1999 [1960]:264), came to the Lugbara region in north-west Uganda, the Lugbara seemed to appropriate the term for themselves to refer to a type of possession when someone was struck by a power of God (the Lugbara had a concept of a creator God). In this thesis, however, I use the term as it is used in contemporary Kampala, to describe more broadly born-again Christians.

Mega-cathedrals, papyrus churches, and the wireless: 'places' of worship in Kampala

The variety of churches in Kampala can be bewildering. The earlier 'traditional' Pentecostal churches, such as Elim, that were underground under Amin, no longer have the presence that they once had. Instead, a group of slick 'mega-churches', including (among others) Watoto church (formerly known as Kampala Pentecostal Church, or KPC), Miracle Centre Cathedral (or Rubaga Miracle Centre as it was previously named), and Christian Life Ministries, can be said to dominate the hierarchy of born-again churches in city. Very large churches such as these, and their Pastors, are household names in Kampala.³² For example, on entering either of the city's sprawling and chaotic central 'taxi parks' (local bus interchange stations), one can easily find public buses dedicated to transporting worshippers directly to their popular born-again church of choice.

In addition to these larger churches a multitude of churches can be found in every neighbourhood. Some of these are more established, whereas others are small start-up churches housed in make-shift wooden structures, often with traditional papyrus thatched roofs (or corrugated tin) with maybe only a handful of congregants. A number of these smaller churches, which make up the majority of Pentecostal places of worship in the city, are off-shoot 'sister' churches of some of the larger established churches in Kampala, usually founded when an up-and-coming Pastor wants to break out and be the leader of his (and sometimes, although rarely, her) own congregation, although still under the wing of the 'mother' church.³³ Others are purely individual affairs, with small but loyal congregations.

Furthermore, around Kampala and its environs are a series of Pentecostal places of worship (some housed in structures that resemble churches, others not) offering alternative services to the usual Sunday (and weekday) sermons. In particular there is a raft of 'deliverance' services, in which a Pastor is thought to have a particular anointing for healing through prayer (intercession) and the

³² These pastors are not always household names for the right reasons, and 'scandals' of supposed wrongdoings by Pentecostal Pastors are quite common headlines. That they make the front page when such a story breaks, however (whether there is truth in the story or not), is at least evidence of how well known these preachers are in Kampala.

³³ The familial metaphors are those used by born-again churches, not only in Uganda.

laying-on of hands. For example, in a sleepy suburb of the city can be found Mutundwe Christian Fellowship, more commonly known as 'Pastor Tom's' after the name of its Senior Pastor, a 'deliverance' church that does not even have Sunday services (congregants are expected to go to their 'home' church on that day) but has regular deliverance and healing services throughout the week. These deliverance services are so popular that people seeking faith healing often travel from further afield, from outside the city, and camp out in the church compound for many days, bringing their woven sleeping mats and other necessary possessions with them, so that they can take part in a week (or more)'s intensive prayer.



Plate 3. Worshippers pray collectively in woods on the 'Prayer Mountain', just outside Kampala. Photo taken by author.

Similarly, the Prayer Mountain, a hill just outside the city, is a place where Kampala's born-again Christians sometimes go for specific prayer sessions, and extended periods of self-prayer (see plate number 3, above). With its cool temperatures due to its higher altitude, it offers a quiet respite away from the congestion of the metropolis, with some worshippers staying overnight, or even longer, in communal tents. Christian worship in outdoor locations away from church buildings is not new: Apostolics in particular have been known to favour outdoor locations (see, for example, the congregants of the Masowe weChishanu Church in Harare, Zimbabwe, in Engelke's (2007) ethnography). However, in this example, the Prayer Mountain is not used, as far as I have been able to identify, as a substitute for attendance at a 'home' church (housed in a building), but is instead one of many additional worship spaces (which include Pastor Tom's and other 'deliverance' churches) that born-again Christians in Kampala use in attempts to ameliorate specific problems and troubles, and seek divine intervention, in addition to attending their 'home church'.

However, not all adherents to born-again (Pentecostal) Christianity are able to regularly attend church, or other spaces of worship. We met a good number of congregants in Kampala who had at times been unable to attend a church to worship but instead practised their faith in part through their media consumption, and in particular through listening to one of the many born-again radio stations.

As identified in other parts of the world, Pentecostal-Christianity has long been aware of the power of media technologies, and has used FM radio and television (and indeed movies) to attract followers and spread their messages religions (see Meyer, 2002; Gifford, 2004b:32; de Witte, 2009). The same is certainly true in Kampala. The power of radio in particular should not, therefore, be underestimated in contributing to the popularity, and accessibility, of born-again Christianity in Kampala. Whereas televisions are beyond the means of many Kampala residents (and certainly the vast majority of homes I visited as part of this research did not have televisions), radios are much more affordable, and many homes and workplaces would own one. The accessibility of the radio then meant that many interviewees could hear Pentecostal radio programmes at fairly regular intervals, and quite a few informants said they had made the decision to convert after tuning in to a Christian radio station (see also de Witte,

2009:183). Indeed, many even spoke the 'conversion prayer' that Pentecostals believe marks the moment when one becomes born-again when they were on their own, by directing the prayer to the radio they were listening to, and often being encouraged by the remote Pastor to touch the radio so that, it was believed, blessings might be received. Others also spoke about the cathartic effect that listening to born-again radio had for them, some listening at night when their problems or ailments were keeping them awake. Indeed, radio transmissions were even described as having healing powers, with a certain weekday lunchtime service being famous across Kampala for apparently being able to heal physical ailments over the airwaves.³⁴

Thus the born-again churches in Kampala continue to attract new followers through their unique and extensive use of radio transmission. But it is not simply their power in attracting new converts that makes the use of radio so characteristic of Pentecostal Christianity: in observing the ways in which followers utilise Pentecostal radio, we are reminded of the ways in which Pentecostal churches operate and compete with each other in a form of religious marketplace. This 'marketplace' of Pentecostal Christianity in Kampala, therefore, does not offer uniform and homogenous places of worship. What might be termed a Pentecostal or 'born-again' church in Kampala then, can be considerably different in form, worship style, and teaching, to another. The issue of definitional boundaries is discussed more in the next chapter, in which I explore fluidity in religious identification. First however, in light of this discussion about the variety of different 'born-again' churches in Kampala, a mention is needed about the two churches that formed the spatial backdrop of my research.

Kiweranga Life Fellowship and Alpha Tabernacle

In Chapter Three I wrote about the reasons for choosing these two churches. Here, however, I introduce them in more detail. Broadly speaking, and certainly at

³⁴ In a manner that differs distinctly from a protestant emphasis against iconoclasm, informants would be encouraged by this Pastor to place glasses of water or handkerchiefs on the tops of radio sets so that the apparent anointing would be somehow magically passed down the airwaves to the item (as with the emphasis on touching the radio when becoming 'saved'); the expectation being that when the listener drunk the water or placed the handkerchief over the ailing part of the body, miracles would happen.

first glance, there are distinct differences between the two churches: both churches are Ugandan-led, although having important transnational connections to churches in Europe/U.S.A and other countries in sub-Saharan Africa,³⁵ but it could be said that the larger church in the case-study, 'Alpha Tabernacle', more vociferously preaches the Prosperity Gospel than the smaller, 'Kiwera Life Fellowship'. And although both churches are located in residential suburbs of the city, many of Alpha Tabernacle's congregation travel from other parts of Kampala to attend its services, whereas most of those who attend services at Kiwera Life Fellowship do live in the immediate vicinity of the church, in Kiwera itself, or in one of the neighbouring suburbs.

Alpha Tabernacle is one of the largest Pentecostal churches in Kampala. Its primary church building, which apparently has the capacity to seat 6,000 people, is a spacious and clean white-washed concrete structure with expansive glass windows, tiled floors, and a three-tiered space for the congregation. During the course of my research, the church would be regularly redecorated with colourful shiny drapes and artificial flowers, often in colours that would coordinate with the uniform of the choir that week. This very modern-looking church, which rises incongruously from swampy wetlands and the surrounding one-roomed brick houses and ramshackle wooden kiosks selling groceries, is set in a church compound of considerable size which includes well-manicured gardens, an air-conditioned three-storey administration building, and a smaller, older, and less flashy church building which is used for Sunday school, Bible school, and other supplementary church events.

Kiwera Life Fellowship is smaller than Alpha Tabernacle. It is said to be able to seat 2,000 congregants in a less grand church building,³⁶ made primarily from

³⁵ When attending sermons over the period of the research, I heard guest preachers from Nigeria, South Africa, Ghana, Kenya, what is now South Sudan, as well as from the U.S.A. In addition, the Senior Pastors of both churches would visit the U.S.A annually, and in the case of Alpha Tabernacle, connections with U.K. churches (especially Ugandan-led ones) were also strong.

³⁶ It should be noted that although the church leaders identified the capacity of their respective churches as mentioned, this does not necessarily reflect actual numbers attending. Although both churches were regularly very well attended on many Sunday services and at particular special events (such as New Year's Eve overnight services, Christmas services, and when visiting preachers were speaking), it is impossible to have an accurate number of attendees, and nor does official church membership offer an accurate and true representation of either attendees or those that consider a church to be their 'home church'.

wood, with a bare concrete floor and a few windows in the wall, without glass panes. Large gaps between the corrugated iron roof and the wooden walls let fresh air in (and occasionally rain). The church is not on a large plot of land, and the church building takes up most of the plot, in addition to a couple of small one-storey office outbuildings, a latrine block, a small car park and a disused freight container that is used as a kitchen. Things did change over the course of the research however: the church purchased a small portion of adjacent land and extended the size of the church building; it paved the car park and gave the church a good re-paint. Still, in comparison to Alpha Tabernacle, Kiweranga Life Fellowship remains far less ostentatious. The choirs in Alpha Tabernacle (there are three) have tailor-made outfits in matching textiles (although the members have to pay for these themselves), whereas Kiweranga Life Fellowship's choir can wear their own clothes within a given colour scheme. Alpha Tabernacle has a vast projection screen on the wall behind the stage, projecting song lyrics, or real-time images of the Pastor, and every Sunday sermon is video-recorded by young and fashion-conscious camera people, whereas Kiweranga Life Fellowship has a more modest amplification system used to ensure that those at the back of the congregation can hear the preacher. Alpha Tabernacle organises an annual pilgrimage to Israel (of course only for those elite members who can afford it, the price of the trip costing thousands of US dollars), complete with a glossy brochure showing photographs of previous Alpha Tabernacle pilgrims, whereas Kiweranga Life Fellowship holds evangelical mission trips to places far closer to home in Uganda (although now and again they do travel to what is now South Sudan, or Kibera in Nairobi). However, even though Kiweranga Life Fellowship is not one of the more wealthy churches in Kampala, it does have its own radio station which transmits programmes to the residents of the city, 24 hours a day. It does not only broadcast sermons live, but also produces a series of gospel music shows, and overnight prayer phone-in sessions. Alpha Tabernacle does not yet have its own radio station but it does pay for slots on Uganda's premier Christian TV station, and also for airtime on popular Christian and non-Christian radio stations. Despite Alpha Tabernacle not having its own dedicated radio station then, its media output is still quite considerable, its scope covering both TV and secular radio stations.

Alpha Tabernacle can be *seen* as a more affluent church. Unsurprisingly, the

financial accounts of either church were not known to me and therefore knowledge of remittances from congregants and supporters, both in Uganda and abroad, was not possible. However, in terms of its visible wealth - its buildings, activities, and indeed its aspirations - it would seem that Alpha Tabernacle has had a bigger bank balance on which to draw funds than has Kiweranga Life Fellowship. Furthermore, it can also be observed that Alpha Tabernacle attracted a significant group of elite members. The socio-economic status of the congregations of churches in Kampala, nor in these two churches, is not, however, homogenous and to suggest that Alpha Tabernacle is frequented only by members of Kampala's more wealthy and privileged minority would be a misrepresentation. In Kampala, people from all socio-economic groups attend born-again churches, or consider themselves to be born-again Christians. Being able to ascertain the proportion of a congregation that could be considered to be wealthy, working class or poor, or middle-class, is impossible in most Pentecostal churches. That said, to use rough proxy indicators such as what types of vehicles were seen parked in the church car parks, it was certainly evident that Alpha Tabernacle had a larger number of affluent Kampala residents in its congregation: on Sundays at least thirty well-maintained vehicles, including a number of four-wheel drives, were visible, whereas in Kiweranga Life Fellowship maybe only four or five vehicles were parked outside the church, and other than the Senior Pastor's car, most were much smaller and less ostentatious.

As mentioned however, this is not to say that all the congregation in Alpha Tabernacle were of the more affluent echelons of society – they certainly were not, and in getting to know those informants who worshipped at that church, it became obvious that there were many, most certainly the majority, that were far from the elite in terms of their access to resources and wealth. These elite members of Alpha Tabernacle worship, therefore, alongside a majority congregation that is unemployed, underemployed or underpaid, and who, it could be argued, better represent the socio-economic lives of 'average' residents of Kampala. The congregation of Kiweranga Life Fellowship is also mixed, socio-economically: one could meet a teacher who had graduated from Uganda's top university, Makerere, sitting beside an illiterate housemaid. And yet despite some well-educated and more middle-class members of the congregation, I would suggest that Kiweranga Life Fellowship does not have the significant population of

elite, wealthy Ugandans as does Alpha Tabernacle. Coleman may have suggested mixed congregations of wealthier adherents alongside poorer and more disadvantaged citizens, such as Alpha Tabernacle, are typical of much urban neo-Pentecostalism (Coleman, 2004:423), and yet I suggest that neither Alpha Tabernacle nor Kiweranga Life Fellowship were atypical – both are examples of the sheer variety of different Pentecostal places of worship in the urban setting in Uganda.

Although it could be seen therefore that the majority of the congregation in both churches were people who were struggling to make ends meet, or to get ahead, it must also be noted that these churches were not, in general, providers of direct material assistance to congregants, or indeed the wider community. Unlike Gifford's (2009:110) assertion that the Pentecostal churches that he studied in Nairobi were all involved in outreach activities, in Kiweranga Life Fellowship and Alpha Tabernacle this was not a central part of their church programme. Whereas the traditional mission churches in Africa were (and are still) known for their charitable activities, especially in the fields of education and health (even though of course the form in which these institutions were established and run are of course much debated and open to much variation), it can be argued that one of the characteristics of contemporary Pentecostal Christianity is that organised charitable activities on a large scale are not necessarily as common as with the more established Christian churches in Africa, (Miller and Yamamori, 2007). Although as Miller and Yamamori (2005) point out, Kampala Pentecostal Church (KPC) does indeed run large-scale orphanages around Uganda that are well-respected by both Pentecostals and secular practitioners concerned with child welfare institutions, KPC (or Watoto as it is now known) is an exception to the rule, in Kampala at least.³⁷

Indeed, neither Alpha Tabernacle nor Kiweranga Life Fellowship ran any significant charitable activities. Alpha Tabernacle had a small two-roomed clinic in the church compound, but the nurse was there very intermittently (according to informants, one morning a week, if that), and the whole clinic was apparently

³⁷ Christiansen (2009) has identified that Pentecostal churches, along with Catholic churches, have been heavily involved in the east of the country with pastoral care and aid to those living with AIDS, but at the same time she has also acknowledged that this support does not foster help at a family level, but rather at an individual one, which she suggests may be less effective.

funded by one wealthy visiting Pastor who would come about once a year from the United States, and drug supplies were only stocked up if he visited. Kiweranga Life Fellowship ran a small primary school, but this was a fee-paying school, and whilst the fees were lower than other primary schools in the area, the teacher's salaries were also way below average. But neither did these churches make any great claims to being charitable churches: within the Pentecostal world, and especially for those who lean more towards preaching the Prosperity Gospel, organised charitable activity is just not part of the *raison d'être* of these churches, although as will be seen in Chapter Eight, informal vertical assistance does happen, albeit it on a small scale, and often as part of patronage relations.

Church rhetoric: situating Alpha Tabernacle and Kiweranga Life Fellowship

There is no doubt that what constitutes the discourse and rhetoric of Pentecostal churches across sub-Saharan Africa is diverse. However, ethnographic work on churches across the continent has enabled different rhetorical themes and tropes to be identified, and I suggest that some of these themes are evident in the discourses of Alpha Tabernacle and Kiweranga Life Fellowship.

Although, as identified above, Gifford (2009) identified that the churches he studied in Nairobi were involved in outreach activities to a greater extent than Alpha Tabernacle and Kiweranga Life Fellowship, his description of Pentecostalism in Nairobi does still have other parallels with the church scene in Kampala. He identifies, for example, that many are not "Pentecostal in any narrow classical sense" (2009:110), in that few have an ever-present stress on the visible gifts of the Holy Spirit. Alpha Temple and Kiweranga Life Fellowship are similar, and as I discuss more in Chapter Six, although it could certainly be identified that both the church and its adherents believed that born-again Christians can possess the ability to speak in tongues (*glossolalia*), its manifestation was rarely observed outside of specific deliverance services.

A more common trope that Gifford identified in Nairobi was a pervasive focus on individual success and prosperity, and a "preoccupation" with "making it in the modern globalised world" (Gifford, 2009:112). It could certainly be said that the rhetoric in Alpha Temple reflects this, as is evident in the vignette that opened this thesis. Promises of "divine favour" (Gifford, 2009:113) and an emphasis on

success experienced in material terms also reflected the experiences of Gifford in Nairobi. In attempting to answer the research questions in the substantive chapters (six, seven, and eight), examples of the appropriation of such rhetoric is examined and discussed in more detail. Suffice to say here, however, that as with other studies identified in Chapter One (for example, Hasu, 2006), both churches understood prosperity and success to be a right, and a marker of religiosity in a manner quite distinct from more aesthetic Christian traditions. Despite this, however, it should be noted that the rhetoric in Kiweranga Life Fellowship was often focused equally as much on issues of morality as on success or prosperity.

Furthermore, Kiweranga Life Fellowship and Alpha Temple were also typical of many Pentecostal churches in sub-Saharan Africa in their rhetoric and preaching about traditional African forms of religion and ritual. As also identified in Gifford (2009) as in many other studies (Engelke, 2007; Van Dijk, 2008; Van Dijk, 2001), in African Pentecostalism there is generally a dismissal of what is termed 'tradition', and an understanding of forms of African traditional healing or religion as being demonic or satanic. Inherently linked to the construction of contemporary African Pentecostalism as being a 'modernising' religion (or, as they would term it, a 'faith'), there is a dismissal of not only the more other-worldly forms of African traditional practice and belief, such as belief in witchcraft, covenants and the 'occult', but also less other-worldly local cultural practices which have sat alongside the mainstream religions (such as circumcision amongst the Bagisu, for example). The churches that formed the background to this research were no exception. For example, in Alpha Tabernacle it was not uncommon to hear the preacher launching into a tirade against 'altars' to 'ancestors': "wicked altars from the enemy, from your father's house" [from an Alpha Tabernacle 'downtown' lunchtime sermon on Thursday 20th November 2008]. Such phrases can be understood as proscribing engagement with traditional kin- and clan- based forms of Ugandan religion. In another service, for example, the congregation was told that:

"the most dangerous things in our life are our Father's altars to spirits – all that are burnt at that altar will come back. When we come to God it has to be reversed... Even if you're in New York where witchcraft is not seen, and you're in suits and ties, your ancestors' spirits will get to you." [From

an Alpha Tabernacle downtown lunchtime sermon on Tuesday 9th December 2008.]

Not only therefore do we clearly see this trope of the apparent dangers of engagement with ancestral, or kin-based, forms of religion ('Father's altars to spirits'), but we also hear that such local spirit forms are not contained even within Uganda but are thought of as transnational spirits able to cross borders: even if the born-again follower of the prosperity gospel receives God's financial blessings and migrates to the imagined locus of wealth itself, New York City, he or she must still guard against the potential wrath of local Ugandan spirits.

Kiweranga Life Fellowship did not differ significantly in this rhetoric of prohibiting engagement with local forms of ritual. Reflecting a common theme heard in fieldwork, that to become a born-again Christian means to actually move away from 'religion' (thought to consist of non-Christian traditions in addition to blind adherence to non-Pentecostal Christian dogma) to the truth, a preacher at Kiweranga expressed that:

"what I know is that for someone to decide to get saved, for someone to come from that deeply engraved religious background: witchcraft and sorcery, the demons that bound him, the clan spirits; for someone to confess that, "I am saved" is not a simple thing" [from a Kiweranga Life Fellowship lunchtime service, Friday 21st November 2008].

However, whereas Alpha Tabernacle's warnings against participating in non-Christian traditional rituals were more often than not concerned with the idea that engagement in such religious forms would not bring about lasting material and financial prosperity, in Kiweranga Life Fellowship it was primarily preached that congregants should not follow certain African traditions because they were immoral. The sermon one Sunday at Kiweranga clearly elucidates this particular concern with morality in that church.

The pastor had been preaching that Christians should construct their lives using good, moral 'building blocks', and that no matter what temptations they may face, every part of their lives needed to be holy and exemplary as a Christian. He then turned to the issue of sexuality, explaining that in contemporary Uganda there is a pressure to be 'sexy' but that as Christians the congregation were "a

holy separate people” who should not talk about ‘unrighteous things’ but should instead ‘guard their minds’. He then continued, to gasps of shock and whispering among the congregants, to talk about the role of female herbalists and sex-educators (‘Ssenga’) in teaching adolescent girls and women about sex. He preached that

“a ssenga should not be teaching you how to do in bed – you can work it out. She should be teaching you how to iron your clothes, not teaching the kids how to be sex-mad in the bush, corrupting the minds of those girls. I will never allow my girls to go to the bush.” [From a sermon at Kiweranga Life Fellowship on Sunday 8th February 2009.]

The preacher was referring to the traditional Buganda practice which is commonly referred to as going ‘to the bush’ in which a girl (usually before her first menstruation) has her labia elongated by the Ssenga, as this is believed to enable more enjoyable sex for both man and woman (see Kinsman et al, 2010; Tamale, 2009). The Ssenga, whose role also includes teaching girls and women about sexual practices, was traditionally carried out in Buganda society by an aunt but is now also practised commercially. Furthermore, the services of the Ssenga are still popular throughout Kampala, and not only, it seems, among Baganda women but also women living in the area from other ethnic groups (Tamale, 2009).

From listening to the pastor’s message that day, therefore, the centrality of ideas of born-again morality to Kiweranga Life Fellowship’s disdain for local traditional practices can clearly be identified. However, the sermon can also remind us that this disdain is not only reserved for more ostensibly spiritual forms of non-Christian African rituals, but encompasses a rejection of other local practices. However, what is particularly interesting about this short vignette from Kiweranga is the fact that a conversation I had later that day about this sermon highlights the need for us as researchers of Christianity to be aware of the limitations of an approach that relies too heavily on church discourse in our understandings of lived Christianity.

In the evening after hearing the sermon about the Ssenga I was ‘off-duty’ and visiting an American friend in a backpackers hostel a few miles from Kiweranga. As with most fieldwork however, it is sometimes difficult to be completely ‘off-duty’:

I had stayed in this hostel prior to finding my home in Kiweranga and knew the staff well, including a young lady I shall call Tessa, who had actually first introduced me to Kiweranga Life Fellowship about a year previously. I also hired Tessa as a laundry lady on her days off work, and over the year we had become good friends, with Tessa often stopping by my place for a chat. Although I did interview Tessa once, much later in the research, as I was keen to get her life story on record, in general she was one of a handful of informants that were not part of the main cohort of interviewees but whom nevertheless were a source of valuable insights.

Tessa was a very earnest and generous young born-again Christian woman with little education and formal career prospects but a fervour and commitment to both her workplace and her religion that enabled her to have a strong network of support in both places. She always struck me as someone who wholeheartedly tried to follow the messages of Kiweranga Life Fellowship, but on this evening at the backpackers' hostel she took me aside and speaking in hushed tones told me that she had something very important to discuss. The pastor, she explained, had been very wrong about the ssenga. To go 'to the bush' and have labia elongation was, in Tessa's mind, absolutely central to being a woman and being able to satisfy your husband in bed, as well as being pleasurable for the woman too. If a woman had not 'been to the bush', Tessa explained, quite exasperated at this point, then a husband would be likely to leave her, and for good reason. Indeed, on then finding out, to her shock, that labia elongation was not practiced in the U.K., and knowing that my partner was from East Africa, she was then adamant that she should take me to a Ssenga, and reassured me that that with the power of certain herbs the Ssenga could still undertake the elongation on a grown woman!

Tessa never did have a chance to take me to the Ssenga, but the point of this story is to stress the importance of an understanding of how born-again Christians understand the 'power' – and indeed the limits – of this form of religion that they have converted to. The very audible murmuring in Kiweranga Life Fellowship that day, as the preacher threw his rhetorical weight against the Buganda practice of visiting a Ssenga, may have signified discontent or shock with the open and frank way that the preacher was talking about sexuality and the 'secret', somewhat

taboo subject of the Ssenga. But some of the whispers from the congregation might also have been murmurs of discontent, of disagreement that being a born-again necessarily meant that this tradition should be dismissed as something not compatible with their lives as Christians.

In talking to those who were born-again in Kampala, there were indeed narratives of Pentecostalism being a 'freedom' from partaking in forms of witchcraft, and in particular ancestral and kin-based rituals, and I write more about ideas of witchcraft in relation to misfortune in Chapter Seven. Certainly such narratives fit the dominant model of Pentecostalism being seen as a 'break from the past', but the example of Tessa's continued belief that going to the Ssenga was important for young girls suggests that this model is not all-encompassing and that not all church rhetoric is necessarily appropriated wholesale by the audience.

In introducing some of the main characteristics of Alpha Tabernacle and Kiweranga Life Fellowship, I am not suggesting that these characteristics, and more particularly, the differences between them, represent the totality of born-again churches operating in Kampala (or beyond). As seen above, there is a multitude of different Pentecostal churches in the city. But by basing my study on the congregations of what at first glance seemed to be two quite different born-again churches, it was also possible to be aware of some similarities across the spectrum of the Pentecostal church scene in Kampala, and at the same remain aware that the differences remind us not to make generalisations about the form that this religion takes, and the adherent-centred approach of this research supports this statement. In the next chapter I extend further this debate about the difficulties of defining what Pentecostalism is, arguing that, in Kampala at least, religious identities are not necessarily so bounded, and that Pentecostal forms of worship are potentially utilised by a far wider population than it might at first seem

CHAPTER FIVE

DIFFICULT DEFINITIONS AND INNUMERABLE IDENTITIES: A NOTE ON 'PENTECOSTALISM' AND BEING 'PENTECOSTAL' IN THE UGANDAN CONTEXT

'Pentecostal', 'Evangelical', or 'Born-again' in Kampala?

Definitions and terms

One of the recurrent issues when researching or writing about contemporary Pentecostalism is the difficulty of definition. Who is a Pentecostal (or born-again, or *mulokole*, or Charismatic Christian)? What kind of church is Pentecostal (or born-again, or Evangelical, or Charismatic)? What kind of sentiments, taxonomies, cosmologies and conceptualisations of the world can be labelled as exclusively Pentecostal (or born-again, or Evangelical, or prosperity gospel)? The variety of terms used in social science (and indeed theology), and the differences between them, such as Pentecostal, Charismatic / charismatic, Evangelical / evangelical, and Prosperity Gospel movement Christianity, means that sharp delineations are not possible. This is in part due to the diffuse and non-centralised administration of such churches, as identified in Chapter One: these are not behemoth dominations such as Roman Catholicism or Anglicanism with centralised management and (to an extent) more structured control over content, form and discourse. In the context of Kampala, new churches open regularly, without official denominational affiliation or membership, and often without even a 'mother' church (a larger more established church which then 'births', or starts, a smaller church under its general care and leadership).

Furthermore, this difficulty in delineating between denominational or definitive boundaries is made all the more obtuse in the Ugandan context in which terms used in global scholarship do not necessarily hold the same definitions in the understanding of Ugandans. For example, scholars might assert that the difference between 'Evangelical' and 'Pentecostal' is that whereas it would be likely that proselytization would be important to both, a Pentecostal church would also focus on the more embodied displays of the 'Gifts of the Holy Spirit'

(glossolalia and faith healing, for example), whereas an Evangelical church would not. However, in Uganda, such delineations are not necessarily made: a neighbourhood church with 'Evangelical' in its name may be known to local people as a 'deliverance' church,³⁸ whereas a congregation taking the name 'Pentecostal' might be less exuberant, and have less obvious embodied displays of the 'Gifts of the Holy Spirit', than a nearby Anglican church, for example. Furthermore, what became clear from my research in Kampala is that the term 'Pentecostal' is rarely used by either churches or adherents.³⁹ Instead, I found that the phrase 'born-again' and the term 'savedee' (a Ugandan English word) were far more commonly used, to describe both the churches and the adherents to this religion.⁴⁰ Add to this the indigenous East African '*balokole*' movement in the Church of Uganda (the Anglican Church) and the fact that born-again Christians in neo-Pentecostal churches may *also* self-identify as *balokole*, and it is evident that the task of defining Ugandan Pentecostalism is, at least in the context of Kampala, something of futile one.

In addition, it has been identified that some 'mainline' churches in Africa have adopted some forms of Pentecostal-charismatic practice, what Gifford calls the "charismatization" of mission churches (2004a:172), in an attempt, it has been argued, to try to compete with Pentecostalism's growing popularity (see Gifford, 2004b:38; Meyer, 2004). The most immediately apparent of these churches that have undergone a process of 'charismatization' is certainly the group of Roman Catholics who go by the name of Catholic Charismatics (see the work of Csordas, 1990).⁴¹ There is also evidence of such 'charismatization' of officially non-Pentecostal churches in Uganda (Jones, 2005), and therefore, the boundaries of Pentecostal or charismatic forms of Christianity can be seen to extend beyond those church spaces that can easily be acknowledged as 'Pentecostal'.

³⁸ Indeed, 'Kiwera Evangelical Church', a relatively new church in the neighbourhood of Kiwera was a good example of such a difference in use of terms, as it was primarily regarded as a deliverance church.

³⁹ There are a few exceptions, notably Kampala Pentecostal Church (now Watoto), which itself was founded by a Canadian. Otherwise, few churches will use the word 'Pentecostal' in their name.

⁴⁰ In this thesis, I use 'Pentecostal', 'born-again', and '*savedee*' interchangeably.

⁴¹ Indeed, in Uganda the term 'Charismatics' was thought to specifically refer to this group of worshippers, rather than another term for those who practice forms of Pentecostalism but not under the Catholic church, as it used in some academic literature.

Pentecostalism and continuity / discontinuity

If it is a difficult enough task delineating boundaries between churches, denominations, and Christian collective movements in Uganda, the same must also be said for individual Christian identities. As identified in the introduction, a pervasive understanding amongst social scientists of 'born-again' Christianity, as the term itself implies, has asserted that conversion results in a radical shift in that convert's identity, including behavioural and cultural change, and moral and cosmological sensibilities: Bennetta Jules-Rosette, for example, discusses conversion in terms of powerful 'shocks', of dramatic change (1975:135). Conversion has thus been seen as a 'break from the past' (Meyer, 1998) not only in terms of individual identification, but also in terms of relationships with kin and culture.

More recent scholarly conversations, which have broadly debated the extent to which Pentecostalism can be seen as a form of discontinuity from the past, can however be said to have engendered a more subtle understanding of the conversion experience, seeing religious identity change in a more multi-faceted and complex light. Thus Engelke asks whether we can actually call it conversion at all, highlighting that even as "proponents of discontinuity point out, the 'break' with which Pentecostal churches are concerned is not necessarily borne out in practice" (2004:106). His own work found that the dramatic conversion exemplified in the work of Jules-Rosette, for example, was not reflected in the experiences of the people he came to know in Zimbabwe, for whom conversion was more "gradual and piecemeal" (2004:105). Indeed, Meyer herself, in later work (2004), has suggested that despite Pentecostalism's resonance with modernity and overt dismissal of local traditional cultural forms, its acknowledgement of the agency of traditional (non-Christian) spirit forms and its "ongoing concern with deliverance" means that what she calls the "self-ascribed project to break with what Pentecostals discursively construct as the "forces of the past"" (2004:457) is an impossible feat. On a less individual level, Ellis and Ter Haar have argued that Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity is less of a "major historical rupture" (2007:388) than part of a way of thinking about the spirit world in Africa, that whilst maybe changing, is still very much evident.

However, in acknowledging that conversion may not be such an instantaneous

'shock' as it has been previously portrayed, does not mean that Engelke (2004) is suggesting that this less-dramatic conversion necessarily entails that the follower does *not* experience, or desire, change in their identity, or the cultural forms with which they engage. Instead, he argues for a more subtle understanding, and I suggest that conversion could be described as a kind of mediation, or oscillation, between the pre-conversion and post-conversion cultures and identities, even if the rhetoric of breaking with the past is strong. Indeed Engelke argues that Gaylord, the protagonist who forms the main case study of his publication, both "looks forward" and rejects some parts of his old customs, *but* in other aspects, "their traces remain" (2004:105).

Furthermore, in the Ugandan context, Jones has suggested that born-again Christianity in Uganda is "less exclusionary" (2005:501) than Pentecostal churches that other scholars have studied (particularly in the west of the continent). For the rural Pentecostal Assemblies of God members that Jones researched in eastern Uganda, not only did they not intend to be "divisive" by converting to this form of Christianity, but he acknowledges that "[f]or born-again" Christians, the doctrine of personal salvation, the expressed belief in withdrawing from a world of sin, of making a "complete break with the past" has to rub along with the economic, social and political necessities that govern life" (2005:513). In such ways, therefore, Jones shows how these converts continue to play a role, and participate in, other institutional forms of collective association, such as burial societies, local courts, and parent-teacher associations. Thus he argues that, in his case study at least, the split between those who were Pentecostal and those who were not was not particularly emphasised (see also the work of Gifford, 1998 with regards to Uganda).

Engelke (2004) still concludes that we need to take African narratives of breaks and of discontinuity seriously, arguing that anthropologists who highlight the continuity in identity and cultural practice post-conversion are potentially guilty of a kind of nostalgia, and of wanting to maintain 'otherness' and 'tradition' in our accounts of the people we study in the face of encroaching and globalising 'modernity', a valid concern. However, these more multi-layered understandings of conversion and religious plurality are refreshing, and I would argue that an understanding of conversion and identity change in terms of a mediation, or an

oscillation, more realistically reflect real-life experiences. Although this thesis is not primarily concerned with the conversion experience per se, the debates highlighted above speak as much about the decision to convert, or the conversion experience, as much as they do about how we can understand religious identities. I have highlighted the work above precisely because one of the most striking outcomes of my data collection was indeed the fluidity of religious identity. Whilst these findings were 'stumbled upon' more later in the research period, and thus were not as extensively researched as I would have liked, they hinted at the potential for a more subtle and less sharply delineated understanding of born-again identities in Africa.

Shifting identities in Kiweranga

As identified in Chapter One, the interviews that I conducted with residents of Kiweranga who initially self-identified as not being 'born-again' came to be particularly illuminating, and I suggest they raise some important questions about how we can understand religious identity and social change. As is discussed in more detail in Appendix A (on methods), the aim of interviewing some people who did not identify as Pentecostal was to have some form of checking about whether the themes that I thought were salient and significant to be writing about the Pentecostal cohort were indeed exclusive to born-again Christians. Simply put, were particular phenomena experienced or conceptualised about in a certain way *only* by the Pentecostals or also by others? As much as I could ascertain then, the social phenomena that I discuss in this thesis were exclusive to the born-again informants I knew and interviewed, and if not exclusively so then this is made clear. They were instances in which it can be safe to say that the adoption of this particular belief system had caused an appropriation of concepts and behaviours different to those who had not adopted that belief system. However, in addition to acting as a form of check and balance against which emerging ideas about the Pentecostals could be compared, the process of interviewing those who did not (initially) self-identify as born-again Christian also brought to light some very interesting wider issues on religious identity, which as I have acknowledged above, I suggest are worth highlighting.

Despite expressing that they adhered to a non-Pentecostal religious belief system when first informally meeting them, a significant number of the those who were interviewed because at first they said were not born-again later identified to some degree as a born-again Christian, or explained how they attended what can be called Pentecostal churches in addition to their 'home' (non-Pentecostal) church. One informant, Sally, identified as a Catholic but later told me she was born-again; Pamela self-identified as Anglican but after talking to her more she told us that she was a *mulokole*; Frances explained to us how although he considered himself a Catholic, he would go to Kiweranga Life Fellowship church for prayers from the pastors; and although Pascal told us he was a Catholic, it became clear later on that he wanted to convert to born-again Christianity, and had for a long time been visiting Kiweranga Life Fellowship with his (already converted) wife.

Whilst four informants out of a sample of thirteen (referring to those 'non-Pentecostals' who were interviewed twice) is not statistically significant, listening to the life stories of all of those thirteen informants, it is clear that religious identity in Uganda is somewhat fluid, and that conversion is certainly not always for existential or particularly spiritual reasons. In addition to Sally, Pamela, Frances and Pascal, two other non-Pentecostal informants had converted from Catholicism to Islam for more prosaic or this-worldly reasons. Rabiah (who changed her name from Bernice after converting to Islam), for example, expressed that she converted because she admired her Muslim aunt, explaining that, "*I used to admire her, the way she was dressing*". [From an interview with Rabiah, 3rd July 2009.] In the case of Abraham, after observing the not-so-salubrious behaviour of his Catholic father in comparison to his Muslim mother, he concluded that a Muslim way of life was more moral and less likely to have 'strife'. [From interviews with Abraham, 14th July and 22nd October 2009.] Furthermore, a local stallholder called Norma, who converted from Anglicanism to Roman Catholicism after marrying her Catholic husband, explained to us that she did not see any difference between the two, except that the Catholics used a *vanjiri* (their own prayer book) in addition to the Bible, and that the Catholics had some different hymns, some of which she knew from her village anyway. [From interviews with Norma, 4th May and 7th October 2009.] Converting for Norma then was not a significant existential, spiritual or social change to her everyday life or way of thinking about the world.

Whether reasons for conversion are spiritual or prosaic, gradual or virtually instantaneous, however, does not necessarily impact on the sincerity of the individual's venture to embrace a new way of life. (And indeed, it is not the place of an anthropological study to assess the sincerity or authenticity, or otherwise, of religious belief, for that would be incorrectly assuming that some authentic 'true' standard of a belief system existed and was in some way measurable.) Likewise, if a person participates simultaneously in multiple forms of religious belief this does not mean that what may seem contradictory to an outsider is necessarily so for them.

We therefore come to the case of Sally, who was introduced above, and was one of the more salient examples of someone who mixes multiple different forms of religious worship and affiliation from the research I carried out in Kampala. Not only does her case support the importance of interviewing participants more than once, but it also reminds us that we cannot judge a person's religious affiliations by either observed symbols of religious identity or informants' initial declarations of religious affiliation and identity.

Being Catholic and born-again: a case study

Sally was a middle-aged lady who intermittently sold *matooke* (one of the staple foods of central Uganda, a type of savoury banana) at a small wooden structure placed on one of the unpaved pathways that led down to my home near the wetlands in Kiweranga. When the weather was sunny Sally was to be found sitting outside her wooden kiosk on a small stool, peeling fingers of *matooke* ready to be sold to local housewives and housemaids who were willing to pay a few extra shillings for the added convenience of buying their *matooke* already peeled. No other seller of *matooke* in the immediate vicinity offered this value-added product of ready-peeled *matooke*, and this was one of the many ways in which Sally used her creativity to think of different ways to earn an income, and in through doing so I met her: to walk to most places in the neighbourhood, I would have to pass by Sally, who more often than not would be sat peeling the *matooke*, and we would strike up pleasantries. Sally was a sociable and chatty woman, and quite often other women would stop by on their way to or from the market, the well, the church, or wherever they were travelling, and take the chance to have a rest and sit and converse with Sally. Therefore, I could not help but often stop myself and

have a conversation with these women, as they always wanted to greet the novel *muzungu* (white person or foreigner) that was passing. Through these ways I came to know Sally.

I had often noticed that she wore a wooden crucifix on a long necklace which hung over her dress and apron, and so when I became interested in meeting people in the neighbourhood that were not Pentecostal, I approached Sally, taking the crucifix as a public sign that she was a Roman Catholic. And indeed, in one of our informal chats by the road-side, before I asked her if she could become an interviewee, Sally confirmed to me that she was a Catholic. It therefore came as no surprise in our first interview, when as we sat on a small bench in her small but homely one-roomed house, Sally started talking enthusiastically about her involvement in the local Catholic church. She was a member of the choir, something she especially loved to do as her eyesight had deteriorated, and although she could not therefore read the Bible very well, she had memorised the hymns and enjoyed participating in the church in this way. Indeed Sally also explained to us how she was also a member of what she called in the local vernacular, the 'Yudo Tadayo' group – a group of Catholics who worshipped Saint Jude Thaddeus, or St. Jude, the Patron Saint of 'lost causes'.⁴² In this way then, we could see that Sally was utilising different forms of collective religious practice in meeting her spiritual (and other) needs, not only attending Catholic mass and joining the choir as a regular Roman Catholic, but also joining a sub-group of believers that existed specifically in order to seek intervention and grace from a particular Saint that, it was believed, might be able to ease their woes. And yet being a member of 'Yudo Tadayo' meant that she still certainly identified as a Catholic. It was in the second interview that we discovered that Sally had multiple religious identities (and furthermore, that these were not necessarily seen by her as contradictory).

In that second interview with Sally, which was again in her home, we were discussing another issue not directly related to religious identity, and we heard how Sally also identified as a born-again Christian. Sally lived alone, having never married and after her two children had both died as small children. She was, however, partly responsible for her orphaned nieces and nephews, after all her

⁴² For an excellent ethnography on worshippers of St. Jude in the United States, see Orsi, 1998.

brothers and sisters had died of AIDS. She spoke often of how she had felt the 'burden of AIDS' in her family. As she explained it, "*when my people got sick they said that they had bewitched them but if you could look at them keenly they had aids. Later they died. The kids died, the adults died and the young has died but who am I that I have remained? So I became saved. And now I pray in the church of born-again*". [Interview with Sally, 12th October 2009.] To Sally, not only did the fact that she remained alive when so many of her relatives had died from AIDS mean that God had protected her, but she also felt that her Catholic faith was not enough for her to express her thanks to God. Instead, it was in the born-again church that Sally felt she could express that gratitude.

However, Sally's fluid religious identity was not just for reasons of supposed spiritual satisfaction. She also utilised her multiple religious identities for practical gains. To Sally, praying to St. Jude, being the Patron Saint of Lost Causes, was seen as more useful than 'regular' Catholic prayers. In Sally's understanding, St. Jude was, "*a white person and he would pray for people like us - the poor, the sick, countries that have wars, the homes that don't have peace, people looking for jobs*". [Interview with Sally, 30th June 2009.] In this way, she thought that praying as part of the Yudo Tadayo group was particularly effective for people who were suffering. Furthermore, practical reasons also led her to the Pentecostal church she attended, which was a deliverance church. When Sally felt the inclination to 'become' born-again, she went to this deliverance church not only because she did not think one could become born-again in a Catholic church, but she also chose, and continued to attend, this Pentecostal church because she had heard that the 'Prophet' (as sole leader of this church self-identified as being) apparently had a good reputation as a faith healer, and so she explained that, "*when I feel something is very painful now on Tuesday and Thursday I go there*". [Interview with Sally, 12th October 2009.] In addition to the reasons outlined, Sally also told us that she liked to attend the deliverance church for help with her business, the prophet encouraging her at one time to bring into church the local herbs she had been using as a talisman to attract business on her *matooke* stall, which he subsequently burnt, offering instead his prophetic words that her business would be successful. Not only can it therefore be seen that Sally utilises different communal religious spaces for different reasons, but we also discover another layer to her syncretic religious sensibilities, that of the use of local traditional

forms of herbal remedies, herbalism, or witchcraft, even if she was then encouraged not to use them.

Sally's use of a talisman of local herbs in an attempt to bring success to her business is worth mentioning. It was not uncommon to hear about the use of traditional Bugandan forms of spiritual intervention in attracting business. For example, Pamela, another neighbour, who self-identified as Protestant, but later expressed that she was a *mulokole*, had previously been a trader at Kiweranga market at the busy trading post on the main road, a potentially very lucrative spot, although of course market fees were correspondingly high. But despite her business going well at first, Pamela asserted that sales started to fall due to what she believed was witchcraft carried out by envious fellow market traders. Furthermore, she explained to us how she had seen what she thought of as a potentially deadly form of witchcraft placed at another trader's stall and that subsequently, that trader had died, which Pamela attributed to the witchcraft. According to Pamela, a jealous market woman had placed a '*mumbwa*', a mixture of clay and certain herbs, under the sackcloth on the afflicted woman's stall when she had temporarily left the market. Soon after the *mumbwa* had been placed, the victim had died, and Pamela (along with others) came to the conclusion that it was the jealous market trader's use of this local talisman that had caused the death of the other woman. Furthermore, Pamela once found a coin had been placed under the sackcloth on her stall, another object of witchcraft, and she attributed her bad sales at the time to this coin. The use of the *mumbwa* and the coin scared Pamela, and so she decided to leave Kiweranga market and instead set up a small stall outside her home, on another pathway through the residential areas, also selling *matooke* (unpeeled), along with other vegetables and some dried fish.

In Sally's case, the herbs she used were not *mumbwa*, but were specifically for attracting business to her *matooke* stall. Although Peel (1977), in his historical analysis of the process of conversion to missionary religions in Africa has argued that the Baganda, in relation to other African Kingdoms, could be seen as less 'magical' and more secular (in the sense that the roles of the King, or Kabaka, are not all strongly related to religious beliefs), he does also write that the Baganda did still "consult *lubale* [deities] mediums as a result of sickness or personal ill

fortune" (1997:119; italics added).⁴³ Indeed, some of the earliest ethnographic data from the region, by Roscoe, also acknowledges that fetiches were being used for protection and blessings in early Twentieth-Century Buganda religion (Roscoe, 2005 [1911]; see also Roscoe, 1969 [1921]). As can be seen from the examples of Sally and Pamela, use of traditional herbal fetiches, or consultations with mediums or traditional herbalists, is still part of the fabric of spiritual and religious life for some in Kampala. As identified in Chapter Four, although the Pentecostal church rarely negates the existence, or the potential power, of non-Christian local spirit forms, it preaches that born-again Christians should not utilise them as remedies for afflictions or problems, or as a lucky talisman. However, although in general the informants I spoke to in Kampala expressed that they did not utilise non-Christian religious or traditional rituals, we can see with the example of Sally here (and Tessa in Chapter Four), that the separation between the two may not be as completely stark as it may at first seem.

Returning to Sally and her syncretic religious identity then, I discovered that despite attending this Pentecostal deliverance church, which had encouraged her to burn her talisman, Sally continued to attend Catholic services and thus maintained her identity as a Catholic after she had 'become saved'. And yet, to confuse things further, Sally also told us that the deliverance church was a place for "*every religion*", explaining that, "*when you enter you just pray the way you want - for us when we go there we make the sign of the cross*". [Interview with Sally, 12th October 2009.] So Sally not only had multiple religious identities but also perceived a church that both followers of the church and academics who study that religious phenomenon think (broadly) as being somehow exclusive and bounded in its culture and discourse as not necessarily being so, but instead saw it as a form of pan-religious resource. Furthermore, she is open about her attendance to this deliverance church to her Catholic brothers and sisters at her 'home' church, and asserted in her interview that these fellow church-goers are supportive of her attendance at other religious institutions, such as the deliverance church. She explained that "*I went there and got healed - what is wrong with that? I have not gone there to bewitch or do anything wrong but to be healed and they are happy because they say I have changed my character*" [Interview with Sally, 12th October 2009].

⁴³ *Lubale* is the Luganda word for various deities (see Peel, 1977:117).

Although she does not mention whether she has discussed her actual self-identification as a born-again with her Catholic fellow worshippers, it seems clear then that at least the idea of utilising different religious offerings, such as healing churches, was not seen, at this local level, as contrary to membership or teachings of the Catholic Church. This is not to say, however, that there was not some tension with her attachments to the other forms of religion with which she identified – there was. At one time she talked about how she ensured that she tithed regularly at the Catholic church because she wanted to be buried as a Catholic and, in her understanding of the religion, “*when you don’t give tithes they don’t bury you, they just drop you there*”, whereas later in the same interview she explained that actually, she would be interested in her people back in the village ‘giving her a chance’ to be buried as a born-again Christian. [Interview with Sally, 12th October 2009.] Furthermore, she explained to me that she no longer took communion in the Catholic church “*because I can’t serve two kings at a go because my heart now belongs more to [the born-again church]*” [Interview with Sally, 12th October 2009.] We could therefore see towards the end of the second interview that Sally was feeling that her religious allegiance swung more towards being born-again, but it is also clear that we should not make any presumptions that this meant that Sally did not feel like a Catholic as well.

In researching religious identity, appropriation and social change then, how do we deal with cases such as Sally’s? Returning to the point made earlier, should we disregard Sally’s case as atypical, as not *really* Catholic or not *really* born-again Christian? Virtually all of those 39 Pentecostals in the main cohort self-identified as born-again, but of course this is to be expected considering the locations in which I met them were born-again spaces, and of course, considering that Pentecostal Christianity is particularly marked in the ways in which faith is performed to selves and others to legitimate ‘authenticity’. As the group of apparent ‘non-Pentecostals’ shows, other members of the congregation whom I did not talk to might not have primarily considered themselves as born-again if one had met them outside of the born-again space.

This second group of informants then has proved to be especially valuable, as a check on the exclusivity of the behaviours and concepts of those who identify as born-again, but also as a warning against generalisations about the exclusivity of

Pentecostalism itself. Indeed, one informant from the group of Pentecostals, an elderly but energetic lady I call Phoebe, did also identify at a later date as being a member of the Church of Uganda. That Phoebe told us later on was not because she had been hiding it, or wanting to keep it secret from us, but it was just that the issue of her identifying as an Anglican in addition to being born-again was simply something that had not come up in conversation.



Plate 4. Born-again Christian poster in the home of Phoebe, proclaiming that “My House is Protected by the Blood of Christ”. Photo taken by author.

This bricolage of religious identity could also be seen on display in Phoebe’s house: in addition to the types of posters that were commonly seen in the homes of born-again Christians, such as that shown above in Plate 4 which announces that ‘My House is Protected by the Blood of Christ’, she also displayed things from the Anglican Church, as seen in Plate 5 (below), a calendar with the photo of the Anglican Bishop of Kampala, whom Phoebe remarked was a very good Bishop. These different expressions of her identity in material form were not incongruous

to Phoebe: she claimed she was born-again, and yet 'belonged' to the Anglicans, and this was simply normal to her. In addition, in the early days that we knew Phoebe, she was caring for her husband, who was suffering from the effects of a recent stroke, and was bed-ridden. In her attempts to relieve his suffering, Phoebe would go to Pentecostal deliverance services to enable her husband's shirts to be blessed, which she would then dress her husband with, in the belief that this would help him heal.

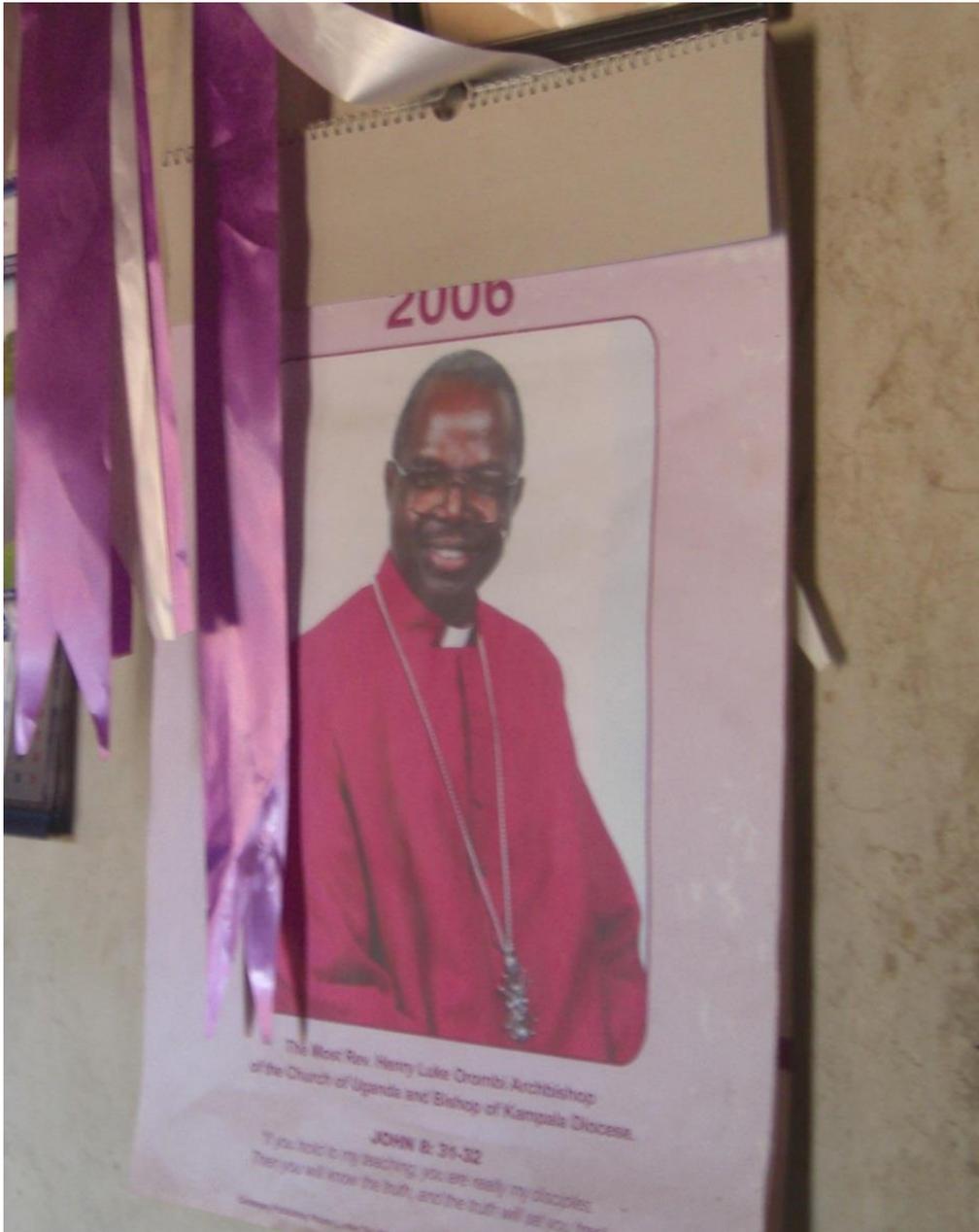


Plate 5. Anglican calendar in the home of Phoebe, showing Most Rev. Henry Luke Orombi, the Church of Uganda Bishop of Kampala. Photo taken by author.

Moving on from the debate regarding post-conversion cultural continuity / discontinuity, or instantaneous / gradual conversion, therefore, I suggest that Pentecostalism or born-again Christianity is not as 'Other' or alternative a religion in Uganda (and quite potentially in other predominantly Christian sub-Saharan African countries) as might initially be thought. Despite the protestations of some of its committed followers, who of course not only see themselves as being 'saved' from a previous religion that is retrospectively thought to have been false, but stop considering their adopted spiritual belief system a 'religion' at all, instead regarding it as a faith,⁴⁴ it is evident that born-again Christianity has become 'mainstream' in the Ugandan religious environment, and has become a religion that is consumed by not only its devotees but by others who might not initially self-identify as born-again or 'saved'.

Just as self-identified Pentecostal interviewees would 'church-shop' for particular needs – attending a deliverance church in the hope for a cure for a bad back, whilst also going to 'home' church on Sunday, for example – so would those who visited the Father or Reverend on Sunday also visit the Pastor (or Prophet) later in the week for specific prayers. As was identified in the previous chapter, Pentecostal places of worship are not only limited to familiar church structures that have a regular Sunday service. Different church events throughout the week, crusades (evangelical rallies) that explicitly aim to bring the church out into the public (non-saved) domain, 'deliverance' services that are frequented by people looking for remedies to specific ailments and troubles, alternative worship spaces such as the Prayer Mountain, and Pentecostal radio; all entail a religion that is physically accessible to many. And indeed, it can be seen that its easy appropriation as an additional spiritual-religious consumable by both Catholics and Protestants (yet not, to my experience, to Muslims, which in itself is another potential area of fascinating research), has made Pentecostalism in Uganda now so much more mainstream.

In this respect, Hunt's (2000) assertion that the 'simple theodicies' of evangelical Christianity, which bridge the dichotomy between an altruistic and sacrificial Christianity and a Western ideology of increasing consumption, accumulation and

⁴⁴ The implication being that following a 'religion' is considered to be blindly following a set orthodoxy rather than having some form of real-time one-to-one relationship with God.

materialism, is part of the reason for its popularity on the “‘theological market place’ of contemporary religion” (2000:84, following Greely, 1981), could also be reflected in Pentecostal Christianity in Africa. Indeed, this could be seen in the case of Sally herself, whose favourite service in the born-again ‘deliverance’ church that she attended (in addition to her continued involvement in the Catholic church), was the Tuesday night ‘Millionaires’ Club’, an service which, unsurprisingly, was aimed at increasing business success through divine intervention. Having burnt her local lucky herbs, Sally was on the hunt for alternative means to increase her peeled *matooke* sales.

As Asamoah-Gyadu (2005) acknowledges, then, plurality is not uncommon in Africa – people go to many different places for help, in what he terms “multiple religious insurance” (2005:110). But with regards to Pentecostalism this rhetoric of conversion and discontinuity has hidden somewhat the extent to which others that seemingly might not have converted still participate in born-again Christian practice, and, to an extent, simultaneously identify as Pentecostal / born-again in addition to their other religious identity. The religious pluralism in terms of Pentecostalism is far more, therefore, than simply an acknowledgement, and subsequent subsuming, of non-Christian spirit forms (see Zehner, 1996, 2005), but is used as an ‘insurance’ by many more than it might at first seem. Indeed, this is supported by the work of Smith (2004) who has also argued along similar lines, based on his work in Nigeria, that even those who are not ‘officially’ Pentecostal may often call themselves born-again, and even those that do not identify as being so are using the rhetoric and the discourse that Pentecostalism is using. In these ways he also concurs with other scholars (as identified in Chapter One) that the reach of Pentecostal Christianity, in Africa at least, is further than simply its official congregations, and that the “dramatic rise of ‘born-again’ Christianity has generated what could arguably called an entire ‘cultural style’” (Smith, 2004:428, following the work of Ferguson 1999).

In addition therefore to serving as useful tools with which to think about the benefits and limits of researching and writing about what has been seen as a bounded religious movement such as Pentecostalism, an agenda which of course was the researcher’s, speaking to the second ‘non-Pentecostal’ group of interviewees has also produced relevant data for inclusion into the thesis proper

as it were. The religious identities of these informants might have been *ostensibly* more complex and multiple than the main group of self-identified Pentecostals, but some of those informants did identify, at some point, as being born-again. Thus, for example, in Chapter 8 on 'Career Christians', we hear about Pascal, a member of this secondary cohort of informants, who primarily identified as a Catholic but whose narratives of why he had become more and more attracted to conversion to born-again Christianity reflect the relationships young Pentecostal (primarily male) 'Career Christians' have between their faith, their livelihoods and perceived futures.

As is evident, the definitional field is complex and opaque. The sheer variety of forms of worship and identifications means that, as Burdick (1993) explains, one cannot really study 'Protestantism' anymore, but I also suggest that it is becoming increasingly difficult to study not only 'Pentecostalism', or at least not with any necessarily definitive boundaries, but also 'Pentecostal'. Engelke's work on less dramatic conversions does not negate that becoming 'born-again' may indeed cause identity and cultural change, but instead supports the idea that there is great benefit in more subtle understandings. He suggests that "there is value in recognizing 'they are trying to change'" (2004:106), and I read this, in part, as Engelke calling for a more grounded understanding of religious identity. Rather than trying to fit the beliefs and behaviours of informants into neat pre-determined categories, it is far more valid and reflective of lived lives to allow for these potentially more obtuse, and sometimes messy, self-identifications. As Meyer suggests, the labels that others use to describe their church, and their personal faith, should be seen as "part and parcel of a politics of self-representation" (2004:452). Therefore, if religious identification is in the eye of the beholder, and not the researcher, we have to take the narratives of informants such as Pascal and Sally, and Phoebe, seriously.

CHAPTER SIX

'POSITIVE CONFESSIONS': FUTURE-BUILDING THROUGH PENTECOSTAL SPEECH

“Even if you wake up with nothing, you should thank God and prophesy yourself. For example, see Proverbs 18:21. It says that death and life are in the power of the tongue. Our tongue can create anything. I wake up and I say “Lord, I’m going to get this, and this, and this.”⁴⁵ [Interview with Judith, 9th October 2009.]

There is no doubt that speech is central to Pentecostal Christian practice: glossolalia (or ‘speaking in tongues’), spoken prayers, testimonies, preaching, and evangelism; it seems that to *be* a Pentecostal Christian, one has to speak. Despite scholarly interest surrounding the more physical and bodily Pentecostal practices, such as faith healing and being ‘slain in the spirit’, it must not be forgotten that much Pentecostal religious practice is verbal. Speech has been seen as central to Pentecostal and evangelical Protestantism in all its forms (see Keane, 1997:677; Robbins, 2001:904; Coleman, 2006:44-45; Bielo, 2009:15-16), and is the main form through which believers are initially converted, and continue to re-create and solidify their identity as a born-again Christian vis-à-vis those who are not saved. Indeed, at the very moment of becoming ‘born-again’, of converting to Pentecostalism, it is through the act of speaking that transformation from an unbeliever to ‘a child of God’ is thought to be possible. As one informant explained it to me,

“when you’re accepting Jesus as your personal saviour you speak, by the mouth: ‘I denounce all sin in my life from adultery, stealing, and lying to other people, and all satanic things. I believe by my name that I’ve become born again in Jesus’ name’. So after speaking those things you remain a person of God”. [Interview with Martha, 3rd February 2009].

⁴⁵ Proverbs 18:21 reads, “[w]hat you say can preserve life or destroy it; so you must accept the consequences of your words” (Good News Bible).

This stress on the power of words should come as no surprise for those with an understanding of Christianity. In the Pentecostal discourse that I heard preached from the pulpits of Kampala's born-again churches (as indeed it can be heard in other forms of Christianity), there is a belief that in the beginning of all creation not only did God create 'The Word', but in fact God *was* 'The Word' and therefore, theologically speaking, the basis of all truth lies within forms of words, whether spoken or written. As one interviewee expressed it,

"only a word... He used the word to change the world. He used the word to create the man [human]. He used the word to do everything you see in earth...The word came in the womb of the woman and the Holy Spirit covered the word and the word became a human being and they gave the human being a name - Jesus". [Interview with Luke, 9th March 2009].

To Pentecostal Christians then, there is no doubt that there is a theological and supernatural understanding of the potential power of words.

In this chapter, however, I will explore one particular form of Pentecostal speech that I encountered during fieldwork, that of 'positive confession'. In particular I suggest that an understanding of what born-again Christians call 'positive confessions' is relevant to debates about the extent to which contemporary Pentecostal Christians in the developing world may be said to exhibit transformative 'agency', and have control to (or power to) change their lives and their futures. This chapter, therefore, is an attempt to answer in part the following research question: 'how does such belief and participation in Pentecostal Christianity have an impact on believers' responses to poverty, wealth and their attempts to mediate their (especially economic) future wellbeing?', and also the sub-question of 'what are the everyday means Pentecostal Christians in Kampala use in their attempts to mediate that future economic wellbeing?'

I will suggest that there are ways in which adherence to Pentecostal Christianity in urban Uganda, as witnessed in both churches in my research, allows the adherent to *feel* they have some control over their lives, some control over the numerous vagaries of living in urban Uganda, and that central to this feeling of self-control is the concept of 'positive confession'. I will be exploring how the Pentecostal belief that words spoken in positive confessions are actively ensuring future prosperity

and wellbeing, what the speaker believes are their God-given 'rights', helps to create this *sense* of agency in the believer. However, I will also suggest that although positive confessions might go some way in creating this feeling of personal control over life and an outlook that does not disregard a more fulfilling and promising future, caution should be taken in understanding these Pentecostal practices as necessarily bringing *efficacious agency* to believers. In fact, despite a discourse that asserts the believer has the 'right' to those things she has prayed for in positive confession, the concomitant idea that when those things that are prayed for might transpire is not known, not knowable, and not able to be questioned. In following the work of Guyer (2007) on evangelical notions of time, I therefore argue that there is a potentially problematic discourse running through the rhetoric of positive confessions that proscribes any doubt, and furthermore, sees the non-arrival of the gifts of God as potentially the fault of the believer, an issue I continue in the next chapter.

Furthermore, in this chapter I continue by suggesting that despite its apparently more 'free' form of spoken practice in comparison to more liturgical belief systems (such as Islam or Roman Catholicism), worshippers of Pentecostal Christianity are equally inculcated into what Bourdieu (1991) calls a 'linguistic habitus'. The choice of particular words spoken might be less prescriptive, but the rhetoric is not: what not to speak, what to speak about, and ideas of *what speech does*, are all learned constituents of the everyday Pentecostal performative repertoire of speech. Therefore, following my conceptual framework and in acknowledging the importance of an understanding of agency through the lens of power, I shall suggest that in understanding positive confessions, and Pentecostal speech practices more generally, we must be aware of not only the audiences of such speech acts, both human and other, but also of the multiple authors of the discourse of 'positive confession'.

The meaning of 'positive confession': everyday and ritual speech

What exactly is meant then by the term 'positive confession'? Before exploring the issues highlighted above it needs to be defined what this term means, as not only is it little explored in the literature on Pentecostal Christianity (with the

exception of the work of Simon Coleman (2004; 2006)), but its meaning is far from definitive.⁴⁶ The English language term ‘positive confession’ was one that was heard used by both informants and preachers whilst doing fieldwork in Kampala. To a greater extent the essence of positive confession is exemplified in the opening quote of this chapter in which Judith tells us that she can inform God, through speaking, that she *will* be the recipient of future possessions, and that even if you are in a state of lack, you must still thank God for what little you do have, or what you have had in the past. Positive confession is a broad term that can refer to many different speech acts, but I understand the defining characteristics that makes these different speech acts be termed positive confessions to be an orientation towards the future: an *expectation* of future benefits to the speaker, through speaking that benefit into being (hence Judith’s assertion that “*death and life are in the power of the tongue*”). Related to this there is a prohibition of doubt that these expected benefits will indeed be forthcoming, which entails thanking God even when times are difficult and those things that were expected do not transpire. Indeed, Coleman, from his work on Swedish Pentecostalism, has rightly identified that a positive confession is a statement made by the believer, ‘in faith’, that “lays claim to God’s provisions and promises” (2006:45), which certainly reflects the form that it took in Uganda, as we will see.⁴⁷

However, whereas Coleman’s earlier work (2004:425) in Sweden identified positive confession as related to the charismatic practice of glossolalia (or ‘speaking in tongues’), what I found was called positive confession by the born-again Christians I met in Uganda did not *necessarily* refer to visibly ritualised

⁴⁶ Gifford (1998:39) briefly mentions that obtaining prosperity through a “positive confession of faith” is a key doctrine of the ‘Faith Gospel’ (read Prosperity Gospel) movement, but does not elaborate further on the practice of positive confession, or its potential implications. In his work of 2009 he also refers to Pentecostal sermon discourse that is similar to that I heard in Kampala, which tells the congregation that they should, for example, give thanks “[w]hether things are working or not” (2009:123), but he does not study the appropriation of this discourse of success through claiming and making positive confessions by the followers of the faith.

⁴⁷ Coleman (2006:45) identifies that he heard the biblical verses from Mark 11:23-24 used in Swedish Pentecostal discourse with regards to the idea of making a ‘positive confession’. This verse reads, “I assure you that whoever tells this hill to get up and throw itself in the sea and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says will happen, it will be done for him. For this reason I tell you: When you pray and ask for something, believe that you have received it, and you will be given whatever you ask for” (Good News Bible).

speech, such as glossolalia or trance-like prayers (although these *could* also take the form of positive confessions and indeed *should* in Pentecostal ideas of practice). There has been much emphasis in anthropological literature on these more 'ritual' forms of Pentecostal speech, from the 'magical' states of possession seemingly experienced in speaking in tongues (see Csordas, 1990; Coleman, 2004), to faith healing (see Csordas, 1992). However, my understanding of positive confessions as practised in Uganda is that it is something that more often refers to quotidian speech events than ritualised ones.⁴⁸

I discovered therefore that the concept of positive confession was used far more broadly to describe many different uses of speech, rather than being a term describing one particular speech event. For example, in addition to prayers, a public testimony, a speech event that is often announced as such to the audience and has a bounded narrative style (see Lawless, 1983; Cucchiari, 1990; Stromberg, 1993), could also be regarded as a positive confession, and I heard members of Bible cell groups often thanking the speaker of a testimony for their 'positive confession'. Likewise, a type of prayer that is called 'self-prophecy' is also likely to be labelled as a positive confession. But in addition to testimony, prayer, and self-prophecy, all of which could still be identified as somewhat ritual speech acts, more everyday conversations could also be understood to be 'positive confessions' - not only conversations with those in positions of authority (such as Pastors), but also those with fellow believers (or indeed non-believers). Positive confessions could consist of both private and public speech acts, and both forms shall be explored in this chapter, including discussing the use of self-prophecy and

⁴⁸ Indeed, it needs to be acknowledged that everyday Pentecostal-charismatic Christianity is not always filled with the spectacular, the dramatic (and 'exotic') and the very visible displays of the 'Gifts of the Holy Spirit'. Speaking in tongues was never explained to me as a means for revelation or transformation, but instead it was expressed that if one spoke in tongues, this was proof that the believer was deemed by God an appropriate vessel for the Holy Spirit. Believers did not have any sense of what was being spoken when they were in states of glossolalia, and although I was told that one of the 'Gifts of the Holy Spirit' was the ability to translate the normally incomprehensible speech of glossolalia into a language that others would understand, I never met or heard of anyone who had this gift. Rather, the impression I got from the act of speaking in tongues was that it was not something any believer expected to understand. Certainly there was a belief in the potential transformational power of faith healing, and believers were delighted when they experienced speaking in tongues, as they saw it as evidence of God's approval of them as a Christian, but, as suggested above, Pentecostal practice is not just about the more obviously ritualised events.

how positive confessions are shared, and encouraged, in Bible cell groups.

I suggest then that understanding what is meant by positive confessions is therefore less an exercise in the taxonomy of different speech acts, and more an exercise in understanding the forms those speech acts take. In this way, 'positive confessions' can be defined as speech acts that, through the words spoken, take the form of the giving of thanks for what the adherent believes God has already done, and/or proclamations about present-day or future events or ways-of-being. They are speech events in which the speaker is 'glorifying' God and that in some way adhere to an idea of 'best practice' with communication with God, whether that communication was in another state of altered consciousness or not (but, as I suggested above, usually not). The more everyday and common usage of the term 'positive confession' that I heard during fieldwork was relating to very conscious, very audible and intelligible spoken words, and the term was more often used to describe communication *to* God, or between fellow believers, rather than any revelatory communication *from* God.

Furthermore, it can be argued that it is *required* of born-again believers to 'glorify' God. As previously identified, the practice of being a born-again Christian is not just for Sundays; it is a form of religiosity that is practised by committed believers on a far more daily basis, and in routine and pedestrian, as well as more obviously ritualised, practices. To Pentecostal Christians then, it makes sense to 'glorify God' – through positive confessions, for example – through as many means as possible, not only through ritualised speech events but also in more everyday encounters and conversations.

Judith and her thanks for the future

Before considering further then, the extent to which positive confessions might well engender future transformations, examples are needed to elucidate what is meant by the term and the forms of speech that are labelled as such. Later in the chapter I explore forms of positive confession in public, group settings, but here I use an example from private speech. The words of Judith that opened this chapter came from a particularly interesting interview in which we were talking at length about the challenges and hardships that she had recently been experiencing in

her life, and are an excellent example of what Pentecostals might call positive confession, and a display of the concomitant idea that speech can transform futures.

On the day of this third (and last) interview with Judith, a single young woman in her mid-twenties who was a member of Kiweranga Life Fellowship, we met in the public restaurant of a local hotel, hidden in the residential neighbourhood on the hill behind Kiweranga. The area further up the hill was a very salubrious locale, with the regal columns of the President's daughter's mansion, and indeed the construction of Kiweranga Life Fellowship's Senior Pastor's new spacious residence, dominating the skyline. Further down however, closer to Kiweranga trading post, the area was occupied by more humble residences that mirrored those in the slums behind the church. This is the area where Judith had lived when we first met her, and although she no longer lived there, after being evicted from her home a few months previously and having had to move from place to place ever since, she still considered this area as home. Her itinerant existence was also the reason that she asked us to meet in the restaurant: at that time a female acquaintance had allowed Judith to temporarily stay in her muzigo, for which Judith gave the woman some money, but Judith did not trust this woman at all, after she suspected the acquaintance of stealing some of her possessions, and so wanted to talk to us somewhere more private.⁴⁹

While we sat in the restaurant eating a local meal of *matooke*, beef and beans (as it was lunchtime and we all seemed hungry, I invited Judith to join us and eat), we talked more about the problems she had recently been facing. When we had first met, Judith had been working in a fish-net factory in Kampala, earning 3,100 Ugandan shillings per day (approximately US\$1.5 at the time of research). Over the twelve months I knew her, the owners of the fish-net factory were blaming the global economic down-turn for a reduction in orders, and there were very few

⁴⁹ Furthermore, another reason Judith gave for wanting to be interviewed away from the house she was temporarily living in was because she suspected that the acquaintance who she stayed with would assume Judith would receive money from me because I was a 'muzungu' (white person, or foreigner). Judith's experiences were not isolated: another informant refused to be interviewed in his home for the second or third interview because after the first interview, a neighbour of his had told his landlady that he must now have lots of money because the neighbour had seen a muzungu visiting. It was for such reasons that we were flexible with interview locations, and would meet interviewees in places where they felt comfortable for us to be there, and to talk. More about interviewing is discussed in Appendix A.

weeks when Judith, who was on a casual contract, could get six days work per week, the amount of work she needed to be able to pay her rent and purchase basic necessities such as food. Judith told us how she had found additional informal work at that time cleaning in the offices of a local pastor (who was from a different church to Kiweranga Life Fellowship), but due pay was rarely forthcoming, meaning that she usually ended up cleaning for free. Coupled with an increase on the rent for her one-room *muzigo* from 50,000 shillings to 70,000 shillings per month, and often being three months' rent in arrears, Judith had found it impossible to make ends meet, and thus after failing to pay her rent for three months in a row, she had been evicted from her home. Subsequently, without enough money to rent another house, she moved between friends and acquaintances, staying for short periods of time with each, and indeed, at one point she became my neighbour: I heard a knock on the door late one evening, and found Judith on my doorstep, wondering if I had some spare food. After my surprise at seeing her in my immediate neighbourhood so late, I discovered that Judith was being temporarily housed in the home of a 'good Samaritan' – someone she did not know well but with whom she had shared her problems one day when they were seated next to each other at church. In fact, I met this lady soon afterwards when sitting in church one afternoon waiting for an interviewee: she was a single mother who mainly worshipped at Kampala Pentecostal Church but would come to Kiweranga Life Fellowship to sweep the floors, something she said God had called her to do, and also to attend the odd service, as it was much closer to home for her. She had been happy to help Judith, and explained that she felt that as a Christian this was her duty. But despite the benevolence of this neighbour of mine, Judith could not stay too long as the house was, just like her previous home, a one-roomed *muzigo*, which was already overcrowded with the host and her teenage daughter. Judith eventually moved out, and returned to moving from one acquaintance to another, ending up staying as a temporary paying tenant at the time of this last interview.

Judith had one young son, Alex, of around ten years old, but because she could not afford to care for him he lived with Judith's elder brother and his two wives, on the other side of the city. She rarely saw her son, although she was obviously very proud of him and talked of him often. During the time after her eviction, however, she would sometimes stay at her brother's house, but she never felt

welcome by her sisters-in-law, and Judith found living there put extra pressures on her meagre income as her family would insist on 'borrowing' any money she did have (with the unstated expectation on both sides that this 'loan' was not repayable as it was a transaction between family members). Furthermore, during the time we knew her it transpired that Judith did not have strong family support networks, or psycho-social ties with her wider family and the community in her home village (in Mpigi district, in the Buganda region outside of the city). She had been rejected from what she thought was her paternal village after villagers insisted that the man she thought was her father was in fact not her biological father, and Judith's mother, whom she had been very close to, had died a few years previously.

It was unsurprising therefore, that without much in the way of strong kinship networks either 'back home' in Mpigi, or in Kiweranga, aside from the church, Judith seemed to throw all her energies into her religious life. She was an extremely energetic and chatty woman, who frequently attended church services and was fond of quoting the Bible and telling her testimonies. Many times she would refer to herself as an 'evangelism woman', and would often pound the streets with Bessie, another informant, trying to 'win souls'. Indeed, this strong religious belief was clearly exemplified in the following narrative, which is being reproduced verbatim from the transcript of this last interview. It was the very end of the interview, and I was asking Judith what she thought the future held for her. She explained to us that,

"If you're chosen from God you can't quit everything. For example, you see my situation; some time ago I got who was conning me and I was broke and didn't even have the money for subsistence. [Conning means 'seducing' or 'flirting' in Ugandan-English, but in this instance Judith is implying that the man was soliciting her for transactional sex]. The man tried to convince me, and get me the money but I said, "no, I've got my God – He will do things in his own time; I will be rich in Jesus' name". That's why it [the Bible] says, "let the poor say they're rich, let the sick say they're well". Even if today I am hungry, tomorrow I'll eat. One day I had nothing; not sugar, not anything. I went to the shop to borrow 1kg of sugar – it was Wednesday and I was going to get money on Saturday. He said, "no, this time no, I

won't give you credit". I said, "okay, I've got 200 shillings - give me a pancake". I came back home, and got water in my cup. I knelt down and said, "God, I thank you for this dry tea; tomorrow I'll get sugar". But then that day I met a friend – he drives the bazungu [the white people, or foreigners] – and he gave me something; I can't remember how much. God was able to do it! The next day I went to the shop, showed him the money and got sugar. He said, "eeh, you mulokole!!"

That's why the Bible says even if today you don't have, don't say tomorrow you won't. Even if you wake up with nothing you should thank God and prophesy yourself. For example, see Proverbs 18:21 – death and life are in the power of the tongue. Our tongue can create anything. I wake up and I say "Lord, I'm going to get this, and this, and this". That time the Lord said, "not tomorrow, today!!" My Father [God] was teaching me – I'm growing in salvation. Today I THANK YOU Lord, not tomorrow. I know the time will come. I've written down my prayer requests on paper and every day I say, "Lord, I want my own husband who knows you, who comes from you" etc. etc., all the things I want. One day I heard from the Lord that, "don't beg from me; thank me for the things that you will get". So now I say, "thank you Lord, for this and this and this". [Interview with Judith, 9th October 2009.]

There are many issues that can be explored in Judith's narrative above: the seeming influence of her faith preventing her from engaging in transactional sex, her wish to have a husband who 'knew God', who was a faithful born-again Christian, and her conception that a benevolent gift from a friend was mediated through divine power, for example. But it is the centrality in Judith's story of the concept of speech as being transformative - as she says, "*death and life are in the power of the tongue*" - that will be explored here. Despite the numerous material and psycho-social difficulties that Judith faced in her life, she had a strong belief in a future that was not only simply satisfactory but *more than comfortable*, a belief that God *would* provide her with those 'things' (for although she did express a hope for a future that included a Christian husband, her expectations were primarily material) that she lacked and that her salary was not able to cover (and indeed, considering the employment market in Kampala, things that any future

salary would also be unlikely to cover). But having a strong belief that her fortunes would be transformed was only part of the process through which, it was believed, this change in her material fortunes would come about. Belief was a crucial part, certainly, but not enough on its own. For Judith to be the recipient of 'God's blessings', she had to *ask for* (or indeed, as was often the case, to *insist on*) those 'gifts' from God, primarily through these various speech acts that are regarded as positive confessions. Judith certainly seemed to think the 'tongue' could create things, but as observers of such belief, we have to ask ourselves whether there is a way in which Judith's words can indeed be seen as efficacious, as somehow enacting that which is requested, or indeed commanded? What is happening when Pentecostals talk about making 'positive confessions'?

Future thinking: the dearth of doubt, the rhetoric of rights

I suggest that it is this future orientation of positive confessions – of looking forward rather than looking back which is particularly interesting to note. Within this schema, a narrative of Pentecostals having a 'right' to those future expected 'gifts from God' and a concomitant proscription against doubting that these 'rights' will materialise in this glorious future, work together to build the boundaries of such speech acts. Without these ideas of rights, a rejection of doubt, and a sense of assuredness towards the future, the positive confession would not, in the eyes (or ears) of the Pentecostal Christian in Kampala, be effective.

Firstly, as is evident in the narrative of Judith, whether in thanking God in advance, or commanding things into being, positive confessions are characterised by a sense of assuredness, a sense that what is being commanded or thanked for, *will* happen: Juliet, referring to her positive confession of advance thanks to God, told us that, "*I know the time will come*". There is no room for doubt within this understanding of the world, of both God's and their own, place in it. For a speech event to be labelled as a positive confession, therefore, the words spoken have to be completely 'positive', as the term suggests – not only about God and what he is thought to have done or is able to do, but also about the (post-conversion) past *and* the future life of the adherent which are, it is believed, evidence of God's

omnipresence and omnipotence. In the Pentecostal understanding of cause and effect, to doubt is to potentially jeopardise the efficacy of those positive confessions, for to express doubt over what God can do in the future is to express doubt over his ability to enact change in believers' lives, and therefore is by extension, an expression of doubt over the very existence of God and the idea that he sent Jesus to be crucified to atone for the sins of humankind. Indeed, this lies at the heart of the difference between the concept of 'confession' in the Pentecostal churches and that in the Roman Catholic Church. For in Pentecostal understandings of their faith, as Jesus has already atoned for the sins of humankind, then the duty of the believer is to simply to recognise the omnipotence, and the omnipresence, of the Trinity.

This then is central to the idea of 'rights'. It was common to hear Pentecostal preachers, and their followers, express that believers need to 'claim' not only their 'gifts' but their 'rights' that, it is believed, God has already given to them. This Pentecostal narrative of 'claiming rights' is certainly not exclusive to believers in Kampala. Not only was it evident in Swedish Pentecostalism (Coleman, 2006), but also in Africa: Gifford (2009:117) has identified the preacher Margaret Wanjiru in Nairobi as asserting that "God has already done it all, and we just have to access what is ours already", and Jeannerat (2009:260) has explained how believers in South Africa are told that they need to *claim* God's promises for themselves, through prayer. Furthermore, in Tanzania Hasu identified that "[b]y virtue of becoming born-again and confessing faith the true believer has the *right* to health and wealth and the possibility of consumption" (2006:680, emphasis in original). *Future* prosperity, security, gifts, and riches: all are thought to have already been created, established, at that moment of crucifixion, and in the process of being 're-born' as 'true' believer, the Pentecostal Christian is, therefore, thought to have a 'right' to these gifts from God.

The believer's task in Kampala then is considered to be one of simply claiming these things, things that are considered to be their 'rights' as a born-again Christian, and then *not doubting* that these gifts, or rights, will come to fruition. This is qualitatively different to other ethnographic examples of how people in Uganda have dealt with misfortune through prayer and religious mediation. The Nyole, from the east of Uganda, for example, do attempt to mediate misfortune

through prayer (Whyte, 1997), but Whyte observes that the goal of the Nyole is a “search for security rather than a quest for certainty” (1997:3), and their prayers of requests are always spoken in the awareness that *uncertainty* is as likely as success, and that pragmatically such prayers and other attempts at alleviating misfortune may not come to anything. In addition, it differs significantly from Heald’s account of divination amongst the Bagisu (also in the east of Uganda). In her ethnography, she explains how people going to seek the advice of a diviner *choose* what that they want to hear and are sceptical of the information given (Heald, 1999:100). Viewing the relationship of diviner and client from a power perspective, she identifies that, unlike in Western medical practice where the doctor is rarely challenged, in Bagisu culture it is the past experiences of the client which are the primary means through which people make decisions, and “where claims are made that transcend it”, for example, by the diviner, “the attitude is likely as not to be sceptical” (Heald, 1999:104).⁵⁰ In the Pentecostal ways of attempting to alleviate problems through speech, however, expressing uncertainty is not only thought to be morally wrong, but pragmatically ineffective.

Therefore, a believer who needs money to send her children to school should, within the concept of ‘positive confession’ pray a prayer of thanks to God for those school fees that (it is expected) ‘He’ *will* be providing, not complaining to God that the school fees have yet to be given. Just as Juliet thought that God had told her “*don’t beg from me*”, I often heard people explain that one must not ‘cry’, ‘beg’ or ‘complain’ to God. To ‘cry’ or ‘complain’ to God that something negative has happened in your life is to suggest God’s potential fallibility, and that some undesirable circumstance is not within ‘his’ control over your life. In reality, born-again Christians in Uganda sometimes do ‘cry’ to God, they do express sorrow in their prayers that life has been far from satisfactory in the past, *and* they do simultaneously ‘beg’ to God for beneficial intervention in their futures. However, there *is* this widespread belief that a ‘crying’ prayer is not only ineffective but could even be counter-productive and may potentially “actually create the very state that it describes” (Coleman, 2004:430). Thus, we return to Judith’s narrative above. She claims that “*[e]ven if you wake up with nothing you should thank God, and prophesy yourself*”. To ‘wake up with nothing’ and ask God why such basic

⁵⁰ Indeed, Heald makes the observation that precisely because of this way of understanding the role of diviners, and of cause and effect, Bagisu diviners were unlikely to be converts to millennial Christian movements.

material necessities are lacking in your life is not only to be doubting God's absolute power over your present (and past) circumstances, but to also be setting into action that which is undesirable (for example, a continuing state of lack) by making what would be called a *negative* confession.

Situating the rhetoric of rights

As we have seen then, the prohibition of doubt is central to idea of 'positive confession' as it is practised in born-again Christianity in Kampala. But related to this is, as mentioned above, the idea that the believer has a 'right' to future wellbeing and prosperity. But what do Pentecostal Christians in the city mean when they talk about 'rights'? It certainly seems that it is potentially no coincidence that the rhetorical use of 'rights' has surfaced in Pentecostal Christianity at the same time as the globalisation of the 'language of rights.'⁵¹ It has been argued that the language of (human) rights is inherently connected with the idea of liberal democracy which sees a person as very much as a bounded individual (Englund, 2004), in ways similar to the apparent individualism of Pentecostal Christianity. In this way, utilizing a language of 'rights' could be seen as a continuation of the idea of Pentecostalism as a thoroughly *modern* and globalising religion, even if the modern language it uses may be re-codified to become something Pentecostal.

Dembour suggests that "Human Rights are first and foremost political aspirations" (1996:19), in which those who utilise the language of rights do so to draw on "strength" and "legitimacy" (ibid.). The 'language of rights' therefore can refer to the use of such rhetoric as narrative means to assert not only identity, but to attempt to secure those things that an individual feels they are due (see Dembour, 1996). Indeed, Englund (2004) makes a similar point when he argues that the harnessing of a 'language of rights' can be seen as part of a 'politics of recognition', in which groups and individuals seek to assert their intrinsic worth qua individuals. This, Englund argues, is something which cannot be dissociated with the globalisation of ideas of liberalism and democracy as the default 'ideal' forms of political organisation.

⁵¹ Indeed, Halsteen (2004), looking at Uganda in particular, identified that the language of human rights also grew significantly in the 1990s, around the same time as the growth of the Pentecostal churches.

The language of 'rights' that Pentecostals draw on could thus be seen as mimicking that used by collectives around the world who seek legitimacy and access to resources and status they feel may have been denied to them due to membership of some group – whether that group is simply 'human', 'indigenous', or 'Christian'. However, Englund (2000), who also identified the use of a language of rights in Pentecostal churches in Malawi, crucially asserts that the form of 'rights' language utilized by born-again Christians in Chinsapo, near Lilongwe, does *not* reflect the economic and political concerns of Human Rights, but instead relates to "a preoccupation with spirituality and personal cleansing" (2000:601). Some of the liberalism of the Human Rights rhetoric, Englund rightly argues, is not always something that Pentecostal Christianity would be willing to adhere to (the anti-homosexual rhetoric in most born-again churches in Kampala being an example). Englund is thus correct to identify that, just as there are different ways of understanding humanity and personhood, such as within Pentecostal Christianity, there are different ways of harnessing the language of rights and different ways of thinking what 'rights' may mean, and we therefore need to be aware of such complexities.

For born-again Christians I knew in Kampala using the language of 'rights' could therefore be seen as a way in which they made claims that by being 'saved' their lives were qualitatively different to those non-believers, rather than relating their claims to legalistic and liberal ideas of Human Rights. Even so, by utilizing this particular language, that they have rights to expect certain things in life by virtue of simply being a born-again Christian, it cannot be doubted that their ideas of rights may well have been influenced by the growth of a notion of Human Rights in which all people have certain rights by virtue of simply being human. In the Pentecostal Christian case, however, this right is not bestowed at birth but rather at *re-birth*, at the point of being 'saved'. However, what is certainly true is that, as with the language of Human Rights, the rhetoric of 'rights' used by Pentecostal Christians in Kampala is primarily one of aspirations.

Possessing the future

The aspirational language of this rhetoric of rights is then part of this emphasis on the future as a central defining feature of this form of 'confession'. It could be argued that an understanding of what I have highlighted as the *future* function of

everyday Pentecostal speech acts has been somewhat limited in previous scholarship on Pentecostalism. Indeed, the discontinuity implied by the conversion experience and the 'complete break with the past' that many authors have, as I identified, seen as central to being Pentecostal in Africa (cf. Van Dijk, 1998; Meyer, 1998) means that studies of born-again Christianity on the continent have had a particular interest in how converts understand the *past* and reconstruct memories of the time before conversion. Lawless (1983:441), for example looks at how narratives of the *past* are reconstructed through Pentecostal testimonies, suggesting that Pentecostals define testimony as "speech that asserts something particular that God has done for them". And indeed, many positive confessions also take the form of testimonies in this way. But, as Van Dijk (1998) has rightly suggested, constructions of the past, whether in the form of nostalgia, or indeed a rejection (or ignoring) of the past, can also constitute visions and representations of the future. He therefore argues that the emphasis on rupture in Pentecostal Christianity in Africa "is intimately linked to an overwhelming orientation – one might say, a rapture – for the future" (Van Dijk, 1998:157). In following Van Dijk's argument, it could be seen that even if a testimony does not include a declaration or command towards the future, it can still be regarded as a future-oriented positive confession: within the Pentecostal schema of speech in verbally 'glorifying God' by expressing what the speaker believes God has done for them, the narrator of the testimony believes that he is or she is also in the process of securing the future, by displaying faith in 'His' omnipotence and omniscience, and thereby 'training the mind' to be receptive to future blessings.

I suggest then that it is the concept that believers feel they are able to construct, through positive confession, their *future* lives that is particularly interesting here, especially in a developing world context, such as Uganda, for it can certainly be argued that it is not just our past that influences our present, but the way people think about the future can also influence (positively or negatively) their identities (Wallman, 1992), and therefore what they do in the present. Wallman, for example, argues that "it seems that without a view of the future there may not be one" (Wallman, 1992:3).

Confession: moving from the sins of the past to the glories of the future

It is apt to explain at this point that positive confessions as spoken by born-again Christians are significantly different in form to everyday understandings (outside of the Pentecostal community, or the study of it) of religious confessions as speech acts in which the speaker admits to past 'sinful' behaviours. This meaning of 'confession' is often commonly understood as referring to linguistically and spatially bounded ritual events, in particular those practised within the Roman Catholic Church, in which the speaker's confession to God is mediated by a member of the clergy. The concept of positive confessions also differs from a wider use of the term 'confession' in formal law and everyday (non-religious) speech as referring to the admission of 'sin' or moral transgressions (see Foucault, 1978:59-63). As we have seen, the Pentecostal concept of positive confession, however, is not limited to a retrospective reflection on, and apology for, past behaviours or thoughts. This is not to say that Pentecostals do not 'confess' in the more common understanding of the word – they do, but more specifically at the time of conversion, and not as a regular ritual form of religious cleansing of the conscience. At the moment of saying the 'conversion prayer' the convert should indeed confess their past 'sins' in the more commonly understood meaning of the phrase: as we heard Martha explain at the beginning of the chapter, at the time of 'accepting Jesus' she declared that *"I denounce all sin in my life"*. However, this is a very limited use of the more prosaic understanding of confession. Instead, in the Pentecostal use of the word, confession is more commonly referred to as positive confession, and in this form, as identified, it is a *reflection* on the past (but not necessarily a 'confession of sins'), but most importantly it is also a proclamation about the *future*.

Returning again to Judith's narrative as an example, she explains that she did not have enough money for sugar, and yet she narrated that *"I came back home, and got water in my cup. I knelt down and said "God, I thank you for this dry tea; tomorrow I'll get sugar"*. This clearly reflects my points above, both in terms of a prohibition of doubt, and a focus towards the future: Judith does not 'complain' about her lack of money in the past and future; she does not complain, therefore, about her poverty (seen through her inability to purchase sugar, or be able to negotiate credit from the shopkeeper), but instead thanks God for her 'dry tea'.

Culturally, in Uganda, to drink 'dry tea' – tea without sugar or without milk – is considered to be a sign of poverty (and indeed, in the narrative read above it seems that Judith's 'tea' did not even contain tea leaves, but was simply a cup of hot water). Furthermore, after thanking God despite her lack, she then makes a verbal assertion that the future will be better: *"tomorrow I'll get sugar"*, she says. Note that Judith is narrating what she expressed in prayer at the time, and when doing so she did not *ask* God for sugar, but *made a statement* about the future, as if it had 'already come to pass' in the moment of being spoken.

This prevalence within Pentecostal Christianity of commanding things in positive confessions (especially in the form of prayer), rather than requesting things, is, I suggest particularly telling about the ways in which adherents understand their faith. The Pentecostal ideal of positive confession supports the notion discussed earlier that future well-being is not spoken about as a possibility, but as a *given*, and as a 'right'. This can be seen in Judith's narrative when she expresses that, *"[o]ne day I heard from the Lord that "don't beg from me, thank me for the things that you will get"*". Within this worldview, Judith should not be requesting from God those things that she wanted (or needed) to receive in the future, she should *thank him in advance*, in the understanding that God has already enabled it to happen, and that it is a given that God *will* enable that future. The Pentecostal future is then already scripted – the future well-being, good health and prosperous living of the believer is something the believer can *expect*, not ask for.

Doing it yourself: positive confessions and self-prophecy

Therefore I suggest that this commanding of the future within born-again Christianity - a rhetorical device which is termed 'self-prophecy' – is central to an understanding of contemporary Pentecostalism. In this worldview, you do not need to wait for a recognised Prophet ordained by the Holy Spirit to come and give you a prediction of your future; you can create that future yourself, by simply commanding that future into being. This rhetorical device of 'self-prophecy', which is part of the wider category of positive confession, is also evident in the opening sentence of this chapter when Judith explains that, *"[e]ven if you wake up with nothing you should thank God and prophesy yourself. For example, see Proverbs 18:21 – death and life are in the power of the tongue. Our tongue can create anything. I wake up and I say "Lord, I'm going to get this, and this, and*

this". There is then something potentially more powerful for a born-again Christian in self-prophecy, in comparison to what is normally understood by the term 'prophecy': whereas a prophet is a conduit, or a receiver, of messages from divine sources (often about the future, but also about the present and past), in self-prophecy it is believed that the speaker themselves can actually create their desired future, not just receive a message about it.

The focus on prophecy in this sense is not necessarily on trying to seek retribution on the apparent (often human) cause of that misfortune. Indeed, whilst in Kampala I heard about one Pastor / Prophet that, for a fee, placed 'negative prayers' on those people that a follower believed had caused misfortune in their lives, assumed usually to have been achieved through witchcraft. However, such practice was very unusual, and not representative of Pentecostal churches in Kampala, and such Pastors / Prophets would generally be considered as 'false prophets' by the mainstream born-again community. In what I suggest is the more common practice of attempting to deal with misfortune, through positive confession and speech, change is thus thought to be brought about through self-spoken future-oriented declarations or 'prophecies'. The past is dealt with also through speech, for example by "declaring chains broken", or "chasing the devil out of my house", but is also accompanied by very individualised declarations of what will be happening in the future. This differs from the work of Gifford (2009) who has suggested that it "is the anointed prophet of God who must actualise the biblical promise" (2009:186). In my understanding, whereas the Pentecostal community in Kampala still seek answers from the Prophet-as-messenger, equally they are just as likely to 'self-prophecy' the future through their own positive confessions.

Words doing things, words creating futures?

There is no doubt, therefore, that to Pentecostal Christians such as Judith, spoken words, through positive and negative confessions, indeed do '*do things*', to use Austin's (1962) now seminal work on the 'power' of speech. Just as in Lienhardt's (1961) example of illocutionary Dinka *lam* speech rituals, in which spirits were separated from the body by the command of speech, it could be argued, therefore, that it is not only in moments of faith healing (in which, in ways strikingly similar to the Dinka *lam* rituals, what is at thought to be the devil is

commanded out of the body of the apparently possessed Christian), but also in more quotidian forms of speech, in this case positive confessions (and self-prophecy), that it is believed that spoken utterances are able enact that which is commanded or requested from God.

Indeed, this is also reflected in the work of Keane (1997), who highlights how the main purpose of ritual Sumbanese Protestant speech (in contrast to the referential language of the colonising Dutch Calvinists) was “to carry out efficacious actions” (1997:680). To the Calvinists, the main aim of the ritual language of prayer was for God to hear some inner personal ‘truth’, whereas to the Sumba themselves, indigenous ritual speech was thought to be able to produce actual “material effects” (Keane, 1997:681). Gifford (2009) has also identified how Kenyan sermon rhetoric has a “performative, declarative use of the Bible” in which promises “are effected in believers’ lives through proclamation” (2009:174-175). The notion that forms of speech can do things, or engender things, is certainly not new in either the African context, or the Christian one. However, both these examples talk about ritual speech in particular. Whereas testimony and prayer can be seen as ritual speech in some forms, the more everyday way in which positive confessions are spoken means this distinction is an unhelpful one (see also Robbins, 2001).

It *could* be seen, therefore that to the *savedees* in Kampala the words spoken in positive confessions, whether in more or less ritual forms, are (perceived to be) doing something at the very moment of being uttered. In making a positive confession, the speaker may believe that that which is being spoken is literally being done: the devil could be leaving their home, headaches could be disappearing, or somewhere a sponsor could be writing a cheque for the believer’s school fees, for example. With the change of verb from a request to a claim, a positive confession could be seen as performative, and that the speaker is “performing the very action that the verb is supposed to describe” (Duranti, 2008 [1997]:221), although my interviewees sometimes used requests, and sometimes used claims, but with a similar sentiment. However, it is difficult to ascertain whether this belief in the more literal power of words is actually what is understood to be happening when Pentecostals in Kampala make declarations of positive confessions. It could be seen in the ‘testimony’ of one young informant,

Diana, who asserted that,

“last year in O-level I suffered from a chronic headache... I used doctors and local medicines but it didn’t work until I brought my heart before God. I asked him to heal me, to remember my suffering and have mercy on me. And the moment I said those little words, the moment I brought my heart before God, I was released. I felt much joy in my heart and the following day when I went to bed I woke up [and] I was healed”. [Interview with Diana, 7th October 2008.]

However, I suggest that the majority of the Pentecostals I met understood the power of words to be in a less instantaneous, but nevertheless still transformative, way. In directing the speech to God, it is thought that an omniscient being is listening. And as has been established, within the Pentecostal idea of positive confession, if ‘He’ listens, ‘He’ answers prayers (and requests, declarations of the future, and even commands). Even if God does not cause the requested or commanded thing to be manifest at the present time, or near-future, it is expected that ‘He’ *will*. Speaking in positive confessions is thus thought to be *starting* the manifestation of that which is requested, through *claiming* that which it is believed has already been created (by God), but had, until that time, yet to be claimed.

In believing that God will enable that which is ‘claimed’ through positive confession, however, the *balokole* I knew in Kiweranga were not able to know *when* the object of their positive confession would indeed ‘come to pass’, as they believed it would. Returning to the prohibition of doubt, the concept of effective positive confessions means that not only should one not doubt whether God can provide at all, but one should also not be *impatient* with God in providing those things that have been requested, commanded, or claimed for. In Diana’s understanding, her prayer was answered quickly, the day after requesting God to heal her chronic headaches. But for her to have given God a deadline would have been considered unacceptable, and also counter-productive. To question is, as identified, a negative confession, and means that prosperity, or healing, that is being ‘claimed’ or ‘requested’ will then be unlikely to be forthcoming. This is also evident in the words of Judith. She was explaining to me, during this last interview, how one of her hopes for the future was to get married. She told me

that she was not sure when it was going to happen, as this was something dictated by 'God's time', but still, she explained that *"I know God is going to do it in Jesus' name. See Jeremiah 32:27 and Ephesians 3:20.⁵² God is able to do what you told him – what we ask or think. You just tell him, he's going to do it."* [Interview with Judith, 9th October 2009.]

This idea that the future is somehow unknowable, but with the caveat that all will be well in the end, as long as the Christian is patient, is reflective of the work of Jane Guyer (2007), who has identified parallels between how ideas of time have changed in evangelical Christianity, and shifting ideas of time in contemporary neoliberal macroeconomics. Guyer argues that there has been a recent reorientation in sensibilities in economics that sees the immediate and the far future both potentially within the grasp of reason, but what she calls the 'near-future' as being something, or somewhere, which eludes attempts at control and understanding, which she then relates to ideas of temporality in Evangelical Christianity

Discussing abstract and relational terms such as time, and attempting to compartmentalise something so inchoate into distinct brackets is, of course, a tricky one. However, in Guyer's persuasive attempt at rendering something so elusive somehow comprehensible, she defines the 'near-future' as "the reach of... engaging in struggles for specific goals, in short, the process of implicating oneself in the ongoing life of the social and material world that used to be encompassed under an expansively inclusive concept of "reasoning"" (2007:409). Using as a departure the idea of the 'long run' in economics, Guyer argues that there has been a kind of faith in the idea that under a free market economy, the far future – the 'long run' - would somehow work itself out, on the basis of intervention in the immediate future. Fluctuations in the near-future were accepted as part of the pursuit of 'progress' of the free market towards the far future, a time seen as "the moment of truth" (2007:114) in which everything would, it was thought, be in a miraculous equilibrium. She continues to argue that the link between the seemingly 'magical' "infinite horizon" of the long-run and the interventions and planning in the short-term were "opaque" (2007:412-413). It is this idea, that the

⁵² Jeremiah 32:27 reads *"I am the Lord, the God of all people. Nothing is too difficult for me"* (Good News Bible). Ephesians 3:20 reads *"To him who by means of his power working in us is able to do so much more than we can ever ask for, or even think of"* (ibid.)

near-future is seen as something unintelligible, that Guyer suggests reflects the evangelical notions of prophetic time in which adherents live waiting for a miraculous, truthful, far-future. In particular, Guyer argues that for both neoliberal economics and evangelical Christianity this rendering of the near-future as something inchoate is something logical within the ideological schema of both.

Guyer's argument, therefore, suggests that evangelical prophetic time is based on a dispensationalist idea of different and distinct eras, categorised as such by the workings of God, and that the current era is one in which Christians are waiting for the Second Coming (of Christ), which is thought to occur at an imminent but *unknowable* time. The current period then is one that needs to be "endured by waiting, by identifying, by witnessing" (2007:415), not by doubting the teachings of God, or seeking to understand the present time through critical (non-Christian) reasoning, which might jeopardise the coming of the new age. Indeed, this is reflected in the work of Van Dijk who argues that preachers in Malawi consider the "end-state of society" to be a place where authority and power lie "beyond society's own perimeters" (1998:166; see also Van Dijk, 2001); somewhere beyond our human capacities of understanding.

Van Dijk (2010) has suggested there are limits to this understanding of time within Pentecostal Christianity, arguing that from his research among Ghanaian migrants in Botswana, he identified that far from finding contemporary neoliberal economics somehow bewildering as Comaroff and Comaroff (2000) and others have suggested, these Ghanaian Pentecostals in Gabarone engaged with developing businesses with specific plans, goals, and strategies for what Guyer might call the 'near-future', rather than a concern with future eschatological time.

However, notwithstanding that this idea of time expressed by Guyer may not encompass all forms of Pentecostal Christianity on the continent, I suggest that there are distinct parallels between this idea of an inchoate near-future and the idea of 'God's Time' in positive confession. Not only is it thought that such a time is unknowable, and beyond understanding, but also Guyer suggests that attempts to grasp such a time is 'illogical' within Evangelical Christianity (and free market capitalism). It is clear to see, then, how a forward-looking temporal frame is supported by the prohibition of doubt – questioning God and his ability to enact his blessings, which are bestowed upon the believer as 'rights' in creating this very

particularly contemporary Christian concept of time.

Dissent and doubt: the limits of appropriation

At this point it should be noted, however, that this narrative of attempting to construct a glorious future by claiming God-given 'rights' through positive confession and a complete lack of doubt that such a future would transpire, was not all pervasive. Although it was rare to hear dissent about the rhetoric of Pentecostal churches amongst born-again Christians I knew in Kampala, a neighbour of mine, Mavis, was one person who intrigued me, for her outlook on her own situation and her faith differed from other informants. Although she is not a representative case, I introduce her story as I believe it does, in the end, also support my observations about the qualities, and perhaps the problems, with the discourse of positive confession.

Mavis lived with her family in one room of an unfinished brick house not far from where I lived in Kiweranga. Pamela, who I introduced in Chapter Four, rented another room in the house. Conditions in the house were very poor indeed: parts of the roof were unfinished and there were no doors between each room, which were rented separately by different families. I was told that disputes about theft among the many families living in the overcrowded space, were common. The landlord had run out of funds to complete the house, and in Kampala's overcrowded rental market with people desperate for a cheaper place to live in the city, he was still able to get tenants willing to live in these particularly dire conditions as the price of the accommodation was cheaper than typical *muzigos* in the area.

Mavis was a single mother, although at the time we knew her only four of her seven children lived with her in Kiweranga as she had sent the others back to her natal village because she couldn't afford to keep them in city. She had been in a relationship with the father of her children, although it had not been a particularly happy one. He did not contribute to the upbringing of the children and now lived with another woman in another part of Kiweranga. Mavis rarely had any regular income. In the time I knew her she started a couple of small businesses, but a lack of customers or having unexpected expenditure such as paying for hospital costs

for her elderly father, frustrated her attempts to make these ventures economically sustainable. She had been able to secure sponsorship for the education of her eldest daughter, Sharon, in return for campaigning for an NRM (ruling party) candidate in the local councillor elections, but that money also stopped after the woman gave up her political aspirations.

In such ways, therefore, things seemed to be getting more and more difficult for Mavis and her family every time I met her. One time we visited Mavis, and brought her a kilogram of rice as a gift, which we would regularly do for informants that we often visited both as a gift of thanks and because it was culturally appropriate. On receiving the rice, Mavis immediately but quietly took her young son to one side and told him to start the *sigiri* (a clay charcoal stove, which nearly all residents in Kiweranga use to cook). At the end of our meeting that day, she thanked us again for the rice, and told us, a little embarrassed, that they had yet to eat that day (it was nearly 4pm by this time) as they had had no food and no money to buy anything. We had come just at the right time, she said. Two things are interesting about this. Firstly, on presenting other informants with gifts it was normal for them to praise and thank God in our presence, sometimes simply by speaking, but in other times through more elaborate prayers of thanks that involved all three of us (the informant, Mable and I), plus anyone else present, and usually included the raising of the food gift to the air. But with Mavis there were no thanks to God, a sign perhaps of her waning religiosity. Furthermore, on hearing how hungry she was that day, something she had said earlier became even more salient. She had explained that “sometimes these children see when neighbours are cooking and when they see that I feel bad and I ask the Lord, Lord are you really there?” [Interview with Mavis, 10th March 2009]. Clearly being food insecure was not uncommon for Mavis and her family, and we see how her hardship caused her to question God and His ability to provide. The fact that she was open about this doubt was also unusual.

Furthermore, this was not the only time that Mavis expressed that she had these moments of doubt about God’s existence or His ability to answer her prayers. On another day we met Mavis seemed particularly agitated, and when I asked how things were she explained that she was very worried because she was due to repay 40,000 Ugandan Shillings (approximately US\$20) that day but didn’t have

any money for her own outstanding rent, let alone the debt repayment. She had taken out a loan of 30,000 Ugandan Shilling from a local lender with the aim of using it to start a small business selling foodstuffs outside her home, but few customers had come and the tomatoes and fish she had bought to sell had gone rotten, leaving Mavis with useless stock that she couldn't even eat, and a heavy debt of 30,000ugx plus 10,000ugx interest. It was after telling me what had been happening that Mavis expressed that, "sometimes I doubt whether God is there or not; does God work or not? I ask a lot of things". [Interview with Mavis, 4th January 2009.]

She talked more about her doubts that day, telling us how "I can pray and if I don't see the things I have prayed for, I stop praying for them". It is clear then that Mavis didn't always feel like praying, and felt that there wasn't so much point in doing so. Clearly in this case, Mavis was not a person who was internalising the rhetoric of waiting for God's (unknowable) time. Other informants, especially in cell group, would sometimes admit that they had been feeling less motivated to pray, but such pronouncements were always part of a testimony that was either thanking God for bringing back their enthusiasm to pray and worship, or a prayer for such enthusiasm to return, in the 'knowledge' that He would do it. This was not the case with Mavis. Instead, she was losing the will to pray, had started to question whether God could help her, without an assertion that it will be alright in the end, as with positive confessions.

Mavis stopped going to Kiweranga Life Fellowship at some point. One Sunday I was walking up through the neighbourhood on the way to church and I saw Mavis chatting with friends of hers who worked in a hairdressing salon at the side of the road. I stopped and asked if she was going that way and proposed that we could walk up to church together. She told me that no, she wasn't going to church because she was "tired, hungry, and thirsty". When visiting her house a few weeks later I asked her about that Sunday and she continued to explain that "now I have spent a full month without going to [Kiweranga Life Fellowship] because I see whatever I pray for, I don't get it". [Interview with Mavis, 11th August 2009].

However, although she stopped attending church, Mavis did continue to practice her Christianity through listening to Impact Radio, one of the popular born-again radio stations that broadcast in Kampala. When I asked why she liked to listen to

Impact, even though she was feeling that her prayers were not being answered and she felt unenthusiastic about attending church at Kiweranga, she explained to me that listening ‘helped’ her and that it encouraged her “not to leave the Lord, not to throw him aside.” [Interview with Mavis, 11th August 2009.] Mavis had certainly not given up on her belief in God then, but unlike other informants, she seemed to have not appropriated the rhetoric of positive confession, of continuing to thank God, despite her lack, and asserting that, as is her ‘right’, her dreams will ‘come to pass’ through her future-oriented prayers. In comparison to the narratives of Judith, who was also in very dire straits for much of the time we knew her, the manner of referring to God and what He can do is quite different.

Mavis was an unusual case, and Mable and I were both concerned for her wellbeing. Unlike some other people we knew who we felt embellished their stories of hardship, and then requested assistance (which in itself is perfectly understandable when faced with a foreigner who asserts they are ‘just a student’ but then somehow has the money to fly thousands of miles from Europe to Uganda to interview some people), Mavis always seemed embarrassed by her poverty, and even though she was always welcoming to us, couldn’t quite hide her acute sadness, despite her attempts at doing so. In comparison to other born-again Christians I met in Kampala, she was an anomaly, as there did seem to be a sense that many believed that their practice as a Pentecostal Christian was beneficial to them, and that even if the gifts of God had not been received in great numbers in the present, their future prospects were much brighter. But the reason I think the case of Mavis is interesting is not only to be aware that the rhetoric of positive confession is not blindly adhered to by all who frequent Pentecostal churches or identify as a born-again Christian, but also because, in the end, it became clear that Mavis *had* still appropriated part of this schema of positive confession and the individualism at the heart of born-again Christianity: the idea that maybe, it was all somehow her fault. As she said to me in a later meeting, she did think that the reason things never improved for her was precisely because she “prays badly”.

Public positive confessions: transformations, and the issue of agency

Mavis was not the only informant who talked about how prayer might not always work if the speaker does quite pray correctly. Underpinning this notion of bad prayer was the concept that it was something that could be learnt. With this in mind I would like to move to a discussion of the speaking of positive confessions in Bible cell groups with a view to showing how this rhetoric is learned and performed, and what this tells us about agency.

Firstly, it should be acknowledged that from sharing a positive confession in public, perhaps within a Bible cell group, it is possible that others may feel prompted to help the speaker in some way with a particular problem that they might have shared. If a *savedee* does not know a fellow believer is facing eviction, unemployment, or needing extra nutrition to support ARV therapy, for example, then they are unlikely to offer assistance. And yet if such concerns are publicly voiced in the form of prayer and positive confession, then if that fellow believer feels they can help (perhaps they hear of a cheaper *muzigo*, or maybe they need an extra employee in their shop, or find that have some extra food to share that evening), then they may well think of the speaker of the positive confession. Furthermore, it could be argued that in sharing testimonies and other positive confessions in group settings speakers may experience some catharsis and easing of their psychological suffering, their worries and concerns (Lawless, 1983:457).

There are obvious problems with such arguments, however, not least the assumption that the actual *talking* about problems is somehow psychologically helpful. However, although this chapter does not negate the possible unintended material or psychological benefits that might arise due to the public speaking of positive confessions, using the present data collected on fieldwork, it would be unwise to make suppositions that positive confessions directly led to material assistance, and although some informants spoke about the cathartic effects of prayer, it was not significantly mentioned in interviews to be of relevance here.

Furthermore, the purpose of this discussion is not to debate the extent to which positive confessions are *literally* efficacious in enabling that which it is thought is being harnessed through positive confession, an epistemological and methodological impossibility anyway, but rather, as with Bielo (2009), it is less the

functional aspects of Bible groups that are of interest, but rather an understanding of the implications of speech acts on identity, on relationships, and on power. This reflects the work of Rosaldo (1982), who, as Duranti puts it, was interested in how speech and language “might sustain, reproduce, or challenge particular versions of the social order and the notion of person (or self) that is part of that order” (Duranti, 2008 [1997]:228). In this way therefore, this thesis is more interested in understanding what the implications might be of such belief in the power of speech in engendering present-time and future-time events, in the face of stark material difficulties in Kiweranga and neighbourhoods like it. To what extent then can it be said that positive confessions are displays of increased agency on the part of those who are speaking?

When adherents speak what they believe to be ‘positive confessions’, it can be seen that there *is* an understanding on the part of the speaker that this is an act of transformation, that through their positive speech they are able to somehow control, and to have power, over the future. Indeed, the move from prophecy to self-prophecy, and positive confession more generally, can, of course, be seen as move from a more passive form of communication to a more active one, and with a cursory analysis it would be easy to see that such verbal displays are exhibitions of increased ‘agency’ on the part of the speakers – an ability to potentially enact change simply through ‘the power of their tongue’.

In this regard, Coleman has also argued that adherents feel they have some kind of agency through positive confession, an agency that he asserts is “simultaneously divine in origin and emergent from the new believer” (Coleman, 2004:425). Coleman’s suggestion that this apparent transformative power is believed to be both a product of spiritual forces (specifically the Holy Spirit) *and* the believer (or agent) themselves is particularly germane to this debate. This is an important point for Coleman is not suggesting that transformation is considered possible through the bodily possession of the Holy Spirit on its own. Instead, the believer (or possessed person) has to not only willingly accept the possibility of possession of the Holy Spirit, but to actively behave in ways that make them a suitable ‘vessel’ for possession. From my experiences of getting to know born-again Christians in Kampala, I suggest that they do indeed attempt to fashion themselves, and their speech, in ways that make it possible for them to be

a suitable vessel not only for possession by the Holy Spirit, but also a suitable recipient of those things that they have commanded, as their 'right', through positive confessions.

Learned discourse, authorship, and audience, of positive confessions

I suggest, however, that to view positive confessions and self-prophecy in terms of increased 'agency' is far too simplistic. Following on from a concern with the lack of analysis of power in understandings of agency, I suggest that we also need to look at issues of discourse, authorship and control in our understandings of Pentecostal speech. As has been seen, the utterances in positive confessions are seen as putting into place that which will be transformative in the future. But in order for the speaker to feel that their utterances are valid, a particular repertoire of language has to be deployed. The fact that declarations of positive confessions are not completely pre-scripted, as are some prayers that are recited in other forms of Christianity (notably Roman Catholicism and Anglicanism), for example, might give the impression that such speech acts are more 'free', in the sense that they might consist of language *chosen* by the individual speaker. However, of course, as with much language spoken within a particular community, especially one in which speech is so loaded with meaning and potential transformational power, the language used in positive confessions is not so 'free', but instead can be very specific and bounded, although significantly, the *feeling* of choice remains.

It is been suggested that it is only in the more ecstatic Pentecostal experiences, such as faith healing and glossolalia, when the conscious mind is overpowered by the embodied Holy Spirit, that Pentecostals believe they can be embodied with transformative power (Coleman, 2004:425). However, although ecstatic forms of communication are considered valid precisely when the 'vessel' (the possessed agent) shows signs of *not* having control of their speech and their movements, in positive confessions an utterance is not thought to have the power of transformation without the concomitant training of the mind, and the visible displays of such training through the correct use of speech. It is, therefore, not simply about saying the correct type of words, but it is about having the correct thoughts, desires, and expectations.

Everyday positive confession is part of the process, therefore, of creating a

Christian subject that individuals believe will be a worthy recipient of God's blessings. But this is not only a relationship between the agent and the divine. Although positive confessions can indeed be spoken on one's own, as a private activity, verbally sharing experiences and desires is encouraged: revelations are meant to be voiced to others and 'testimonies' of God's wonders are supposed to be shared with fellow believers, for example, for these constitute public evidence of the presence of the divine in the life of the speaker. The frequency, therefore, of positive confessions being uttered in the company of others means that the relationship between the speaker and his or her listeners needs to be considered.

I suggest, therefore, that public positive confessions need to be seen as a performance, a discursive mode par excellence through which the speaker and their audience learn how to be good Pentecostals, stake a claim as such among their peers, and, sometimes, chastise transgressions from the norm. Certainly ecstatic moments of contact with the divine are, of course, thought to be loaded with potential power, and assertions of being 'filled with the spirit' are one of the ways in which believers attempt to assert authority over either their own situation, or others' as being suitably worthy of possession. As identified however, whereas the validity of divine possessive experiences lie in their ability to transcend (what is considered to be inferior) 'mind knowledge' (Coleman, 2004:430), the validity of positive confessions lie precisely in displays of the correctly-trained conscious mind, and in their ability to be understood by others when performed (ibid).

"Confession is possession": the performances of positive confessions

Such displays of positive confessions, of the correctly-trained and conscious mind, were clearly visible in the Bible cell groups that I attended, and I suggest it is through such communal activities that born-again Christians in Kampala learn to use the rhetoric of positive confession. The following examples are from the Alpha Tabernacle cell group that Mable and I used to frequent. The theme of speech as transformative was a common one in cell groups, and especially in this one. However, although the phrase above, "*confession is possession*" was spoken on another date, again when discussing the importance of speaking a prosperous and a positive future into being, I want to highlight in particular the events of a different cell group meeting, in July 2009, as it was particularly illuminating in

highlighting many issues already discussed in this chapter, and reflects the rhetoric of Judith's individual prayers, above.

In this meeting, five regular members were present who Mable and I knew well, in addition to two new members who we did not see again. It was a temperate evening, and we were sat in a circle in the spacious gardens of the host, Mummy Sandra, as we always did when the weather was dry. Our host's home was situated near the top of one of the many hills of Kampala, and congregating in the garden allowed us to benefit from the evening breezes, providing some respite from the sweaty day-time heat of Kampala. The turn-out that day was quite low, and a few regular members were missing, but it was a lively and engaging group nevertheless. This cell group did not have a regular group leader, but due to an unspoken hierarchy within the group, some more prominent members would lead some sessions, and others on other days. This week the group was being led by Rachel, one the most frequent attendees to the cell group, a young graduate and successful junior saleswoman who was full of fervour and apparent dedication to her faith. The details below are taken from my hand-written field notes.

Prompted by the discussion questions provided by the church in advance of the cell group, discussion that day turned to debating what people should do when things get in your way of 'promotion' and when things in life seemed 'immovable'. Rachel, stressing that believers have power through speech, told the group to,

"remember when Jesus Christ died he gave us the invite. God gave us the authority to declare, as a child of God, that he's going to give knowledge. You have the power! Hallelujah! See Ephesians 2:6⁵³ – we're reigning with the leader! The Pastor said that God has given us the power to use His name – we can speak like Him. Your promotion is going to come – we carry a God in us! You have the power. We can do things that others can't do. We can say, "you, Mountain of Failure, move away!""

After Rachel's sermon-like introduction, the group was then prompted to discuss the 'action point' provided by the church, which read, *"[a]re there certain things in your life that seem to be permanently tormenting you? Have you used your*

⁵³ Ephesians 2:6 reads *"In our union with Jesus Christ he raised us up to rule with him in the heavenly world"* (Good News Bible).

authority to declare against them to stop, in the Mighty Name of Jesus?” After encouraging the group to keep on track with the question, and not go off-topic, Edward, a young man who had suffered from epilepsy, explained that,

“one time I was testifying – I was sick and I was using the Word of God. He would help me. You must begin to refuse fear – the fear comes with problems/troubles. The Bible says “stand still and you will get salvation of the Lord” and also it says “there is power in your tongue – proclaim life or death”. We can proclaim “we’re not going to fail, devil you go away” – he [the devil] can run free from you. The Bible says “the Word of God is sharp and it takes on all our difficult situations”. If Satan brings fear then God gave us authority and power... Use your authority, using the Word of God. If you have faith, like a seed of millet, you can command it to go away”.

The discussion continued, with members of the cell group using the same rhetoric of having the ‘power in your tongue’, of being able to ‘proclaim’ sickness and the devil away, of having a God-given power and authority. Likewise, Matthew, a young man whose case is discussed at more length in Chapter Eight, and who had been finding life difficult because he had not been able to return to school because of a lack of funds, expressed that, *“things are tormenting you but they only seem permanent. My education situation seems like a permanent thing that will not go away. But I’ve declared against it and I’m now waiting”.* We see here how Matthew had thought he had set into practice his more positive future, through his declaration, and now he was waiting for it to ‘come to pass’, as he assumed it would do. Following Guyer (2007), as discussed earlier, it could be seen that Matthew was in the necessary process of waiting for the far future to arrive after his intervention in the immediate (positive confession). This was followed by another member who added her own testimony, explaining that *“when I was younger, I was bitter in my heart, but then I’d wake up and say I’d never cry anymore and at least now I’ve become fat.”* Here, the young lady is expressing that it was when she stopped ‘crying’ to God, stopped complaining, that her fortunes started to change, and she was able to ‘become fat’ (which can be understood to mean that she had enough money to eat well). Rachel, the cell group leader, remarked in response that, *“she stood in her authority – that’s a testimony. She stood as a child of God”.*

The testimonies and discussion continued along the same lines – stories of sickness removed because of ‘confession’, of things not ‘coming to pass’ because ‘we haven’t declared’, of having the ‘authority to talk on a mountain’ the moment they got saved, of the importance of implementing that ‘authority’ through ‘speaking it out’, of not ‘complaining to God’ but of ‘declaring’ and waiting. What I think is important to note is not just how the same, very specific, language was used, but also how mutual approval is given, informally authorising the content and rhetoric of the narratives of other members. For example, after another testimony in which a member talked about the healing power of making positive confessions, Rachel took control of the discussion again by proclaiming that, *“Praise God! That’s very powerful!”* before reminding the group that, *“our God is TOO BIG for this devil man. The battle is already fought; we just need to step in the Word. Like using Pastor’s name as a password to get into the U.S., God’s name is our gate-pass to get to our promotion.”*

Once again, we can see a familiar theme coming up, the idea that God has already put into place the future prosperity and security for those that follow him, but that they need to ‘step in the Word’ – which can be read as meaning not only the need to read ‘the Word’ (the Bible), but also by speaking ‘the Word’ through making positive confessions. Putting aside issues of the consolidation of hierarchy in both Rachel’s speech, and in the way the cell group is debated, which arise in some form in Chapter Eight, what I hope is evident in this data from the cell group is that the narratives and rhetoric of positive confessions are clearly learned behaviour. Although Judith attends Kiweranga Life Fellowship, a different church to the members of this cell group that has been explored in this chapter, there are clear parallels in the language and concepts used.

There is no doubt on the part of the believers that they have an intention to control their futures: the apparent verbal means to transform those futures are much debated, and talked about within Pentecostal circles. If we follow a line of thinking that suggests that an ‘agent’ must be self-aware of their own agency (see Keane, 1997:675), then there would be no doubt that the born-again Christians discussed in this chapter – Judith, Rachel, Edward, Matthew – and their fellow believers, have a self-awareness of what they call ‘authority’, or ‘power’. However, despite the individualism supposedly inherent in Pentecostal ideas of

transformation through speech, in which it could be argued that the emphasis on self-transformation through actively training the mind, and manners of speaking, entails a higher degree of agency on the part of the everyday believer, it can be argued that other forms of agentive beings are very much at work in moments of positive confession (and beyond).

Not only do believers' positive confessions, at least those in public, need approval from peers in terms of the rhetoric and content, as identified, but it needs to be remembered that within Pentecostal cosmology there are other, non-human, agentive forces at work in any potential transformation, including the devil, and other spirit forms. The irony here is of course that Protestant Christianity's quest for self-transformation, the aim par excellence of Pentecostal Christianity, theologically entails liberation from idolatry and the beliefs that non-human things and non-Christian spirit forms cannot possess agency. In reality, Pentecostal Christianity as practiced in everyday sub-Saharan Africa (and elsewhere) does not reject the agency of non-Christian spirit forms at all, but instead subsumes them within a Christian understanding of God vs. the devil. Life for Pentecostal Christians in Kampala, therefore, is often expressed as the site of a constant spiritual tug-of-war between God (and the Holy Spirit) and indigenous spirits, what is called 'spiritual warfare', as referred to in Chapter One). Indeed, Keane himself argues that both the Sumbanese Christians who follow a syncretic form of missionary Christianity, and the Dutch Calvinists who converted them "impose significant limits on human agency", by ascribing agency to not only non-human agents (Keane, 1997:690).⁵⁴

In this way Keane (1997:688) suggests that ascribing agency to a non-human "source of words acts to efface or momentarily bracket human agency." If we take Keane up on his suggestion, herein lays the incongruity of contemporary Pentecostal Christianity practice: the process of self-transformation of the

⁵⁴ Furthermore, the Bible itself can be seen as being an object that can be imbued with agentive powers. Just as the Sumbanese Christian converts in Keane's work (1997:687) consulted the Bible as an oracle, seeking "directions for efficacious actions" in response to particular events and queries, so too would my informants. Many would explain that when they had particular issues that were concerning them, they would ask God for guidance and then read a passage in the Bible wherever it naturally opened. That to them was communication from God that that passage would contain answers to their problems. Keane rightly highlights the potential pitfalls in the project for 'liberation' from fetishism in the first place, pointing out that potentially nobody's practices "could altogether escape some charge of fetishism" (1997:690).

individual that is so eagerly sought by the born-again subject is expounded as 'liberating' the person from fetishism and idolatry but also from the shackles of control; and yet, in practicing these tools of self-transformation, in particular that of positive confession, it can also be argued that the believer is attributing ultimate agency not to herself but to the spiritual realm, to God. Stamping their feet in an attempt to 'trample on the Devil' and repeatedly announcing in prayer that "I *will* be delivered from the spirit of poverty", telling God in prayer that "I *will* be rich in Jesus' name", as Judith did, could be seen as displays of agency, as these born-again Christians in Kampala attempt to control their future. But in reality, the same concept of positive confession is exactly that which may potentially deny them agency over efficacious future action. For when they are not 'delivered from the Spirit of Poverty', it is not for the believer to question why this deliverance has not taken place, despite their confessions of self-transformation. Instead, to continue to make positive confessions means asserting that God's time is not like human time, it is instead an unknowable and unquestionable time, and that therefore, when 'rights' are 'claimed' through positive confession, and yet do not transpire, questions cannot be asked. Instead the believer is encouraged into an endless cycle of apparently self-transformative prayer, *feeling* that they are influencing their life-course, *feeling* like they are doing something, and yet potentially not really having any power, at least in the process of that speech act, to do very much at all.

Despite the differences between the concept of positive confession as I have defined it here and what has traditionally been understood as 'confession' as described by Foucault (1978), his identification that the act of confession is essentially a relationship of power, however, can still be relevant to this discussion. In any speech act, there is not only the speaker, but the listener(s). In moments of testimonies and public prayers of positive confession, the role of the listener is to be quiet, to hear about the glory of God, waiting until a certain pause or final sentence when it is acceptable – and to an extent, prescribed – to exclaim words of agreement: to shout "amen!" and "hallelujah!" But that this is a moment of hearing rather than silence is significant: Coleman suggests that, unlike the Quakers in which the ideal state is to be silent, "the ideal charismatic is both hearing *and* speaking, both receiving *and* broadcasting sacred language" (2006:44, emphasis in original). Thus listening to these testimonies in Bible cell groups

becomes a form of consuming 'the Word', a way of learning the performance of public positive confession, and also a way of co-authoring others' speech acts: with their remarks of agreement (or disagreement), encouraging words, and exclamations of '*Hallelujah!*', fellow believers who listen to a positive confession signal approval or disapproval of the speech event as having the right quality to be *true*, to be transformational. When spoken in front of an audience this form of public speech act simply doesn't work as a 'positive confession', as a ritual of speech, without this input of agreement from those listening (cf. Coleman, 2006).

Listeners therefore sanction speech (and in doing so further recreate the socialisation of the linguistic habitus of other members in the group). And yet, of course, the speaker may still have some room for manoeuvre, some room for a certain degree of agency: the repertoire of future things requested (or commanded) can be theirs to an extent, despite the learned rhetoric of the positive confession. But, for all apparent rhetoric of control, 'rights', and implied implicit power that comes with the assured demands of the positive confessor, as Foucault writes, "the agency of domination does not reside in the one who speaks..., but in the one who listens and says nothing" (Foucault, 1978:62).

Therefore, I argue that the extent to which the feeling of control that Pentecostals in Kampala have over future lives could be identified as enabling efficacious agency in the lives of the speakers, is somewhat limited. I suggest that we should be wary of viewing Pentecostal behavioural change through a functionalist lens that might see it as necessarily positive and transformative, and necessarily enabling mutual assistance and psycho-social support, and become aware of the limits of Pentecostal believers' own rhetoric of 'change', 'rights' and 'freedom'. Following Luhrmann et al's (2010) suggestion that we must see Pentecostal speech as learned, I argue that Pentecostal Christian positive confessions that look towards, and attempt to mediate, the future are spoken as part of a linguistic habitus that is, to a greater extent, authored by others, and is characterised by a potentially detrimental attitude towards believers' abilities to criticise and to pressure those who have power over that rhetoric.

CHAPTER SEVEN

“LET THE POOR SAY THEY ARE RICH; LET THE SICK SAY THEY ARE WELL”: DEALING WITH POVERTY AND DISENFRANCHISEMENT

Phrases similar to that above were commonly heard amongst my informants, often in response to questions about whether they identified as being rich or poor (or somewhere in between), and indeed, this exact phrase, “*let the poor say they are rich; let the sick say they are well*” was spoken by Judith, the young itinerant informant who was discussed in the previous chapter. I suggest that there is something quite emblematic, in these succinct words, of how poor born-again Christians, at least those that I met in Kampala, not only understand their own poverty, but also how they attempt to deal with it, and how they think it may be possible to ‘move on up’. In only a few words, the phrase ‘*let the poor say they are rich*’ can be seen to support the concept that believers hold in the power of positive confession, and the idea of speaking the future into being (in this case, a wealthy future).

As identified in Chapter One, the prevalence within Pentecostal Christianity of a Prosperity Gospel ethic of economics in which material gain, and especially ideas of ‘fast wealth’ has replaced ascetic sensibilities, has also led to a well-established body of scholarship that has focused on the seemingly ‘magical’ understandings and practice of Pentecostal faith (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2000; Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005). However, whereas there has been a strong theoretical focus on the links between neo-liberalism and Pentecostal Christianity, and relatedly, some excellent ethnographic work exploring the meanings of Pentecostal gift exchange (Van Dijk, 1999; Coleman, 2004), there has been less on how born-again Christians themselves, living in the developing world, deal with disenfranchisement.

This chapter seeks to answer the following research question: what are believers’ concepts of poverty and wealth, and how do they think it is possible to move out of poverty? It explores how informants I talked to in Kampala not only conceptualised both their own material poverty, and others’ wealth, but also how they dealt with particular issues of disenfranchisement.

This chapter will suggest that, despite literature that puts forward the idea that Pentecostal Christians in sub-Saharan Africa understand wealth generation and money through particularly ‘magical’ lens, evidence from my research suggests that, at least among the born-again Christians I got to know, understandings of poverty and wealth are more complex, and whilst it is undeniable that some *savedees* have ideas of poverty as being caused by more supernatural means, more pedestrian and ‘this-worldly’ reasons also feature, and not all Pentecostal Christians I interviewed subscribe to a ‘get-rich-quick’ view of magical income generation. Continuing on from Chapter Six, which explored how speech is central to Pentecostal Christian understandings of the possibilities of future transformation, I put forward an argument that, for many of my informants at least, although giving in church is seen as central to the successful pursuit of future economic improvements (indeed, of prosperity), equally important is speaking in the correct way. Furthermore, I suggest that, as seen in the previous chapter, it is thought that the believer needs to have a correct ‘mind-set’ to engender these positive transformations in fiscal and material wellbeing: on the one hand, a mind-set of Christian morality, but also, and more significantly for this thesis, a mind-set of unending patience and a non-questioning attitude. Further to this, therefore, I suggest that although these means to future wealth and security could be seen as evidence of ‘magical’ thinking of economics, equally of interest is a very *individualised* emphasis on future wealth; an idea of the future, and the past, that lacks an awareness of wider structural causes of economic prosperity or poverty, and concomitantly serves to create an ethos of both non-accountability and inaction in the face of exploitation or wrong-doing.

This chapter is then split into two parts. The first deals with how my informants considered their (especially material and economic) lives and whether they considered themselves poor or not, before exploring the importance of positive confession to moving out of a state of poverty, the conceptualisation of the perils of (non-Christian) transient wealth, how the Pentecostal economic is considered to be part of the root to God’s blessings, and how humans are considered fallible and therefore untrustworthy. The second part then moves on to give case examples of how informants dealt with particular challenges in their lives, especially those that impacted on their economic well-being, and how the conceptualisations of wealth generation that are explored in the first part of the

chapter did not necessarily enable them to address those challenges productively.

Before continuing, I find the photo below apt for the debate to follow. The poster was displayed on the bare brick wall of Mavis, the Pentecostal informant who was introduced in Chapter Six and who, unusually, expressed doubts about God and His ability to enact change. However, this was one of many similar posters in this woman's home asserting positive pronouncements of the ability of a belief in God to bring about benefits to the believer. "If God is for us, who can be against us?" read one, "I am more than a conqueror! 'And we know that in all things, God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to His purpose' (Romans 8:37)" read another. These positive assertions may have given Mavis hope and comfort at times, but as will be discussed in this chapter, the extent to which the church as an institution and born-again belief can be a force not just for catharsis but also for change, was limited.

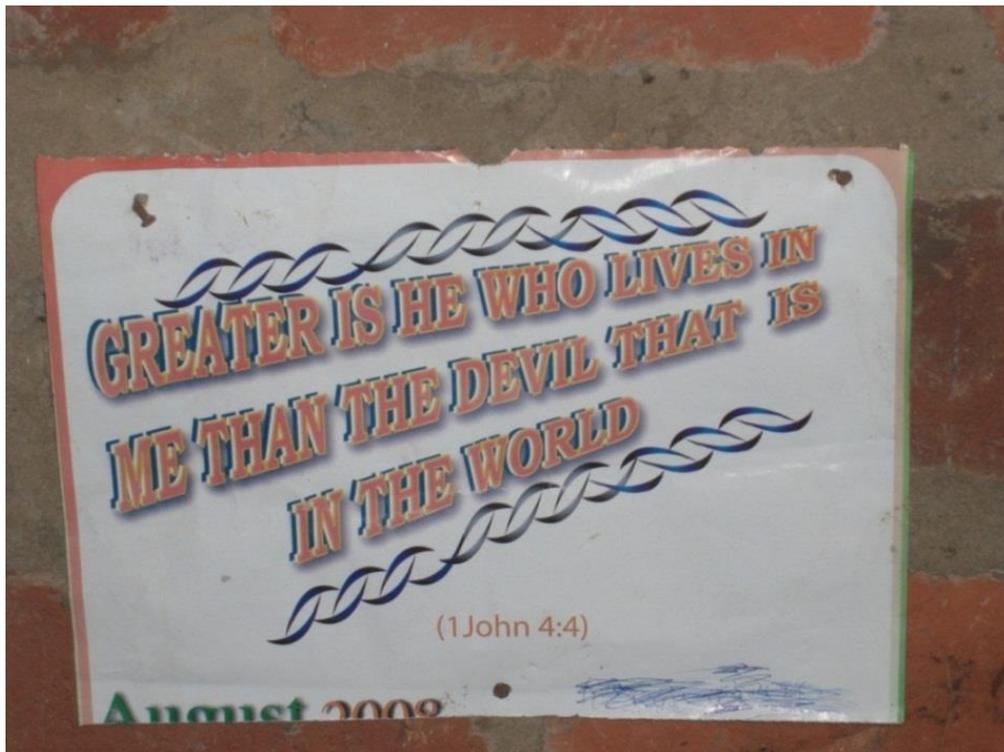


Plate 6. Born-again poster displayed on the wall of an informant. Photo taken by author with permission.

Ideas of wealth and poverty

As already identified, there has been a corpus of academic scholarship that sees a growing prevalence of using the 'occult' to deal with problems (Geschiere, 1997), including 'magical' and 'get-rich-quick' thinking about money and wealth in sub-Saharan Africa (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2000). This body of literature suggests that, especially amongst African countries that can be seen as experiencing particularly accelerated socio-economic change in an era of the globalisation of modern capitalism, there has been an increase in understandings of economics (and in particular monetary gain) that are set within a 'magical' and 'occult' framework. Thus, Comaroff and Comaroff (2000) suggest that urban-dwelling Africans live in a society in which money seems to become ever more separated from the means of production (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2000), and in which wealth can be seen to be distributed and gained on an unequal and sometimes seemingly 'illogical' basis, have therefore come to rely on 'magical' understandings of money and wealth and how it is possible to acquire (quick) money. To Comaroff and Comaroff, the "inscrutable speculations" of this neoliberal economy thus "call up fresh spectres in their wake" (2000:292), including not only pyramid schemes, occult practices, but also the Prosperity Gospel movement.⁵⁵ In particular, they suggest that in the clamour of the marginalised seeking divine assistance to navigate their way through a confusing capitalism, people turn to "fee-for-service" religions that peddle "locally nuanced fantasies of abundance without effort" (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2000:297) and ideas of economics that try to beat "capitalism at its own game by drawing a winning number at the behest of unseen forces" (ibid.).

There is no doubt that the Prosperity Gospel movement could, of course, be seen within this vein, and my point is certainly not to irrefutably dispute this. The pervasiveness of 'seed faith' teachings within Prosperity Gospel theology - the idea that whatever is 'seeded' (or given) to God through monetary gifts to church or other beneficiaries will be returned in multiple amounts, sometimes expressed as 'ten-fold' - could certainly be seen to be an example of what the Comaroff call

⁵⁵ The parallels between the growth of pyramid schemes and the rise of the popularity of Pentecostalism has also been noted in Kenya by Gifford (2009:161), and the parallels between the discourse of multi-level marketing companies and Pentecostalism has been discussed in Busher et al (2009).

'fantasies of abundance without effort'. The implied implications of such understandings of the cause and effect of wealth-generation are readily apparent: a distinct move away from an emphasis, at an individual level, on saving and fiscal prudence, coupled with a potential lack of inclination towards hard work with proper remuneration, as means through which financial and material security might be established. At the same time, Comaroff and Comaroff, as with other scholars (for example, Asamoah-Gyadu, 2005) suggest that such 'magical' understandings of wealth entails an lack of awareness of structural causes in understanding the material misfortune that someone finds themselves in.

Whilst finding the work of Comaroff and Comaroff persuasive, and not completely unrelated to my observations in Kampala, I do however question the all-pervasive influence of the 'magical' forms of Prosperity Gospel thinking on the ways in which adherents to Pentecostal Christianity think about money and wealth, in particular the idea that those believers follow a 'get-rich quick' formula of wealth generation. As mentioned above, I suggest that the emphasis on Pentecostals' 'magical' understanding of monetary gain (or loss), is not necessarily non-existent, but that, at least from the data collected from this research, the reality is more complex.

There were, of course, stories of misfortune caused by demonic spirits, or witchcraft. For a handful of my female informants in particular, their life stories and narratives in interviews were overwhelmingly characterised by stories of how they thought their family members had caused problems in their lives through various forms of witchcraft, reminiscent of the work of Geschiere (1997). For example, Edna, a middle-aged woman, believed her ex-husband, back when she was a young teenage bride, had travelled to Mombasa in Kenya to purchase a malevolent mermaid spirit in an attempt to stop her from having other lovers in the future. She believed that this changeling spirit had stayed with her ever since, appearing in the form of snakes, cats, and human beings, amongst other living forms, and causing ill-health, failing businesses and even the kidnapping and subsequent death of her youngest son. Similarly, Ayesha, a divorced nurse, held the belief that a former lover had blighted her life, and especially her health, through various forms of witchcraft, including once encouraging her to eat raw eggs with magical Arabic inscriptions on the shells, that she believed had then

held a curse over her. She also asserted that her brother-in-law had ‘run mad’ (become mentally ill) after having an affair with a ‘night-dancer’, a type of witch that is thought to come out at night and seduce men, who he believed fed him human flesh. Such stories are not unusual in Kampala: as identified earlier in the cases of Pamela and Sally and the use of *mumbwa*, things (coins, cloth, pipes, amongst other things) and animals, can all be agentive, and have imbued spiritual (and often malevolent) powers, as is common not just in Bugandan traditional beliefs (see, for example, Roscoe, (2005 [1911])), but in other pre-colonial belief systems in the region.⁵⁶ Narratives of ‘curses’ were often on the periphery of life stories, and they therefore remind us, as identified, that Pentecostal Christianity in Uganda certainly does not negate the existence of non-Christian spiritual forms, but instead subsumes them under the arch of their own divinity, as indeed, has been found in other parts of the world (see Zehner, 1996 and 2005, for Thailand). Obviously, remedies to such spiritually afflictions, including faith healing and speaking in tongues, in Pentecostal churches certainly fit the model of an “occult economy”. However, at the same time, it was very common for informants to believe that poverty and misfortune were caused by far more prosaic (and less ‘exotic’) reasons.

Having the correct ‘mind-set’: work and fiscal sensibilities

Such narratives, for example, held that the reasons for poverty were due to ‘laziness’ or ‘minimising jobs’ (disregarding employment as a viable source of income). There was a significant portion of my informants that believed that in able to ‘receive God’s blessings’, one must work hard, and have a correct ‘mind-set’ that included an ability to be sensible with money – to be able to save, and be aware of opportunity and financial risk. Judith, for example, explained to us that,

⁵⁶ See, for example, Middleton on Lugbara lineage-based ghost cults (1999 [1960]). In addition, Middleton identifies that if a person did not have a shrine to their ghost cult (i.e. that they did not participate in that form of spiritual belief system) then they were not considered to *be* Lugbara (1999 [1960]: 35). Although Ayesha was a Muganda, she experienced a similar rejection from her family and clan group not because she had rejected Islam, but because she had stopped participating in family and clan-based traditional religious practice. This rejection was not complete, and she still had relations with her family, but she had distanced herself from them and spent more time with her sister (the wife of Ayesha’s brother-in-law that had ‘run mad’) and her children, who were also born-again. This is reminiscent, of course, with Meyer’s assertion that becoming a Pentecostal signifies a ‘break from the past’, including a break with family / ancestral ties. Ayesha was not necessarily typical of my informants, however, and many still maintained relations with their family members, if not all.

“when you don’t want to work, you are lazy. One time I went to a Pastor to pray for a job – the fishnet factory had put me on six months [unpaid] leave. I met him and said I had tried to get a job and failed. This Pastor said I was spoilt because the gospel without action is a dead gospel. If I pray and then just sleep, it is a dead gospel, you can say a spoilt gospel. But I told him direct that me I’m not spoilt. I DO the action – I will look for a job.”
[Interview with Judith, 9th October 2009.]

Clearly, although as seen in the previous chapter, Judith was a strong proponent in the power of positive confession, from the narrative above it would seem that she also thought that praying was not necessarily enough. Likewise, Matthew, whose life is discussed in more detail in the next chapter, explained to us that he thought that,

“poverty is brought by laziness... Proverbs says that a lazy man will not always have something to eat, yet a hardworking man will always have plenty of harvest. Being lazy is one of them, also is lack of instructions: I tell you that if you use this route you are not going to reach where you are going, but you don’t take the advice - this can also bring poverty.”
[Interview with Matthew, 23rd July 2009.]

This hard work ethic and awareness of opportunity were commonly heard in interviews. Another interviewee, a young man called Jonathan who sometimes worked with Judith at the fish-net factory, expressed that,

“some people just live a life of poverty because they admire to be poor, they don’t want to work hard so they just live in a wasted life. Maybe they can involve in activities like maybe drinking, what, and then you live a life of poverty. You don’t mind, you [have a] ‘don’t care’ attitude. You say, ‘after all I can live my life, I can cultivate in the village and as long as I’m able to eat’.... so you just live that kind of life and you remain a poor person.”
[Interview with Jonathan, 29th August, 2009.]

These are just three short examples of a common, more ascetic, trope in interviews: of the need to be hard-working, to actively look for jobs, to avoid spending ‘on women’ and on alcohol, and to be fiscally wise, in order to avoid poverty. The data from my research does not conclusively show that neo-

Pentecostal ‘Prosperity Gospel’ concepts of economic exchange between ‘this-world’ and the other are not lacking, however. Typical tropes of the Pentecostal economy such as ‘seed faith’ were still present in some form, which are discussed later in this chapter. But what is important to note is that I found Prosperity Gospel (indeed more ‘magical’) ideas about money and how to become rich co-existing, seemingly quite easily, alongside a more ‘old’ Pentecostal (and indeed, Weberian Protestant) work ethic, in the interviews and narratives of my informants.

“I don’t believe in poverty”

What was striking when conversing with informants in Kampala was that their explanations of their own socio-economic lives were very often spoken about in terms of the future: how they defined their own socio-economic situation – whether they thought they were rich or poor (or something in between) – was often voiced in terms of future possibility, and as seen in the previous chapter, future *certainty*, rather than present-day reality.⁵⁷ A good example is that of Jonathan, who we have just heard from above.

Jonathan is a young believer at Kiweranga Life Fellowship, who we got to know as an attendee at a cell group. An unmarried high school graduate, Jonathan had migrated a few years previously from rural eastern Uganda to Kampala to look for work. In the time my research assistant and I knew him, Jonathan had, typically for many of the young informants we knew, been employed in a number of low-paid menial positions with poor workers’ rights and had lived a fairly transient existence within the city, moving from one muzigo to the next as his fortune, or rather the lack of it, dictated. Jonathan was also typical in his self-identification of his own socio-economic situation. Reflecting the sentiments expressed in the phrase that opened this chapter, Jonathan explained to me one day that,

“okay, I wished to describe myself as a poor person but when I learnt myself that I’m not generally a poor person, but it is only circumstances that make me look like a poor person. But I know I have potential to become a rich

⁵⁷ Indeed, in this way, therefore, these expressions voiced in interviews were in themselves positive confessions – declarations spoken of a successful (and often wealthy) and secure future that in the process of being spoken were thought by the speaker to be engendering that perceived future into being.

person. Yeah, I don't believe in poverty." [Interview with Jonathan, 28th August 2009.]

To Jonathan, those 'circumstances' that made him live in a position of poverty had not only been relegated in significance, but his state of poverty was in fact being denied. To him, one's socio-economic situation was characterised by future *potential*, not by existing present-time 'circumstances'. He had 'learnt' (the implication being through his involvement and belief in born-again Christianity) that apparently he was not *really* a poor person, and that the poverty that was caused by these 'circumstances' was actually only cosmetic, and temporary. This was exemplified in his statement that, "*it is only circumstances that make me look like a poor person*", suggesting to us that his true socio-economic state was actually that which was latent and yet to be fully realised. As he says, "*I have potential to become a rich person*". His denial of those present-day circumstances, which we could read as being the multitude of issues, including structural causes, that meant Jonathan's life continued to be economically insecure, culminated in his assertion that he did not, therefore, 'believe' in poverty.

What can we make of such a declaration? I suggest that in expressing himself in this way, Jonathan is displaying an understanding of poverty and wealth within a paradigm of positive confession thinking. To 'believe' in poverty (for himself), would be to deny God's omnipotent ability to improve Jonathan's lot. As has been seen in the previous chapter, this would constitute a 'negative confession' that would, in the understanding of born-again Christians in Kampala, bring about that which is (not) being believed. Therefore, to engender that future latent wealth that is thought to be promised to them by God, a believer should, as Jonathan did, make assertions of these (future) riches, even if it was apparent that the current life of the believer was far from rich or financially secure. To circumvent this apparent contradiction then, Jonathan employs this rhetorical device of looking towards the future, and in doing so, believes that through these positive proclamations these latent possibilities *will* indeed come true.

Of course, it is a truism that definitions of poverty and wealth are not always understood as primarily economic categories, and therefore it cannot be assumed that in talking about wealth that money is always at the centre of others' definitions or understandings. However, Jonathan and his fellow believers in both

Kiweranga Life Fellowship and Alpha Tabernacle did overwhelmingly categorise poverty and wealth in economic terms. Being poor *was* primarily described as not having the finances to pay for things: houses, cars, education, good (and plentiful) food, and good clothes.⁵⁸ And indeed, despite his denial of the situation of poverty in which Jonathan found himself, and his proclamations that he was rich *because he said he would be*, and despite expressing that he did not ‘believe’ in poverty, there was still an awareness of the dearth of financial security in his life in some form: as he first expresses it in the quote that opened this section, “*I wished to describe myself as a poor person*”. Jonathan was not therefore fooling himself, as indeed it would be impossible to do so if, for example, one was served with an eviction notice, or did not have enough money to buy cooking fuel that evening. But his narrative exemplifies how he reconstructs his own identity, his own place in the world, using the rhetorical device of positive confession, and at the same time believes that he is therefore helping to construct a better future, helping himself ‘move on up’.

It must be noted therefore that when asking informants to self-identify as being poor or wealthy, to describe to me their own socio-economic situation in their own terms, their responses were multi-layered. However, as with James’ narrative, despite an understanding of poverty and wealth expressed in financial and material terms, as just identified, there was still a conceptual understanding that such definitions did not really *belong* to them, by virtue of their faith, that somehow they could be differentiated from others in similar physical and economic state as them, as if they had something else – this latent potential for wealth, or even further, a guaranteed future of wealth.

Related to this, and despite generally defining poverty and wealth in economic terms, informants did make a differentiation between different *types* of poverty, between what could be categorised as *material* poverty and what could be

⁵⁸ Thus one informant explained a rich person as being “*one who can give himself everything that he wants, his children go to school, he has got a big house and all other things like eats, clothing. That is person you can call rich, with his businesses. I mean when he doesn’t have any need*”. [Interview with Fiona, 8th September 2009.]⁵⁸ Another informant, Evelyn, expressed this in a similar way when she said that a rich person is one that has “*a good looking house, a good car he /she drives oneself, the children go to nice schools, the feeding is up to date*”. [Interview with Evelyn, 17th September 2009.]

categorised as *spiritual* poverty (and likewise material wealth and spiritual wealth). Thus Judith, whose understanding of positive confession was explored in the previous chapter, explained that, *“me, I’m rich because I have faith and hope. In the physical I’m poor, but in theory I’m rich. Physically I’m squeezed in that way and I can’t rent a house alone.”* [Interview with Judith, 9th October 2009.] Likewise, when I asked George, a young unemployed labourer and volunteer at Kiweranga Life Fellowship, to explain what he thought about his socio-economic status he explained that, *“biblically I am rich but physically I might appear poor, but spiritually I am rich, because the Bible says the just shall live by faith.”* [Interview with George, 18th August 2009.]

There is then an element of this separation between ‘material’ or ‘physical’ and ‘biblical’ or ‘spiritual’ wealth that, within the born-again worldview, sees the material as not enough, that without the psychological feeling of fulfilment that the *balokole* believe they gain through their relationship with God, material wealth is not enough to satisfy someone, for someone to have a good life. As George explained it,

“The Bible says that what will it benefit a man if he possesses all the land and all there is and afterwards lose his soul? This means even if some people have big things, if they don’t have the rules of God, then they are the poorest people.” [Interview with George, 18th August 2009.]

This was also reflected in the words of Vincent, who expressed that, *“if someone was in possession of all these things that he needs, all the bling blings, he’s got a vehicle, he has a house, but in you, you have this big house but you don’t have the freedom, you feel like why am I in the world?”* [Interview with Vincent, 25th August 2009.] ‘Freedom’, as Vincent expressed it, meant the freedom he considered to have by virtue of being born-again.

However, despite expressing a conceptual separation between ‘material’ and ‘spiritual’ poverty and wealth, it should be understood that this understanding that I am arguing was held by the majority of informants is not an ascetic version of an ideal world. It does not reject material wealth as being a hindrance to the ultimate communication with the Divine, but instead expresses that material wealth without spiritual fulfilment (and in particular, a Pentecostal spiritual

relationship with God / Jesus) is not enough. It is important to emphasise this as to my informants increasing their material wealth was certainly still expressed as being not only a major future goal that would be prayed for, but was not only considered to be surety (as expressed by Jonathan), but as discussed in the previous chapter, was considered to be a *right*.

'Worldly riches', danger, and morality

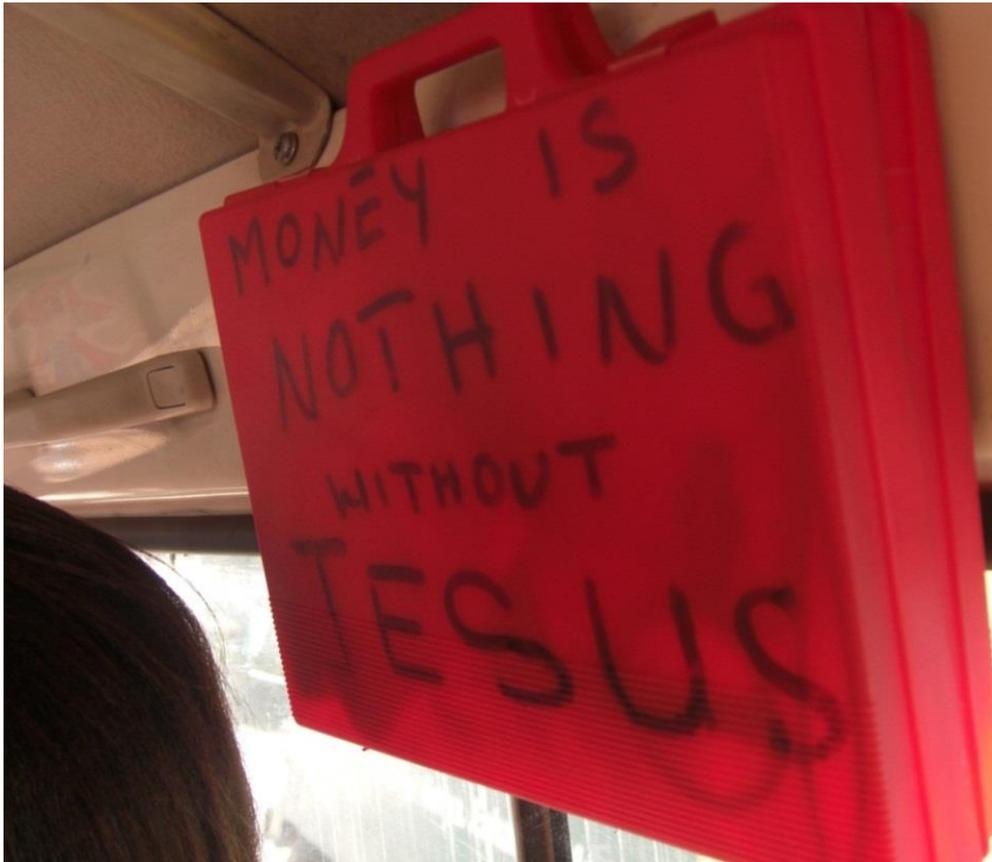


Plate 7. Hand-written message on a public minibus in downtown Kampala. Photo taken by author.

This message visible in the plate above, 'money is nothing without Jesus', scrawled decisively on a disused first-aid kit on a public 'taxi' (minivan bus) in Kampala, was reflective of a fairly common sight when travelling around Kampala, of born-again Christian messages or scriptures. This message could be interpreted, I suggest, in two ways. Firstly, it could be seen to reflect the point made above: the idea held amongst *balokole* in Kampala that material and financial wealth on

its own cannot bring happiness or contentment, and that a spiritual relationship with Jesus (and God / the Holy Spirit) is necessary. The second interpretation, however, is more complex, and relates to the following section of this chapter: I suggest it reflects another belief that I observed amongst my informants, the idea that without the support and the security of God / Jesus / the Holy Spirit, 'worldly' riches are doomed to be short-lived and that financial accumulation would be unachievable due to the work of non-Christian (Satanic or traditional Ugandan) forces that were believed to control them.

Furthermore, this separation in understandings of poverty and wealth between a material realm and spiritual realm, what Judith expressed as the 'physical' and the 'theoretical', could be seen as a necessary part of this conceptual division within the born-again worldview of cause-and-effect that sees 'worldly' riches (wealth that is gained without being influenced by, or part of, the Pentecostal economy, or generated through non-Christian means) as being unstable, and therefore destined to be short-lived. This concept, which was evident in many interviews with informants, thus sees that long-lasting wealth can only ever be achieved by being a *mulokole*. This idea of economics considers this 'worldly' wealth to be somehow transient, destined never to last, as exemplified by these words of one informant, Jennifer:

"They preached in the church; they told us in this world you can get money, you can do everything but if you don't have God that money is just like flowers - it will go and you become poor. And you will cry, and you will regret and it will never come back." [Interview with Jennifer, 25th August, 2009.]

In a similar sentiment, one elderly informant, Jenny, a Jophadhola woman from eastern Uganda, who had once considered herself relatively rich within the rural farming community in which she spent most of her life, reflected back on her subsequent (pre-conversion) financial misfortune in the following ways:

"In the village [I was] one to be called rich: I had children, I had my husband... we had food, we had cows, goats, hens, plantations, pineapples and I had orchards, every kind of food, be it rice, groundnuts, beans, I had it all. And we were there, they called us rich. But I have seen, for me... those

riches ended. When I look back, people without things could come to me in those days, and I gave them eats, another day I got women and I gave them second-hand clothes, one could come and dig for me and I gave him food, but now this time I see that I worked but it was not divine.” [Interview with Jenny, 12th August 2009.]

In hindsight, therefore, Jenny had reconfigured her understanding of her financial and material ‘fall-from-grace’ within spiritual terms that meant that her wealth had not been secure because her belief system at that time (which was Anglican) was not as effective as born-again Christianity. In a later interview Jenny discussed how her late husband had lost his job around the time that those “*riches ended*”, which of course could explain the financial insecurities they subsequently faced; but the point is that her later understandings of the causes of her family’s misfortunes were couched in terms of the instability of wealth accrued when not a born-again Christian.

There is a sense then that money achieved through non-Christian means is potentially dangerous. This trope was indeed evident in the narratives of some informants, including Luke, a young congregant in Alpha Tabernacle, who when talking about the importance of giving in church, expresses a view that riches gained through ill-gotten means can cause problems. He explained to us that,

“you see these people, they go in the shrine [building where witchdoctors or traditional herbalists practice] and they give offerings and... when you give Satan a head of a human being he gives to you, but what he will give you it will take your peace. Because every time you will be guilty about that head you have taken... He will give you riches but it will be for a while... But God is not like that. When you give to God he will give permanent things and you will be having peace in that what God has given to you.” [Interview with Luke, 10th August 2009.]

However, I suggest that this concept that wealth generated by a non-Christian, or through non-Christian means, is somehow impermanent is less an expression of qualitative difference in the substance of that wealth – that some wealth is more

'dangerous' than the other⁵⁹ - but I feel relates more to issues of morality. As I understood it from the contexts within which such ideas were discussed, it was less a conceptualisation that it was physical money as the inherent cause of problem, and more a concept that, on the one hand, money gotten through non-Christian means will give the bearer of that money moral torment and feelings of guilt, and on the other hand (and related to the first), a way of expressing the concept that God's blessings endure when the receiver continues to conduct his or her life within Christian principles. This is why Luke expresses that when you receive something from God (as it is perceived to be), *"you will be having peace."* Likewise, in the same interview Luke continued his narrative with an example:

"If I had stolen that money to pay this rent, every time I slept in this house I will be guilty because every time a soul will say 'you stolen [stole from] someone to pay your rent'. Even if I will be sleeping that spirit of the Lord will come to me [and say] 'you stolen someone to pay your rent'. I will not have any peace. And very soon they will chase me in [from] the house because I received this house in the bad way not in the good way."

Thus it can be seen how, to Pentecostal Christians like Luke, these narratives of transient wealth are less about a fear of ill-gotten money itself, or a fear of some essence embodied in money, but more a reflection on what they see as the intransience of money that was not received through moral 'Christian' means such as hard-work and honesty. Indeed, it might be possible to see such accounts therefore as proxy narratives for changes in lifestyles. They are not only narratives against theft, and the generation of wealth through deception, but they also remind us of the theme addressed earlier, that was present in many of my informants' narratives, regarding the importance of hard work, saving and fiscal responsibility. It is again in these ways that my informants' understandings of poverty and wealth generation are at odds with the literature that sees neo-Pentecostal churches, such as Alpha Tabernacle, and to a certain extent Kiweranga Life Fellowship, as espousing a concept of quick-fix 'magical' money, wealth that is created without an understanding of its origins, or indeed, without the need to work for it.

⁵⁹ Van Dijk (1999), for example, has described how Ghanaian Pentecostals fear gifts as they might contain malevolent essence or power that has been placed there by the giver.

It's more blessed to give than receive? Ideas about a Christian spiritual economy and how to receive 'God's Blessings'

Therefore, just as an ethic of hard work was still visible in some form, so were less transcendental ideas about the meaning of giving to church. In addition to the more neo-Pentecostal ideas of seed faith and return prestations from God (usually received through a conduit) as a result of 'sowing' money in the form of tithes and offerings in church, the number of informants who explained that they gave to church because of more this-worldly, even pedestrian, motives were not insignificant. To this cohort, it was important to give money to church because the church needed financial support for its pastoral team, for its buildings and administration, and for its outreach activities or evangelism crusades – certainly not very 'transcendental' or 'magical' ideas of what happens with the money given to the offering basket.⁶⁰ However, and in a way that potentially marries these two differing concepts of the Pentecostal economy – the transcendental and the prosaic – there was a commonplace understanding that giving to church, and indeed giving to others that might need assistance, was one tool among many that was seen to aid the givers' propensity to receive God's blessings at a later date: it was seen less as a direct prestation in return for that which was given, but was rather conceptualised in terms of a wider, more complex, exchange system, which was touched upon earlier in the chapter, in which the giver behaving in a correct Christian manner (in this case including giving money to the church) comes to be a worthy recipient of those future blessings.

However, as can be seen in the following narrative heard in another Kiweranga Life Fellowship cell group meeting hosted at the home of a lady I call Mummy Glenda, the motives behind such gift exchange practices were certainly not altogether altruistic: the gift, of course, was not 'free'. Instead, in listening to informants talk about giving, familiar themes emerge: of claiming things which, it is believed, one has the *right* to receive, and of the need to give as a form of thanks for what you have already been given (for example, in terms of wages and

⁶⁰ Interestingly, few informants mentioned that the church needed money for charitable activities. 'Outreach' was generally understood to be evangelical activities 'reaching out' to those populations seen as particularly in need of being saved, especially those in hospital or prison, rather than organised benefaction. As discussed in Chapter Four, organised charity or social responsibility initiatives were not high on the agenda for either church.

other means of income and material wealth), through which, it is thought, future wealth is secured. The following passage heard in this cell group meeting at Mummy Glenda's is an excellent example of this way of thinking about giving. Flavia, the cell group leader (and paid member of the administrative staff at Kiweranga Life Fellowship) was discussing the issue of what believers need to do to receive prosperity. She explained to the cell group members that,

“there's a scripture that says “you'll reap what you sow”. If you sow maize you won't expect millet. If time has come for digging and you don't dig, at harvest time there'll be no food. For example, in the g-nut [peanut] season in Teso, everyone is planting, busy busy, but if you're just sitting there you won't be harvesting those sacks of g-nuts... Recently I reaped out of sowing. I got a message about my father [who needed help in the village] – we prayed as a life group for money for a building and I got enough money for him. Then the spirit of God had told me to accompany with bedding. But then I didn't have enough so I surrendered my own beddings. I said to my kids ‘my God will provide for me’. I found my Father needed it. Back here life was not easy – I used the very small mattresses for kids and the ribs pained me. But there's power in giving – God made me reap. This lady, Sophie's sister muzungu [a European missionary who had recently visited Kiweranga Life Fellowship], when she was going back she said, “take my things, take my property”. She didn't have much but I got a bigger bed, a bigger mattress, bed sheets and bedcovers. I would have had to buy them slowly slowly and it would have taken me years. Now I sleep like a real child of God. Each one of us has a store and it's up to us to unlock it. But we don't claim for the promises of God and we don't use the key, giving... We don't ask enough for big things. He's able to give us big things.

Promises come from God but we don't claim for them... [but] we even have problems giving a tithe. We ask for a job from God but you land on a job and then He remains watching you but you come to church and keep quiet and look for a balance [small change] of 200/- [approximately USD 10cents]. That is unfaithful. Yet God was faithful and gave you the job. We rob him when we don't give our tithes and offerings. We have become robbers. He says ‘don't come to my house empty-handed, lest you leave with a curse’.

Luckily our Lord is a merciful Lord. Your giving is up to you: preachers remind us, but it is up to you. You carry your bags and say [you have] 'no money' but God knows even if the church is not going to check your bag. At the end of it when we don't prosper, are we going to blame anyone? The Pastors? God Himself?" [Notes from cell group meeting, 29th July 2009.]

We see therefore the centrality here in the idea that future prosperity will come from giving, not only to other people, but also specifically the importance of not 'cheating God' and giving to church, and we also see that this future prosperity is guaranteed: *"He will definitely open doors so you can begin prospering"*. But the passage also suggests that not only is this guarantee of prosperity plentiful (*"He is able to give us big things"*) but that it is the *individual* that is considered to be both a central agent of change and yet also the cause of misfortune: we are told that *"we don't use the key... we don't ask for big things"*. Not only does this phrase thus reflect a quintessential Prosperity Gospel message – the suggestion that born-again Christians should expect big things - from the members of a church (Kiweraanga Life Fellowship) that did not seem to display a strong Prosperity Gospel character to its sermon rhetoric, but it squarely places the blame of misfortune not on God, but on the speaker. As Flavia expresses it, *"[a]t the end of it when we don't prosper, are we going to blame anyone? The Pastors? God Himself?"* With this rhetorical question Flavia is clearly placing any blame for not prospering with the individual, an individual that does not thank God at all times (even when things prayed for have not 'come to pass') through positive confession, that does not help their neighbour, and does not pay tithes and offerings – the 'key' to their own personal 'store' of prosperity from God.

Rights and sureties: the fallibility of 'man' and the infallibility of God

It is this centrality of the individual as a cause of misfortune that I suggest has been missing in the literature. The flip-side of an individualistic view of social change is that it is not only fortune but misfortune that is seen to be within the control of the individual, because it needs to be acknowledged, according to the born-again rhetoric that I witnessed, that this agency of humans is, in the end, limited. Within this schema of understanding of the cause-and-effect of poverty and wealth, if God is infallible, if 'He' will apparently always provide (at some future point within 'His' unknowable time, of course), then the corollary is that

humans are inherently fallible, and never fully able to successfully improve their position, or be in control.

As identified in the previous chapter, whilst God is considered to never be able to fail, and will always provide that prosperity that, so it is thought, has been promised, this wealth cannot, and indeed *should not*, be expected at a particular time in the future, but in 'God's time' – at some unknowable point. Not receiving God's blessings is not then seen as being a problem with God's ability to provide, but instead is considered to be somehow the fault of the receiver – maybe they have not been generous enough with others, or maybe they 'robbed' God by not paying their tithes and offerings as a thanks for money received, or as 'seed faith' for money in the future; maybe they have not got the correct 'mind-set' and do not believe they will be 'victorious', or maybe they negatively confessed by complaining about their poverty. As an example of this idea of the fallibility of man, I would like to return to Flavia's narrative in the Kiweranga Life Fellowship cell group meeting, in which she continues to talk about the Pentecostal 'right' to prosper, and which, in so doing, elucidates this concept that human beings are fallible, and, furthermore, not able to be trusted:

"Each one of us were born to prosper. Others have misread 'blessed are those who are poor' but no, you are still on this world, you need to be smart. The Devil has lied to us – 'blessed are those who are poor'. According to Jeremiah 29:11, we were born to prosper.⁶¹ God has a plan not to harm us, a plan to bring a future which you hoped for... He has a plan for each one of us: to prosper us, not to harm us. He will not fail to do what he said he will do for you.

[See also] *Numbers 23:19.⁶² God is not a man, not a human being. Humans tell you one thing but do another. What He says he will do, He will. But we need to change our minds – for example, why are some of us not prospering? There are some principles that go with what God says – we need to renew our mind, to take God's word seriously. We keep on*

⁶¹ Jeremiah 29:11 reads, "I alone know the plans I have for you, plans to bring you prosperity and not disaster plans to bring about the future you hope for" (Good News Bible).

⁶² Numbers 23:19 reads, "God is not like people, who lie; He is not a human who changes his mind. Whatever He promises, He does; He speaks, and it is done" (Good News Bible).

reminding God – “we don’t have this, we don’t have that” etc. but NOTHING will change God – the problem is with us, not with God. We shouldn’t be crying to God.”

This passage then is very interesting for the way in which it succinctly raises a number of key issues that surround this form of understanding of both poverty and wealth generation. We see in Flavia’s speech to her fellow cell group members the move away from moral asceticism towards the idea, already discussed in this chapter, that prosperity is not only a God-given right but also, an assuredness that that prosperity WILL come – but not through the ‘untrustworthy’ and ‘fallible’ works of humans.⁶³ Thus Florence reminds her audience that “*the problem is with us*”: God should not be criticised (and any other structural factors that might influence a state of well-being are not even mentioned), and believers should refrain from ‘crying’ to God, from negatively confessing, lest they impair the future possibility of their own prosperity.

Hence we return to the centrality of the idea of positive confession to Pentecostal ideas of socio-economic change, and this very individualistic response to poverty. Hearing the words of one informant, Evelyn, we see these themes coming together: of the importance of a correct ‘mind-set’ and having to vocalise expressions of current situations, and hoped for situations, in a positive light, despite material evidence to the contrary. Evelyn was an HIV positive single mother of two children, who worked as a house matron in an orphanage run by one of the prominent Pentecostal churches in Kampala. She was a teacher by training but had had to leave her job after a period of bad health, when her CD4 count had deteriorated significantly. By the time we knew Evelyn, however, she was on anti-retroviral drugs and her health had improved, and she had been able to take the job at the orphanage. She had been open about her status, and the orphanage had not discriminated against her. However, she found that although she received food for her and the son that lived with her, as part of her job, her wage of 50,000 shillings per month (approximately US\$25 at the time of research) was not enough to buy the extra, more nutritious, food she needed to supplement the food given to her, and indeed, sometimes her wages were late by months. Furthermore, her employer was not willing to pay for the full cost of

⁶³ Indeed, Gifford highlights that one Pastor he spoke to in Kampala suggested that Uganda’s problem was not with poverty, but with trustworthiness (Gifford, 1998:167).

transport back to Kampala so her son (who was also HIV positive) could get to the paediatric clinics he needed to attend regularly, meaning that at times, when her eight-year old son was weak, Evelyn would have to carry him on her back some of the distance. Despite these setbacks, Evelyn remained committed to the logic of positive confession, explaining that, *“yes, for me I’m not poor because the Bible says that confession creates something. Now I may be in a bad situation but because of the mind, you find tomorrow I have done something then I come out of poverty.”* [Interview with Evelyn, 17th September 2009.] Likewise, returning to Jonathan, the informant who expressed that ‘I don’t believe in poverty’, we hear him explain that,

“I don’t believe [in it] because there is an attitude of someone saying that for ‘me I’m a poor person’, then that attitude you have it in your mind and you live your life that even when you get anything small, you say ‘me I’m a poor person’ - you spend the way you want and just live your life and you only want to sustain your life... Then besides, from church they always preach and give us encouraging messages. They tell us that if you have the attitude of poverty, if you believe to be poor, and it comes out of your mind and your mouth can make you the person you really are, and what [you can] be. So that erased those ideas of saying I’m poor’. You have a potential: your God is there to make you a rich person. Yes!” [Interview with Jonathan, 29th August 2009.]

Despite Evelyn’s assertion that she might be able to do something herself (the implication being confessing positively) which will help her move out of a position of poverty, we also clearly see in Jonathan’s narrative that the blame is fully on the individual – the individual having a bad ‘attitude’ – if that prosperity is not forthcoming. Certainly, there is understanding of fiscal responsibility in Jonathan’s narrative above (exemplified when he says that the person with a ‘bad attitude’ would *“spend the way you want”*), but at the same time, an understanding of how one can move out of poverty that is wholeheartedly in line with prosperity gospel thinking and the concept of positive confession.

Dealing with inequality, domination and misfortune

Thus despite the apparent 'agency' that the believer feels they possess that enables them to improve their situations (using this multi-layered scheme of successfully negotiating the Pentecostal economy through giving to church, through working hard, and having the correct 'mind set' and making positive confessions), I would suggest that the Pentecostal response to poverty and wealth that places both the blame for misfortune, and the onus for improving that misfortune on the individual leaves the believer with little room for manoeuvre in dealing with real issues of inequality and misfortune. With an understanding of the causes of misfortune placed to a lesser extent on spiritual forces and witchcraft, but as seen above, also on the fallibilities of the believer themselves, and with a response to misfortune that discourages complaint or criticism and favours waiting for a promised improvement in some never-determined 'future', how do *balokole* in Kampala deal with particular challenges?

In facing problems, there is, unsurprisingly, evidence from my research carried out in Kampala that many informants feel not only a sense of catharsis, but a sense of 'strength' due to their born-again faith and involvement in religious practice, a feeling that their problems or worries were not necessarily insurmountable. This was frequently referred to as 'hope' by both informants, and in the rhetoric of pastors and their sermon content. The words of Vincent, a young man who was heavily involved in Kiweranga Life Fellowship as a member of the choir, are a good example. During the time we knew him, Vincent was employed as a driver for a wealthy Ugandan-Indian businessman and although later on in the research we heard that he had been able to negotiate a higher salary, when we first met him he was finding it difficult to financially support himself in addition to his sister and her three small children, with whom he lived and were responsible for. Vincent was a very gentle and open young man, and he explained to us about how he sometimes felt depressed about the problems he faced. However, he also told us how he felt he was able to face his problems through his faith. He talked about how one time that he had been feeling low; he felt he had experienced direct communication with God, communication that had given him psychological support:

"I asked the Lord, 'how can I be able to overcome such challenges?' because I was like feeling fed up of all these challenges that were coming up. And as I was reading the Bible, inside me it was like God had dropped a revelation and I felt inside me someone was telling me that open this book. When I opened the book [the Bible] I came to 2Chronicles 20:17. It says: "you shall not have to fight all these battles but stand firm and see the deliverance I will give unto you" and when I read that it only empowered me to go on with life again because then I knew that God then has got a life for me."

[Interview with Vincent, 21st January 2009.]

Vincent was not the only one who narrated stories of feeling 'strong' or 'empowered', or of 'having hope' when they practised their born-again faith in some way, whether that psychological feeling was from listening to sermons (in church or on one of the many popular *balokole* radio stations), from dreams in which they felt they had communication with God or Jesus, or from reading the Bible (all of which were mentioned as experiences through which they experienced catharsis and/or 'hope'). Matthew thus explained to me one evening, as he escorted Mable & I back to the bus stop after an evening cell group, how he had had a dream in which God revealed to him the scripture of Matthew 11:28, which he told us read, "*come to me, all of you who are tired from carrying heavy loads, and I will give you rest*". Matthew had experienced this dream when he had first moved to Kampala, when he had been very lonely and had been struggling to find employment, and he had felt that this biblical passage was sent to him from God as he thought it reflected his troubles directly. This, he explained, gave him a feeling of support, especially when he had no close friends or family in the city.⁶⁴

Likewise, George, a client of the pastors at Kiweranga Life Fellowship, and an unassuming and hard-working man, whose relationships with the pastors are discussed at more length in the next chapter, explained that he sometimes felt what he called 'the fear': feelings of acute worry and anxiety about the

⁶⁴ Dreams were a common theme in many interviews, often recounted as forms through which informants had communication from God, saw visions, or received revelations. The content of such dreams often had a guiding force for their subsequent behaviour, or ways of looking at their life. Indeed, Roscoe, writing about the Baganda in the early Twentieth Century, writes of the importance of dreams, and suggests that "[n]o person ever let a dream pass unnoticed, without drawing from it the lesson it was intended to convey" (Roscoe, 2005 [1911]:18).

circumstances in which he found himself. At those times, George he explained to us that he would,

“turn to the Bible to read, not knowing that I will come to a certain verse that will encourage me. Fortunately you come to a verse that encourages you to keep your faith: if you are maybe to look for other ways of gaining a certain thing then you say, ‘no, let me just leave it to God’.” [Interview with George, 16th March 2009.]

For Vincent and Matthew, the practice of born-again gave them general feelings of support when the challenges they faced meant they were lonely, or depressed. In George’s case, he suggests that when he was feeling somewhat desperate in the situation he found himself in, reading the Bible encouraged him to stop thinking of alternative, less moral, means of making an income.

Narratives such as this were so common it would certainly seem necessary to conclude that personal faith for born-again Christians in Kampala was indeed a very useful psychological support, enabling feelings of not only catharsis, but also of hope for the future, that things would not turn out that bad. Whilst it would be difficult to deny such a conclusion, another interpretation could be that these narratives in themselves were also testimonies and positive confessions - both rhetorical practices that would be considered necessary for any born-again Christian to voice in a conversation, whether or not the topic of that conversation was initially about God, or their faith. Whilst I am not denying that informants experience psychological support from their faith, I am suggesting another layer of analysis of informants’ narratives, that of the performative rhetoric of positive confession, which indeed in itself makes it difficult for a listener, or a researcher, to necessarily ascertain which positive narratives might be spoken because the speaker genuinely feels those sentiments, and which are spoken because the speaker feels they should do so. Indeed, it is quite possible for a narrative to be both at the same time.

But what concerns me in this chapter is that even if we do accept some level of psychological support in the practice of being born-again Christian, and assume that this may indeed stop some informants from being defeatist, that it may mean that they do try out new strategies in an attempt to alleviate their poverty, the

narratives of many of my informants also suggest that in dealing with particular cases of exploitation or tribulation there is, to some extent, an attitude of inaction, and of simply 'leaving things to God'. Indeed, as George himself says in the narrative above, although turning to the Bible may have stopped him from looking for other means to "gain a certain thing", in the end he still resolved to "let me just leave it to God". I suggest that in such narratives where there is an identifiable person(s) or institution that has been the cause of an informant's tribulations, there seemed to be an unwillingness, or rather a feeling of inability, to be assertive and to attempt to tackle that exploitation or wrongdoing through means other than born-again practice.

A good example in this regard is the case of Maureen, a young single woman who worked as an assistant to a dressmaker in a more upmarket part of town, but who experienced poor working conditions. A committed and eager employee, Maureen had been particularly pleased when she had first got the job because the dressmaker was also born-again and Maureen thought, therefore, that she would be paid and treated more fairly as an employee than she might have done if she had worked for someone who was not born-again. Unfortunately the conditions at her workplace were less than desirable. She felt poorly treated by her boss, and was only paid 30,000 shillings a month (approximately US\$15), which was only just enough to pay her half of the rent of 50,000 shillings for the garage in which she lived with a friend from church. In the following extract from an interview with Maureen, it is possible to see how she dealt with her undesirable situation:

"Maureen: Jane [her employer] used to quarrel so much; she was treating me as a useless person and also because of the money she gives me, she thought I couldn't go anywhere else. And at times when customers come, she could speak annoying words [speak badly about her] because I had wanted to quit from there. But I prayed to God and asked Him if He was with me to work at that job getting little, working so much but receiving a small wage. Because I could climb up the ladders, take up the clothes to Kiswa [a neighbouring area], then from there I go to town. I could really get so much tired. And when the time of the payments comes, paying me becomes a war; she doesn't want to pay me. Because that money I get is for paying the landlady, at times she has come when I have not been paid. But

my only answer was to pray to God. If He doesn't want me to do the job, I could leave it and I asked God and He told me that He is with me, I should bear with the situation for it is this that is taking me to another level. So I persisted till this time. And she changed when we reach payments, she pays me at the end of the month immediately and she no longer abuses me. There is a way God uses me there - customers at times come and tell me to pray for them. So that is where the Lord wanted me to be when He brought his people - He wanted to show me that He is there. Although I get little money, He told me not to look at the salary I get, but be like a servant. And I stood to serve....

Sophie: When God told you to be patient how would he communicate to you?

Maureen: I went early in the morning to the shop and I was so tired, I had just walked by feet because here we didn't have money as we used the 1000 shillings [used the transport money for food]. Now when I reached there, I cried so much to God, so I asked God; 'Lord why do I suffer so much like this?' Then I heard a voice telling me that 'Maureen, don't fear. I'm together with you'." [Interview with Maureen, 6th September 2009.]

Maureen was lucky in that over time her situation had improved somewhat – she was at least getting paid on time, even if those wages had not been increased to anything near a wage that Maureen could live off, and she felt that her employer was no longer ‘abusing’ her. This narrative could be seen as a positive story, one that meant that Maureen’s faith gave her patience to endure an undesirable situation, and through that endurance, something improved. At the same time she coped with the problems she faced in her workplace by reconceptualising it as a space for opportunity, an opportunity that God had given her, a space to meet fellow born-again Christians that Maureen could pray for. Of course, in Maureen’s conceptualisation, her prayers to God helped improve her situation at work, but of course there are other interpretations. What is important to note here however, is that Maureen’s choices of what to do about her undesirable working conditions were limited, indeed seemingly limited only to praying to God that things might change, or not doing anything at all.

She did not feel she was able to assert herself and request a living wage from her employer: this was in part due to the social and class differences between them (her employer was an educated and wealthy woman who fraternised in Kampala's elite 'society' circles, whereas Maureen was a poor migrant to the city, not so well educated, and without a network of wealthy friends and family) but also, I suggest, in part due to a pervasive theme that I observed in Kampala of employees not asking or asserting themselves in the workplace. Rather, the seemingly prevailing relationship between employer and employee in the city was one of the employee getting whatever was given, whether that was low pay or delayed pay, without recourse to ask for better remuneration or an explanation of late pay or poor working conditions. This attitude amongst those with power of not giving a voice to those without it was reflective of a wider exploitation of those who could be called disenfranchised – the employees without contracts, the neighbours without contacts in the local council, the poor *muzigo* tenants who were facing unsustainable rent increases – and meant that those disenfranchised people (whether born-again or not) would not necessarily even *try* to improve things as the means with which to attempt to change or influence matters were lacking.

Whereas Maureen did not have a trade union or equivalent that she could turn to, in other cases where there were institutions in place that officially had a mandate to help deal with a problem, these institutions were not seen as effective and were either not used, or if they were used they became part of the problem. For many of the born-again Christians that I spoke to, their narratives suggested that God was seen as a more reliable and effective agent of change. The Police, and other institutions such as LCs (Local Councillors,) or even in one example, University departments, were rarely seen as being able to enact positive outcomes for those that needed them.

For example, one interviewee, Godfrey, was at one time earning his living by making chapattis (a popular snack in Uganda of unleavened bread made of flour with oil), but later we found that his livelihood had been ruined because his chapatti table had been stolen, something that had cost him 80,000 shillings (approximately US\$40), a significant amount for Godfrey. Although he did not necessarily know who had taken it, he did know where it was: he had engraved

the phrase 'patience pays' on the table and had thus been able to spot it in another neighbourhood one day, not far from Kiweranga, again being used to make chapattis for sale to the public. However, despite this information, Godfrey did not go to the Police, "because even if I go to the police, I don't have money to give" [interview with Godfrey, 10th May 2009]. Instead, without a job, he would seek solace from the words of pastors:

"Now if I am walking around and talk to elders or pastors about jobs, they encourage me..... I tell them that about the struggle I am going through, and talk to them about the stagnation of my life. Financially, I don't get a breakthrough; I just keep struggling, [being] stressed."

Despite his struggles, however, Godfrey explained that he did still "remain hopeful and prayerful". Once again, it is clear that Godfrey experienced some kind of psychological support from his born-again faith, but it was difficult to see how his patience did indeed pay, and how this enabled him to address the problems he faced in making a livelihood.

However, there were also other narratives that although not specifically suggesting that institutional avenues could not be effective in dealing with such problems, did suggest that other non-institutional (and faith-based) measures would be more suitable. For example, one young 19 year-old informant, Julianna, explained to us how she had felt no need to use the Police after she had been left facially disfigured and blind in one eye following an acid attack from her ex-partner. Although her aunt had gone to the Police on her behalf, when she was recovering in hospital, Julianna had not wanted to continue with the prosecution, and when I asked why not, she explained to us that,

"because inside my heart I decided to forgive that boy and I said let me be just having my peace and God himself will punish him. So from there I said no because I didn't have the time going there because I was sick - I was having a wound and I was alone and by then of course you don't have anyone who can help me to do such and such. So I decided myself that let me give up, God will help me if I didn't die. Thank God I am still alive so God will help. That was the reason... Yeah life is like that but I believe in God, because I know God one day will help me and I forgive the guy who poured

me acid. I didn't take him to the police, the jail. I say 'God, as the Bible says that forgive your enemies, I decided to forgive' because inside my heart I was having my God and I was a believer." [Interview with Julianna, 25th September 2009.]

To Julianna, justice was not served through institutional means, but through her forgiving the perpetrator of the crime. Sadly, for Julianna, after she had recovered from the acid attack she found it difficult to make a living and had to send her young daughter, whom she was very close to, to live with the mother of her ex-partner. Sometimes she would see him around and he would taunt her, but she would try to ignore him.

Discussion

There were other cases in which institutional means of justice or help were not considered as avenues down which informants could turn, too many to note in this chapter. I am not suggesting that these views of institutions such as the Police as being ineffective are unique to born-again Christians in Kampala; in fact, from interviewing those that did not (initially) self-identify as Pentecostal, I would suggest such responses are quite typical. However, I am questioning the limits of the psychological support that the *balokole* assert that they feel they gain from involvement in the church as an alternative to action, suggesting that there is little evidence that being a born-again Christian necessarily enables believers such as my informants to tackle issues of exploitation or wrong-doing in any greater measure than if they were not born-again.

Kampala's faithful spend hours accessing church services in an attempt to improve their situations, moving to different churches for specific aims, listening to daily radio shows, and praying individually at home (and indeed, wherever they feel the need to do so), many hours of which are spent in an effort to improve their own socio-economic situations. Whereas I have suggested that a stress on 'magical' means of making money and understanding the cause-and-effect of poverty and wealth have been somewhat over-emphasised, and that there is evidence of more 'this-worldly' understandings of money and giving in church, I have also suggested that the Pentecostal relationship with money-making and moving on up needs to

be understood as one which is based on the individual as the agent of change. At the same time, however, it needs to be understood that there are definite limits to that agency, and simultaneously, that there is a sentiment in which it is therefore in some sense the individual's responsibility if things do not work out in the future as planned, even in situations in which it might seem obvious to others that the causes of misfortune or malaise are not necessarily the fault of the individual. Within this conceptualisation, without saying the correct words, tithing in the correct way (or frequently enough), or having the correct 'mind-set', any endeavours are bound to fail to come to fruition. As Julianna, the victim of the acid attack, explained to me, you should ask God "*with patience. You have to be patient of course: you can't say 'God give this', like you tell him 'I'm in a hurry'. You can't order.*" [Interview with Julianna, 13th August 2009.]

Instead, *balokole* in Kampala are encouraged to sit tight and wait, much as they are told to do in other, non-church, situations and environments in which a resource, a service, or due pay has not been forthcoming. Being born-again in Kampala and trying to move on up in the world means to not to 'cry to God', but instead to confess positively, to try to change your 'mind-set', and to wait for God's (unknowable) time when those promised fortunes *will* (apparently) come. In a narrative reminiscent of Judith's in the previous chapter, Luke explained to us that some days he did not have enough to eat, but still,

"I say God, thank you for this day, tomorrow I will eat. I discovered even if I will cry, I'm not going to get anything. If I keep that pain in me, I will never get anything with that, it will remain in my heart. It is better to leave it and go and put another thing in your head, and start to think other things because the word of God is power. The word of God, it can change someone; the word of God is sharp." [Interview with Luke, 10th August 2009.]

CHAPTER EIGHT

CAREER CHRISTIANS AND SPIRITUAL SERVICES: MOVING ON UP THE PENTECOSTAL PATRONAGE PYRAMID

“Pastor said ‘come and see how things are done’, to teach me how to do things. So it is like when we were at church I used to be with pastor, moving around with him, seeing how he does things: do like this, pray like this. He used to give me people to pray for. That went on like he was nurturing me to become somebody because I was nothing.” [Interview with Fahad, 12th May 2009.]

Fahad was a young charismatic member of Alpha Tabernacle, a migrant to Kampala who had converted from Islam about ten years previously. In the time we got to know him his roles both in the church and the Bible cell group that we both attended were seen to develop to the point at which he himself became known, unofficially, as ‘Pastor’. Fahad was one of a group of born-again Christians in Kampala that I am calling ‘Career Christians’: primarily young men with little education or sustainable employment options in the city, who seek to transform their fortunes through climbing what could be called a Pentecostal ‘patronage pyramid’ (Scott, 1972).⁶⁵ In the previous chapters I have attempted to show how Pentecostal Christians in Kampala attempt to deal with issues of misfortune and poverty, through the ‘power’ of speech in addition to trying to develop the right ‘mind-set’ of trust in God, and participating in the Pentecostal economy. In addition I suggest in this chapter that these Career Christians also attempt to move out of a state of poverty by being clients to established ‘big men’ in church with the hope of being able to be a patron themselves, and as an alternative to an insecure employment market characterised by low pay and exploitation.

Utilising Christianity with a view to ‘getting ahead’ like this is not new in Kampala: the progression from follower to Career Christian could be seen as reminiscent of

⁶⁵ Lauterbach (2010:268) has also identified that in Ghana “[b]ecoming a Pastor is a career trajectory.”

the conversion of many Baganda to Christianity in the early days of missionary activity. As Low (1968:159) argues, many of the converts to Christianity in Buganda were aspirational, “earnest, forward-looking, young Baganda... For some of them, in the end, the adoption of Christianity seemed to be the only way forward”, enticed as they were to adopt the culture and ‘modernity’ of the ‘White Fathers’. This certainly rings true for many of those whose narratives are discussed in this chapter: Pascal, who was yet to convert, but was hoping to do so, expected that he might make more money by doing ‘church work’ than being a petrol-pump attendant. We may no longer refer to Pentecostal Christianity in Africa as the religion of the ‘White Fathers’, of course, but it can certainly be argued that Matthew and Fahad, two young Career Christians whose narratives feature in this chapter, were indeed enticed to adopt the culture and ‘modernity’ of the ‘West’ in some form. This of course does not make them unusual amongst sub-Saharan Africans (see for example, Hunt, 2000), but this is not the place to discuss the extent to which contemporary Pentecostalism in Kampala constitutes a product of the ‘West’ or can be seen as a more ‘home-grown’ phenomenon.

Instead, in exploring this subject in this, the final substantive chapter of this thesis, I continue to assess whether trying to create a role for oneself as a Career Christian can be seen to enable these young men to positively transform their futures, concluding that it is only in rare cases that they can be seen to benefit from their endeavours, but that the Pentecostal rhetoric of fast wealth and opportunity maintains that these young men keep trying, even if it may not be fruitful. Furthermore, only a minority of Pentecostals I met in Kampala could be called Career Christians. Instead, many other born-again Christians could be seen as being part of patronage relations within the Pentecostal community where there was no obvious attempt to climb the ‘pyramid’ as with the Career Christians, and that such relationships were characterised by an imbalance in power relations that was not to the benefit of the informant. In the second part of this chapter, therefore, such cases are considered. This chapter therefore continues to answer in part the research question ‘can belief and participation in Pentecostal Christianity in Kampala be said to engender transformative ‘agency’ for its followers?’ and also ‘what are the everyday means that Pentecostal Christians in Kampala use in their attempts to mediate that future wellbeing?’

I suggest that members of Pentecostal churches in Kampala attempt to materially benefit from participation in Pentecostal Christianity, not necessarily through direct or indirect employment (whether formal or informal) through networks at church, nor through some form of altruistic benefaction, but through different forms of exchange relations, and specifically patronage relationships. In agreement with Lauterbach (2010) who has identified that young pastors in Ghana see their involvement in Pentecostalism as a way to increase social mobility in a society in which their employment options have diminished, I suggest that there is a significant proportion of young male *balokole*, these 'Career Christians', who find it difficult to get employment due to lack of education or networks, that try to establish themselves as providers of spiritual services (as preachers, healers, counsellors, or intercessors) and in return expect, and often receive, some form of in-kind or monetary payment. Unlike in Lauterbach's work, these young men are not Pastors, although they want to be, but are instead trying to attempt to place themselves within a web of exchange and patronage relations.

Through this exchange they attempt to gain status as beholders of the truth, as mediators between the divine and this-world, and as persons within the inner-circle of influential elite members of the church, and sometimes the Pastors themselves. I suggest that by becoming a Career Christian, believers can be seen as trying to place themselves within multi-layered 'pyramid-like' patron-client and exchange relationships in which they can be seen as both a patron and a client, and in which the aim is to become purely a patron. Through offering these spiritual services, these young men form relationships as clients to more wealthy members of the church (and of the wider Pentecostal community) that would have been previously unavailable to them before this 'career' change. Simultaneously, they seek to establish their own clients through attempting to become a patron themselves. Through these forms of patron-client relationships and the provision of spiritual services as an exchange good, these young men are not only seeking material reward, but the chance to climb the ladder of patronage, and consolidate their status as a (Big) 'Man of God'.

To illustrate this argument, I will explore the case of Fahad, whose words opened this chapter. Fahad is a case of a Career Christian who has successfully negotiated

and climbed the patronage pyramid and who was, by the time fieldwork ended, on his way to becoming an (unofficial) junior pastor. The progression of Fahad's 'career' is not exemplary; it is exceptional. No other young Career Christian that I met in the course of fieldwork could be said to have been able to progress up the patronage pyramid as much as Fahad had. However, in describing his career progression, salient themes emerge that can be seen at work in the narratives of others, and across these multi-layered patronage and exchange relationships: the rejection of non-church forms of income generation; the ways in which the Pentecostal economy of giving, especially the giving of tithes and offerings, underpins this alternative form of income-generation; the assertion by the Career Christian of an embodied spiritual power that gives him authority; and the importance of developing patron-client like relationships with wealthy and/or influential people within the church community.

'A miracle and a photocopier': (Pastor) Fahad's blessings

One balmy evening my assistant Mable and I were attending the Alpha Tabernacle's Bible cell group that we had regularly frequented on a Thursday night, which was held in the manicured gardens of an affluent member of the church, 'Mummy' Sandra. The members of the Bible group, sat in a circle on white plastic chairs, numbered nine (including myself and Mable), and we were all attentively involved in a discussion about how to face difficulties in life and how members had dealt with those difficulties, when I noticed a man and a woman, new to the group, enter the compound, and Fahad quietly left the discussion circle to greet them. Over the next hour or so, a few metres away from the seated circle of cell group members, close enough to be observed but not be overheard, the novice Career Christian led his two guests through some intensive prayers. After some time, banknotes were pressed into Fahad's palm from one of his clients, and Fahad variably placed his hands on his guests' stomachs and heads, which culminated in the woman convulsing on the dirt floor (although rarely seen in regular Pentecostal services that I attended in Kampala, it was a sight sometimes seen in Pentecostal 'deliverance' sessions, and is thought to signify the exorcism of embodied non-Christian spirit forms by the Holy Spirit). At the conclusion of their meeting, the man pressed some more banknotes into Fahad's

hand, the couple left the garden, and Fahad then joined us back in the Bible group circle (which had not ceased its discussion even though these dramatic events had been unfolding in the near vicinity).

What was interesting about this incident, which was witnessed later in the research (after having already interviewed Fahad twice), was the way in which it was indicative of how Fahad's status had changed in the time we had known him. Over the year of the research, Fahad had moved from being an unemployed young man who contributed as an equal in the Bible cell group, to a member who was continuously deferred to in group discussions, to the point of being called 'Pastor' (even though he had not been formally recognised as such). Furthermore, he had the strong belief that he was now possessed with certain transformative powers, as a form of conduit between the Holy Spirit and his clients. In our third (and final) interview with him, which occurred after we witnessed at first hand the events discussed above, I asked him to tell us more about what had happened that evening, and he explained that,

"[t]he couple had come to pray with me. As the man handed me money I started doing deliverance... one [person] had debts and for the other, the business was down. As we speak now one of the people we talked about got money from nowhere and now he's okay. As the man paid me the money, the spirit of the Lord told me to speak messages. The lady also got a miracle and a photocopier." [Interview with Fahad, 28th October 2009.]

It can be clearly seen then how Fahad attributed these miracles (of 'money from nowhere' and of 'a miracle and a photocopier') to his own apparent healing abilities, and furthermore he implies that there was a direct connection between his receiving payment for his 'services' and his abilities to provide them through being anointed by the Holy Spirit.

Without necessarily dismissing Fahad's own explanation of his rise to prominence within Alpha Tabernacle's community as being attributable to some 'anointing' by God / the Holy Spirit, from an anthropological perspective, it can be seen that Fahad's success as a Career Christian had certainly been achieved through the cultivation and negotiation of a series of social relationships with key players in the church 'elite' or inner circle. In that third and final interview with Fahad, for

example, a point in which his progression to become one of the elite members of the church had been complete, we were conducting the interview in the 'old church' on Alpha Tabernacle's compound (the 'new church', a much more slick and modern building had been completed with much fanfare a few years previously), and it was obvious that Fahad was very much in demand. He frequently broke away from the interview to talk to clients on either of his two mobile phones, which when not in use sat expectantly on his lap, and we were interrupted twice by the Senior Pastor's brother, himself a junior Pastor at Alpha Tabernacle, explaining that Fahad was needed by the Senior Pastor back at the main church administration building.

But how had Fahad come to be in this position of climbing high up the patronage pyramid, being in demand by a network of patrons and clients? To explore the processes by which Fahad became a successful Career Christian then, it is necessary to understand more about his background, and how he became involved in the church.

Fahad: from groundsman to man of God

Fahad's childhood had been a disrupted one. He was rejected as a young boy by his father, a well-educated and wealthy Muslim in his village who had denied paternity of Fahad. Without funds from his maternal family, he had received very limited schooling and had moved between the homes of his grandmother and his mother. In his early teens he had migrated to Kampala to look for work, on the suggestion of his older half-brother. He started doing odd jobs in the informal economy, working as a *shamba boy* (a gardener or groundsman), and selling second-hand clothes in a market. None of these were ever able to provide Fahad with a reliable and sufficient income, a situation compounded by his involvement in a group of heavy drinkers.

Fahad's 'conversion story', if there is one, does not consist of a dramatic moment of identity and behavioural change. Rather, he was initially attracted to the church building for practical reasons, as somewhere he might be able to sleep, after

becoming homeless.⁶⁶ He later became interested in the singing and joined the choir. He would attend church services but would ‘backslide’ (the word Pentecostals across the world use to mean a return to what is thought of as sinful pre-conversion behaviour) and really only became more committed to being a born-again Christian when, ironically, a Muslim friend of his remarked that Fahad was not being respected by his peers as much as he had previously, and suggested that commitment to his new-found religion would be good for him. And indeed, for Fahad, things did seem to change for him, as he explains:

“Since then my life started changing and one day we were building the new Cathedral, that new church. We were still in that old church... then pastor said, “I want people who want to buy cement to build the pillars in the church.” It was an overnight [service], I danced during that time, and someone gave me five thousand shillings.⁶⁷ I saw that I am big, now somebody can even give me a note of five thousand shillings in the church! Then I said “God is here; He has remembered me with that money”. He [the Pastor] wanted people to contribute 20,000 shillings each but for me I had only 5,000 shillings and I felt like something is telling me that you go and give that 5,000 shillings. For me I was hesitating with my 5,000 shillings but I found myself in the midst [of people] moving towards the pulpit. People were not coming up with their money but I stood up and I went before the congregation with my 5,000 shillings.

So I gave it in and after giving I was turning back to my seat and then Pastor called me in the midst of the people and told me that “you man, you have been going through this, what, what, you have been miserable in life but

⁶⁶ Coming to the church initially as a place to sleep was heard by a handful of informants. It seems that a few years prior to the research period, the churches had been more open to having people seek shelter in the church building overnight. At the time I was in Kampala, however, neither Kiweranga Life Fellowship nor Alpha Tabernacle allowed this practice, and the doors to both churches were locked overnight.

⁶⁷ Without having been present at this event, it is not clear exactly what happened. However, it was a common sight when sitting in Pentecostal churches to see congregants walk (or dance) up to the stage and press money (usually notes) very visibly and ceremoniously into the palms of the person or persons who were performing for the church. This was explained to me by both congregants and one informant who now and then performed her own gospel songs at different churches, as being because the giver, the congregant, felt particularly ‘blessed’ by the sentiment or emotion displayed in the performance. However, Fahad’s narrative seems to suggest that he received money from someone simply by dancing as part of the congregation, not as an official performer on stage. 5,000 Ugandan Shillings was equivalent to US\$2.5 at the time of the research.

from today I am your dad. From today we are going to be sitting together on one table one dining [table].” So I was like I just started crying, crying tears. I said [to myself] “this man, what is wrong with you?” Then he told the congregation “you people, this is my son; I want you to come and bless this guy with money.” Oh! I was like running mad I couldn’t stand, I was just [in] tears, just tears. People gave me money; they gave me money and that time people asked me, “you guy how do you pray, how do you pray”? All those guys I found there in the church praying there for five years they were asking me “you man, how do you pray?” I was telling them that for me I don’t know how to pray but your God has helped me. Ever since then I have seen my life changing, changing. I started preaching the gospel going where, where. I started growing in the spirit... I decided like I have God. I can pray for people, I can preach and God does miracles.” [Interview with Fahad, 4th December 2008.]

The centrality of the relationship with an influential, ‘anointed’ figure, in this case the Senior Pastor, to the inception of Fahad’s spiritual career and income-generation through his faith cannot be missed in this narrative. Indeed, all of the young men I spoke to that could be called Career Christians were keen to stress their close relationships with influential figures in the church, especially their relationships with more senior (in terms of position) Pastors. In Alpha Tabernacle, where the Senior Pastor has a superstar status even to his own congregation, the young Career Christians without exception mentioned him as a senior figure key to their development along their ‘career’ path. This is reflected in Lauterbach’s work in Ghana. Although she focused on pastors themselves, she also explains how junior pastors would seek to have a relationship with a prominent successful pastor, especially those with transnational connections (2010:265), in ways not dissimilar to the experiences of the Career Christians I identified in Kampala.

In Kampala, not all of those who I spoke to talked of an on-going relationship with this Senior Pastor of Alpha Tabernacle, but many would recount stories of how they felt they had been specifically ‘chosen’ by him at some point, as seen in Fahad’s story above when the Pastor called to him in the congregation and expressed that from that point forward he would become Fahad’s ‘father’. As with Fahad, these narratives are usually told of as being life-changing moments when

the Pastor spoke to the Career Christian in a sermon, in front of other church members, and they often recount how the Pastor instructed other members of the congregation to donate money or other material possessions to the informant that had been singled out of the crowd.

Similar narratives were not restricted to the Career Christians: stories of (somewhat miraculous-seeming) impromptu gifts of money or material things by other members of a congregation could also be heard in the narratives of other informants, for whom the label 'Career Christian' would be inappropriate. However, in the narratives of the Career Christians, it was the relationship with the Senior Pastor or another elite member of the church that were at the heart of the story, whereas in the narratives of those who were not Career Christians, they recounted times in which there seemed to be 'miraculous' giving of material goods from *anonymous* givers to the informant, or from known people who were not patrons.

Although in the many hours I spent in Ugandan churches I never witnessed such an event as a Pastor singling out a church-goer to be a recipient of the congregation's generosity, the point is not whether these narratives are true recollections of experiences and events or not but that in associating themselves with high status figures such as Senior Pastors, and especially by recounting times when they were singled out, these young men imply that they are qualitatively different from other congregants, that there is something special about them – potentially an 'anointing'. In publicly associating themselves with senior church figures, these aspiring Career Christians are attempting to make a stamp of authenticity on their abilities to provide spiritual services: the preaching, healing and intercessory praying that has become the means through which they make a living.

Furthermore, accounts of how others have been blessed by their spiritual services pepper the narratives of Career Christians, not only in interviews but also in Bible group meetings, reasserting to those that are listening that this anointing has continuity, that it is a regular occurrence. This can be seen in Fahad's speech above, where he asserts that others were asking him how he prays – the implication being that he has a special anointing that realises those prayers. Although Prosperity Gospel Pastors will more often than not claim to have

publicly and miraculously ‘cured’ a physical ailment, most quotidian attempts at ‘deliverance’ or miracles are far more humdrum, a matter of spoken prayers, accompanied at times by the placing of hands over the ‘patient’. With successful ‘results’ being a matter of subjective opinion rather than medical fact, it is through speech – oral testimonies and everyday conversation, and through the charismatic ability of the Career Christian to convince others of his status and his powers, that authority is conferred onto the ‘apprentice’ intercessor, healer, or preacher.

However, what is particularly interesting in Fahad’s narrative above is that he states that he “decided like I have God”. This suggests a level of agency, and suggests a *choosing* to take on the role of what I term Career Christian, which Fahad himself would most likely deny if he were asked directly about it. As just outlined, to Career Christians, it is the anointing of God, to an extent with the Senior Pastor as a conduit of that power and authority, which spontaneously gives them the ‘Gifts’ they use as preachers, healers, and an intercessors. As Lauterbach has identified, power and authority is seen to come from a spiritual power, a power that “could not be refused” (2010:268). In Fahad’s narrative however, it is possible to hear another possibility, that Fahad himself actively *chose* to reconstruct his identity not just as a follower of this form of Christianity but as one that is anointed, as a potential leader.

It should also be noted, however, that although these ways of asserting authority are common with all Career Christians, Fahad’s relationship with the Pastor is unlike his peers, and this seems to be at the centre of his success. He did indeed seem to move in the inner circle of the Pastor and his entourage – other smartly dressed young men who were assigned various roles, including that of bodyguard. Fahad himself had been assigned the role of ‘Head of Transporting’, his primary duty being ensuring that visiting Pastors got a lift to the lunch-time services that Alpha Tabernacle held in downtown Kampala. Whereas many of these aspirational young preachers and pastors could be observed throughout the day ‘hanging out’ in the compound of Alpha Tabernacle, Fahad was the only one (of those I knew) that publicly had conversations with ordained Pastors and other senior figures in the church. To understand the close relationship Fahad seemed to have with the Senior Pastor, we return to the passage that opened this chapter:

“Pastor said ‘come and see how things are done’, to teach me how to do things. So it is like when we were at church I used to be with pastor, moving around with him, seeing how he does things: do like this, pray like this. He used to give me people to pray for. That went on like he was nurturing me to become somebody because I was nothing.” [Interview with Fahad, 12th May 2009.]

In these ways Fahad was different, for whereas other (less successful) ‘Career Christians’ would often narrate a story of being initially publicly singled out as the beneficiary of the Pastor’s good words or the congregation’s generosity, this longer-lasting relationship with the Pastor, which Fahad himself acknowledges was ‘nurturing’ him ‘to become somebody’, was uncommon. But it was also Fahad’s ability to make relations with elite members of the congregation, not only the pastors of Alpha Tabernacle, which allowed his aspirations as a Career Christian to be realised. ‘Mummy’ Sandra, the wealthy owner of the gardens in which the Bible cell group was held, came to know Fahad through hearing about his ‘spiritual gifts’, and they became close associates. He became Mummy Sandra’s ‘right-hand man’, accompanying her to meetings of the church’s inner-elite, and he talked of future business plans which they would jointly manage, although she would be bank-rolling the projects.

Fahad’s relationship with Mummy Sandra was evidence that he had been able to negotiate his way into the inner-circle of Alpha Tabernacle; that his ‘career’ as a Christian was developing. Indeed, a few times in cell group Mummy Sandra and Fahad would leave in her flashy four-wheel drive, explaining that there was an important meeting in the church for the ‘management’ that they both needed to attend. Furthermore, by the time the fieldwork was coming to an end, Fahad was calling himself ‘Fahad-Isaiah’, or just ‘Isaiah’. This was not only a biblical choice in contrast to his Muslim given name, but Isaiah was also the name of the Senior Pastor of the church.⁶⁸ Indeed, not only that but, as identified earlier, fellow members of the cell group meetings were calling him ‘our Pastor’, both in his company in cell meetings but also in personal conversations when he was not present. When I asked Fahad about the recent name change and title that he had become known by, he explained to me that,

⁶⁸ As with all names, this name is a pseudonym.

“I love my name Fahad but I use Isaiah too. I was going to be baptised and [the Senior Pastor] gave me his name as he saw me as his spiritual son. But the name was there before baptising – he gave it to me before... A guy in Kasese said I was multi-purpose: a prophet, an elder, an evangelist, a Pastor. I look like a boy but the words are not of a boy. I’m not a Pastor but people call me one. Behind these words [names] are a lot of responsibility. I’m not ordained as a Pastor but maybe in the future I will be. But for me I want to evangelise. In my passport it says my occupation is an evangelist. Me, I’m a preacher man. I don’t want to build churches; I want to stay in [Alpha Tabernacle]. But dreams have come to me about building a church so I don’t know what God wants.” [Interview with Fahad, 28th October 2009.]

It is evident in this narrative that Fahad’s progression along the path to becoming a pastor was, apparently, not of his choosing, for he states that he wanted to evangelise (the implication being that he wanted to do the less ‘superstar’ role of a *humble* evangelist), rather than ‘build churches’ (which we can read as being a pastor). And yet, at the same time, in asserting that he would have preferred another role (still, it should be noted, within the faith), his subsequent announcement that “[b]ut dreams have come to me about building a church so I don’t know what God wants” clearly tells the listener that not only is he in communication with God, but that God Himself is controlling Fahad’s path as a Career Christian. In indicating his change in status to Pastor was not of his choosing, but that other people had assigned him the role of Pastor, including of course the anointed Senior Pastor Isaiah himself, Fahad is further cementing the idea that his new role was chosen by God, not himself. And it is no wonder therefore, being apparently chosen by God, that he also implies that he had therefore become important, powerful, a ‘big man’: as he states *“I look like a boy but the words are not of a boy. I’m not a Pastor but people call me one. Behind these words [names] are a lot of responsibility.”*

In addition, not only was Fahad already assuming a title that indicated his successful ascent of the patronage pyramid, but his activities also reflected this: in addition to attending ‘management’ meetings with Mummy Sandra and being a purveyor of the spiritual services of intercessory prayer and healing, he was also representing Alpha Tabernacle on a Luganda-speaking early morning prayer

programme aired on a secular radio station.⁶⁹ Even though Alpha Tabernacle had yet not officially given him the title of Pastor, Fahad, or 'Pastor Isaiah' as he was increasingly being known as, was evidently being groomed for the job.

It is difficult to ascertain exactly why Fahad's career (but not others') progressed as it did. Certainly he was a confident, smartly dressed and sharp-minded young man. His fellow *balokole*, of course, would suggest that the key to his success was the anointing of the Holy Spirit, and the subsequent power of the 'Gifts of the Holy Spirit' (of preaching, of healing, of praying) that, it was thought, had been embodied in him. Realistically one could speculate that his personal attributes meant that the patrimonial Senior Pastor saw him as a useful willing client, someone who could work for free (as the 'Transport Manager', as a radio presenter, and as a preacher on 'crusades'), and be loyal to him. And in return, Fahad has indeed materially benefited: although he has no discernible 'job' either inside or outside of the church community, in the time that I knew him he and his family moved to a much larger house, he raised so much in his wedding meetings⁷⁰ that he had 6,000,000 shillings (approximately US\$3000) left over (with which he has bought a plot of land), and is now driving a shiny four-wheel drive vehicle, the status symbol par excellence in Kampala. The car is not his, but he admitted that a wealthy benefactor in church allowed him to drive it exclusively. Unsurprisingly, by the end of the period of research, Fahad / Pastor Isaiah no longer talked about looking for a job, going back to school or finding capital to start his own business. He did not need to. As a young Christian, his 'career' has been very successful.

However, as already mentioned, Fahad was not a typical 'Career Christian'. In many ways his 'career' progression was what others aspired towards, but were not achieving. Although these young men had aspirations to become a 'Man of God', they were instead continuing to operate as clients in patronage

⁶⁹ It is significant that the church paid for airtime on a non-religious radio station, as it suggests that born-again churches are moving away from their Christian media bases and bringing their messages into mainstream media outlets.

⁷⁰ It is the norm in Uganda that before a wedding a series of 'wedding meetings' are held (often about six or eight in number). These are fundraising events where friends and family of the engaged couple are encouraged to pledge (and give) donations towards the cost of the wedding. In some churches, including Kiweranga Life Fellowship, it was quite common for a church elder or preacher to give the congregation details about wedding meetings in the church announcements at the beginning of a service, encouraging people to attend and to 'stand with' (financially support) the couple.

relationships that did not offer the material 'gifts' that Fahad had received, and which, of course, had no guarantee of financial or employment security. Whereas Fahad had developed a relationship as the Senior Pastor's protégé, and a relationship with Mummy Sandra that, if not a relationship of equals, could be described as one of a veteran and an apprentice, there were other young male Career Christians that I knew through the Bible cell group, who could only be seen as clients of Mummy Sandra. These young men then were, I suggest, more typical of the majority of young male Career Christians I met in Kampala: they sought favour from patrons, and tried to climb the patronage ladder themselves and become 'big men' in the church, but more often than not they continued to live insecure and disenfranchised lives. There is not enough space to explore their narratives and life stories in full, but I would like to highlight the case of Matthew in particular, as I suggest his story is a good example of a Career Christian that was still struggling to climb the patronage ladder, with limited success. Matthew, who has already been introduced briefly in earlier chapters, is a quiet Jophadhola man in his early twenties who comes from Tororo in the east of the country, and although he was quite shy when we initially interviewed him, he opened up over time, especially as we would see each other regularly at Bible cell groups.

Matthew: an aspirational client

When we first met Matthew he had only been in Kampala a few months, having travelled to the city, just as Fahad had once done, in search of work. On his arrival to Kampala, an uncle of Matthew's who had sometimes frequented Alpha Tabernacle, suggested that he should go and ask for work as a *shamba boy* for Mummy Sandra, who was an acquaintance of the uncle's. Mummy Sandra had her own 'self-contained' house (a house with indoor plumbing) within the larger plot of land that included the gardens where we met for cell groups. Also on this land were the 'boys' quarters' (traditionally the name for servants' lodgings) – a row of single rooms which she either rented to people connected to church, or offered as part payment for services rendered by the occupant. Rachel, the young sales professional and some-time leader of the Bible group that was mentioned in Chapter Six, rented one room; Mummy Sandra let Fahad's ailing mother (who was recovering from a stroke) and her carer to live in another; and as will be seen,

Matthew also had a room in return for his services as a shamba boy.

When I first interviewed Matthew, then, he had recently started working for Mummy Sandra and he was earning 20,000 shillings per month (approximately US\$10), which he received on top of food and lodging in the boys' quarters. Although the sum was small, it was comparable with other live-in domestic labour positions in Kampala, which generally paid around 30,000 shillings per month. Without many other costs, Matthew had, now and then, been able to save 15,000 shillings a month from his wages, which he put in his bank account for his future school fees. At its best this bank account had 250,000 shillings in it (approximately US\$125), enough for at least one term's school fees. Matthew was clearly an intelligent young man who had managed, despite being an orphan, to be educated to grade Senior 4 through the help of another uncle and a local NGO back in Tororo. This represented a fairly good level of secondary education, comparable to the U.K GCSE year.⁷¹ When we first met Matthew he had high hopes of going to back to school to finish the final two grades of his secondary education, and then on to university to study medicine.

By the second time we interviewed him, however, Mummy Sandra had informed Matthew that there was no job for him anymore, although she indicated that he was welcome to continue lodging on her land. However, Matthew continued to do the same jobs as he used to – looking after chickens, gardening, cooking, and helping out on the days when Mummy Sandra rented out the gardens for a function, usually a wedding reception for a member of Alpha Tabernacle who was getting married. But although he continued to receive food and lodging, he did not get any more money from Mummy Sandra, except for the odd time when, after a successful function, she would give Matthew 5,000 shillings (US\$2.50) or something similar, for his help. In explaining what had happened, Matthew told us that *“we just stay as family members here”*.

Over time, the money he had saved for future school fees depleted until Matthew admitted that he no longer thought about going back to school or university and becoming a doctor. Any money he did receive were gifts from more wealthy members of the Bible cell group community, specifically his neighbour Rachel,

⁷¹ Senior 6 is the highest grade of secondary education, comparable to A-level education in U.K.

who would give him 500 shillings (US\$0.25) now and then for help with 'transport'.⁷² He would spend maybe 200 shillings on an offering to church (any less he considered 'too small') and the rest he would keep. Fahad himself would also give Matthew small 'gifts' at times.

Mummy Sandra's gardens then had multiple uses and gave her multiple sources of income. She received money from renting out the gardens for weddings, and renting out some of the boys quarters to those who were not strictly clients (in particular Rachel), and in addition she was able to use the boys quarters to enable her to extend her reach as a patron, enabling her to 'employ' young people such as Matthew at times when it was convenient for her (such as when there was a wedding party or gardening was needed). She thus offered the use of the boys' quarters as a kind of 'retainer' allowance for these young men when things were quiet and she no longer needed their labour. In these ways both Matthew (and another man called Jacob) became tied in some way to Mummy Sandra, the lure of the 'free' rent creating a patron-client relationship between them that was difficult to break.

When we first met Matthew, he would often speak about how lonely he was. He found the thought of being on his own in the big city of Kampala somewhat daunting, and immured to life inside a compound, and working long hours, he had little opportunity, or reason, to make connections elsewhere. Thus, aside from the members of the Bible cell group, many of whom were also clients in one form or another of Mummy Sandra, the only people he knew were from Alpha Tabernacle. With little means of moving elsewhere, or without necessarily an inclination to do so, Matthew had become a client of Mummy Sandra (and to an extent, 'Pastor' Fahad himself).

However, in a form not too dissimilar to Fahad, Matthew also showed signs of having aspirations of a spiritual vocation, and of climbing the patronage pyramid himself. In the early days of the research, Matthew was a peripheral figure in the cell group. Shy about his lack of proficiency in Luganda and English, he rarely

⁷² In Kampala, small gifts of cash, specifically those given in coins, are often referred to (by the giver and the recipient) as 'transport' or 'soda', the cost of a bus fare or a bottle of soda usually being similar, at between 500 shillings and 800 shillings. For example, someone might request cash by exclaiming that "you give me transport". It is generally accepted that the cash is not used specifically for these purposes.

spoke unless his opinion was specifically sought. Towards the end of our time visiting the cell group, however, he sometimes chaired the whole discussion, and with vastly improved spoken English. He was becoming an engaging and confident speaker, always with something to say. Likewise, whereas in earlier interview narratives with Matthew he was a more quiet interviewee who nevertheless spoke quite openly about his worries in life and rarely mentioned his faith, by the third (and final) interview, Matthew was very charismatic and chatty and wove biblical references and born-again Christian discourse throughout his words, even when the subject matter would not necessarily have warranted it. In fact, he had become almost preacher-like in his rhetorical style and confidence, and the way he interpreted his world had become purely (in interviews at least) conceptualised or presented through born-again lens. In these later interviews for example, Rachel and Fahad were thus conceptualised as being conduits through which God was helping Matthew with money.

Crucially, whereas he had previously expressed a desire to become a medical doctor, at this final interview, he explained that instead, “I could be having a dream yet God purposed for me something else. I cannot deny him. People go for some things but God has a different plan for them.” [Interview with Matthew, 29th October 2009.] He had thus modified his ambitions, talking about how the Bible cell group was “training every member to be a minister of God”, and how he had dreams of “flying out... to India, America, Canada, Germany”. Clearly, the alternative discourse of success, of preaching the gospel and being fruitfully rewarded, was looking more promising to him than furthering his education and seeking a more ‘regular’ career.

Career Christians: payments, exchange and the place on the pyramid

By reviewing the cases of Fahad and Matthew, therefore, it can be seen that there are elements of these dyadic associations between Career Christians and more wealthy and / or influential members of the church that lend themselves to being labelled as patron-client relationships, and with Fahad in particular, we can see how the relationships became part of a pyramid of patronage, as he worked his way up to become a patron himself. Matthew had moved from being in what

could be seen as a semi-patronage position, whereby he received at least some of his wages in money, to becoming a client, not just of Mummy Sandra, but also of Fahad (and to a lesser extent, Rachel). Matthew had stopped getting paid, but continued to do nearly the same amount of work as he previously had. He reconceptualised his role as a worker to that of a 'family member',⁷³ and when I asked how he was making ends meet he explained that,

"I think I can say God provides that one now....He provides through people. Someone can drop off something and says 'use this for food, for yourself'... Fahad can also drop for me something." [Interview with Matthew 29th October 2009.]

In return for these small gifts of cash that Fahad would 'drop' to Matthew in the form of 'transport' or 'soda', Fahad further solidified his position as a 'Man of God', with Matthew as his client. Matthew in return would refer to Fahad as 'Pastor Isaiah', and ensure that when he was chairing the Bible group, Fahad had the last (and the longest) word.

The case of Matthew might seem to fit the definition of a dyadic patron-client relationship, but I suggest that such a label is far too limiting. Even if this young Career Christian had not experienced the changing fortunes and status that Fahad had, he had aspirations and intentions to move out of a position of clientism. The changes in Matthew's aspirations, and the way he incorporated Pentecostal discourse (on time, on the future, on economics) are examples of this. Their 'careers', or their potential careers, could therefore be seen as an example of what James C. Scott calls the 'pyramid' of Patron-client relations, in which an agent could at once be a client *and* a patron (1972). Within this model, therefore, Fahad can be seen as having already moved up the pyramid, being a client to both the Senior Pastor and to Mummy Sandra (and others), but also becoming a patron to fellow congregants, such as Matthew, who sought his services and, later on, looked up to him as an emerging 'Man of God'.

However, it could be argued that in developing and promoting their skills as preachers, 'prayer warriors', intercessors, and evangelists, these young men do

⁷³ Indeed, family metaphors are common within patron-client relationships (Scott, 1972), and Lauterbach identifies how they were used in the relationships between more established pastors and their 'apprentice' junior pastors in Ghana (2010:272).

develop relationships that could be defined more in terms of commodity exchange, rather than in terms of patron-client relationships.⁷⁴ For example, it became clear when witnessing Fahad's intercessory prayer session with the visitors to in the Bible cell group that Fahad was offering his spiritual services in return for direct payments. However, more commonly, Career Christians would be given what could be seen as a delayed 'gift' days or even weeks after receiving a spiritual service. Fahad himself told of many such instances. In one, a British-Ugandan woman had heard about Fahad's apparent abilities as an intercessor, and being impressed that he had found a fellow born-again Christian woman to marry, she requested (from the U.K.) that Fahad pray to God to send her a marriage partner (within Uganda, and the born-again Christian community in particular, getting married is considered very important, and is a regular topic of discussion and prayers). Months later, when this lady became engaged, she sent U.K.-made *gomesis* (traditional central Ugandan dresses for women) as gifts for the ladies in Fahad's wedding party, and flew over to attend his wedding herself, to thank Fahad for his intercessory prayers.

This narrative of Fahad's is again unique amongst the young men I interviewed in that, as a successful Career Christian, he was able to successfully extend his reputation (and therefore, it can be argued, his identity) as a transnational provider of spiritual services outside of Uganda to the Diaspora in the West.⁷⁵ But in another way, the manner in which he received indirect 'payment' or 'gifts', was not unique. The point here is that Fahad did not receive a direct payment from the British-Ugandan lady, but a 'gift', one that was delayed and supposedly unexpected.

Giving in cash is certainly not discouraged, but whether in-kind or in cash, a return 'gift' is usually received, and expected, even though the receiver is unlikely to be open about that expectation. Of course, with the Career Christian expressing that

⁷⁴ Of course, the Career Christians themselves would not think they 'develop' their spiritual gifts believed to be embodied in them by the Holy Spirit, but they would think that they needed to develop as a Christian – in terms of being more prayerful, and seeking to know and understand the Bible ("God's Word") so that they can become better 'vessels' for further anointing.

⁷⁵ Indeed, references to transnationalism and internationalism are narrative tools that Pentecostal Christians use to express their identities as successful born-again Christians that are not bounded by or defined by simply the nation-state 'in this world' (see Gifford, 2009), and transnational, global identities are very sought after.

their ability to transform others' fortunes is due to an anointing by the Holy Spirit, something that cannot be publicly doubted, there is an unspoken expectation on the part of the beneficiary to make some form of return payment to the Career Christian, for to not do so could be seen as implying that their blessings have not worked. However, there is of course an unease with labelling such return gifts 'payments', for to do so might somehow make the transaction of giving spiritual services and receiving something in return, ostensibly secular. By terming it a 'gift', the Career Christian, and his client (of the spiritual service), are incorporating the transaction within the discourse of the Pentecostal economy of gift-giving. By validating the spiritual service and return 'gift' as being divine in character in this way, they further uphold the belief that God blesses faithful believers through return gifts and through people 'in this-world'. Hence Fahad described the prestation of *gomesis* from the British-Ugandan women in return for his (transnational) intercessory prayers not as being a direct payment, but as being a blessing from God. Testimonies of receipt of such 'gifts' are therefore readily used in support of the idea that God *always* provides, and that the future will hold unexpected riches and wealth.

However, there are other adherents who continue to be involved in church-based (or faith-based) patron-client relationships that sometimes receive 'gifts' but that do not follow the pattern of attempting to climb the patronage pyramid that is exemplified by the Career Christians. These informants could be seen to be involved in simpler dyadic patron-client relationships, often in which the client can be seen to be disenfranchised from negotiating benefits from that relationship. In these patron-client relationships, then, the client seemed to have less control than their fellow believers who could be seen as Career Christians, in negotiating beneficial outcomes from those patrons (who were, in these cases, in leadership positions, or positions of influence, in the church).

Martha and her ministry: dyadic and dependent patron-client relationships

An exemplary case in point is that of 'Martha', an elderly lady who was a very frequent attendee at Kiweranga Life Fellowship. Indeed, Martha only lived a few metres away from the church boundaries, enabling her to be a pretty much

constant figure in all services. In addition, she could often be found around the compound at other times, keeping herself up-to-date with neighbourhood news and helping out in church if she could, usually by sweeping the cement floor or re-arranging the plastic chairs into neat pews. Martha would also volunteer as an usher every now and then, and would always attend Saturday morning meetings at Kiweranga Life Fellowship as she believed she had particular gifts as an intercessor, and it was at those meetings that others with that 'gift' of (or 'heart for') intercessory praying would get together to attempt to change the fortunes, and the course of history, of individuals and the nation. Martha was illiterate, but would always carry her Bible with her to the chair at the front of the church where she would always sit during services, and proudly place it, covered in a protective textile sleeve, on her lap, or hold it aloft when praying. And despite her inability to read verses for herself, she had become fairly good at memorising biblical passages, at least those that she would enjoy recounting in interviews. She was in all these many ways therefore, one of the most visibly committed church members at Kiweranga Life Fellowship, a lady who was welcomed and was welcoming, and who was as comfortable talking to Pastors as she was with her fellow elderly female church-goers.

There was little doubt that Kiweranga Life Fellowship offered Martha both a feeling of community and a place to make friends. She had been through three difficult marriage-like relationships in her younger years, having been married off to her first husband by her family when Martha was still a teenager, and having suffered domestic violence at the hands of another husband. It was when she was no longer welcome at her natal home after leaving this last, abusive, husband, that Martha made the decision to come to the city, to try her luck there, and to cut ties with her village. In her own admission, in those early days of living in Kampala, she used to mock the born-again Christians and preferred to have a good time with her friends drinking locally brewed alcohol, but after a dream in which she thought she saw a vision of Jesus, Martha also became a *savedee*, and indeed she believed that God led her (through another dream) to Kiweranga Life Fellowship. Without the support of her natal family or her own children (whom she had lost contact with, some of them having stayed with their father due to Martha's lack of independent financial means to support them), the friends and acquaintances she had met at Kiweranga Life Fellowship had become her

community, and her surrogate family.

The church, the network that surrounded it, and indeed the wider faith, had offered not only friendship and companionship however, but also some material support. Sometimes this came in a form that Martha interpreted as miraculous. For example, one afternoon when we were sheltering from the rain in the empty church, Martha recounted with great excitement how one time when she was visiting Prayer Mountain, the preachers apparently spontaneously directed the congregation to give Martha *“63,000 Ugandan Shillings and 15 dresses”*. [From an interview with Martha, 3rd February 2009.] Other times, however, Martha received things in response to something that she did for others. For example, at Kiweranga trading station was a café-restaurant called ‘In God we Trust’, which served reasonably-priced hot meals and a place where those worshippers who could afford to eat out would gather to meet; and a waitress at the café would sometimes give Martha food at the end of the day, if there was any left. However, this was no altruistic act of charity: the waitress that helped her with free food had previously come to Martha asking her to pray for her as the managers of the ‘In God we Trust’ restaurant were threatening the waitress with the loss of her job. When her position was maintained, she thanked Martha by offering hot meals when she was able to do so.

So, just as the Career Christians often received ‘payment’ for what I have been calling their ‘spiritual services’, and just as Fahad was seen as being reimbursed for engendering ‘a miracle and a photocopier’, Martha was also reimbursed for her spiritual gifts of intercessory prayer. But whereas Fahad and Matthew had aspirations to climb the patronage pyramid and be ‘big men’ in the church, Martha had no such expectations or ambitions. Her reimbursement for her intercessory praying could certainly be seen as a payment for her spiritual services, but more often than not her ‘payments’ from patrons were for more everyday and mundane activities, not for her ‘spiritual gifts’.

This was not to say that Martha and other adherents who would not be called Career Christians, did not think that they did not possess such ‘gifts of the Holy Spirit’ as the ability to prophesy, be an intercessor, or a faith healer, in addition to the abilities to evangelise, to teach, or to speak in tongues. It was common among most informants to believe that they did have, in some way, one or more of these

abilities, or 'spiritual gifts'. However, there seemed to be a difference in the nature of these 'gifts'. Many adherents would explain how they possessed certain spiritual abilities, but it was clear that not all those abilities were those that would easily be perceived to have a direct impact on, or benefit for, a potential client, or on someone who was able to repay the 'service' with a return 'gift'. For example, quite a number of female informants would spend many hours each week evangelising to the non-'saved' – sometimes in the workplace or on the bus, but more often than not by getting together with a fellow believer (usually also a woman) and knocking on doors in Kiweranga, or a neighbouring suburb. Others would spend a significant amount of time, as Martha did, attending intercessory prayer sessions in which the group often prayed for Uganda's problems (rather than, for example, a particular individual). In these instances, therefore, it would be extremely unlikely that a well-wisher would seek to present the evangelist or the intercessor with some form of gift as thanks for their street evangelising or intercessory praying. These 'gifts of the Holy Spirit' were not ones, therefore, that lent themselves to be used as a spiritual service that might be reimbursed with money or other material benefits.

Instead, Martha, and others like her, sometimes received material gifts from patrons for whom they carried out the more everyday, domestic, less 'spiritual' tasks, as indicated above. For example, in addition to regularly sweeping the church floor, Martha also informally helped care for the children of one of the pastors of Kiweranga Life Fellowship. The same pastor allowed Martha to make her home in the compound of that pastor's house. This was poor accommodation as it consisted of a 1.5m² kiosk that was used to sell eggs, although Martha was able to keep her few possessions in there, and would curl up at night to sleep despite the floor space being too small to lay down straight. However, for Martha, this was at least somewhere to call her own.

Some days I would walk past Martha's egg-kiosk home and find her inside, making brightly coloured woven mats using dyed banana leaf fibres. Now and then she would find a buyer from church to purchase one but she only made profit of the equivalent of US\$2 on each mat, even though it might have taken her three weeks to make. Other than this, and the goodwill of fellow church people who might give her the odd 200 or 500 shilling coin (approximately 10 or 25 US cents

respectively), the occasional meals from the In God we Trust café, and of course, the miracles that she believed she received once in a while, Martha had no other form of income. In her understanding, she “*works for the Lord and the Lord pays her salary and her needs*”. [From an interview with Martha, 3rd February 2009.]⁷⁶

But Martha’s dependence on the church was, I suggest, at the detriment of finding potentially more sustainable forms of income. For example, at twilight every evening, at the roadside of the ‘stage’ (or intersection) near the church, and as people were moving around after working or studying, a petite 50-something deaf-mute lady could be found sparking up a small barbecue on the ground ready to make *gonja* (barbecued plantains), a very delicious and popular snack in Uganda. This lady, whose name I never knew, was also a regular congregant in Kiweranga Life Fellowship, and although she could not talk or hear, was able to successfully sell her *gonja* to passersby due to her abilities to communicate through other ways, through gesticulation and facial expressions. She continued to sell most evenings throughout the months I lived in Kiweranga, and so one can suppose that her small informal business was sustainable, and profitable enough to keep going. Martha certainly thought so, indicating to us once that she thought this lady made ‘good money’. The two were indeed friends, and Martha explained to me how they had learnt to communicate over the years, to the point that the *gonja* seller had indicated to Martha that she thought they should work together and start making coffee at the same spot, next to the barbecued plantains. But Martha, despite having little income, and relying on irregular gifts from supportive benefactors and patrons, did not want to embark on a small business with the *gonja* seller, or indeed on her own. Martha explained to us that this was something she could not manage as she “*loves ministering to the Lord*” and she was not interested in work that would “*limit her prayer*” and voluntary service in the church and the church community. [From interview with Martha, 9th September 2009.]

⁷⁶ Martha was one of only two informants who, whilst giving informed consent to be interviewed as part of the research, did not give consent for those interviews to be voice-recorded. Therefore, direct quotes from Martha are direct quotes from my hand-written notes taken as we were talking, and so are therefore sometimes in the third person, as in this case.

The sound of silence and the absence of client power

Martha's experiences are not unique: a dependence on church-based patron-client relationships was evident in the narratives of quite a few informants, mainly (but not exclusively) amongst older women. On the one hand the material support, whether financial or otherwise, that they intermittently received from patrons could be seen as a form of mutual support and informal social security in a society without government welfare, and often without the traditional inter-family security system that they might have received if they were in a position to benefit from it. De Bruijn and van Dijk (2009) have been ambivalent about vertical support in Pentecostal churches in Ghana, and have suggested that such gift-giving is motivated by feelings of personal salvation rather than altruism. Whilst sympathetic to this view, I do not have evidence to support this from the perspective of the giver. However, I do suggest that the patron-client relationships that grow within church communities such as Kiweranga Life Fellowship and Alpha Tabernacle, especially those in which the client is not a Career Christian, foster financially dependent relationships that may potentially limit that client's options for a more sustainable livelihood, and one that furthermore supports a culture of non-accountability and a silencing of those at the bottom.

It was not just a feeling of commitment to their voluntary service to the Lord that meant that women like Martha maintained dependent on the church and its patrons; the shared narratives (often in testimony) of moments in which a client had become the recipient of material support from a pastor, or another influential elite member of the church, maintained the expectations of more poor members of the congregation that they might also benefit from a wealthy benefactor, or patron, in the future. The imagining of future 'miracles' or gains maintained the loyal support of clients in doing unpaid work, not only for the church itself as a building or institution, but also in voluntarily giving their time and assistance to elite members of the church. Career Christians who were at the bottom of the pyramid, such as Matthew, also voluntarily gave their time, but whereas these young ambitious wannabe pastors were honing their skills as future pastors and locally-renowned providers of spiritual services (and therefore trying to become patrons themselves), those without such ambition maintained their positions as disenfranchised volunteers to those more powerful and wealthy than themselves.

It must not be overlooked that for some people, including Martha, there were real tangible benefits of clientism. Martha of course had somewhere to stay, even if the conditions were less than ideal, and other informants, particularly those who attended Kiweranga Life Fellowship, also told stories of how they had been the recipients of material support from prominent church members. Another example is that of Faith, another more elderly lady who liked me to call her my 'Mummy Africa' as we built a close relationship over the years, was, like Martha, a very visible member of church, always there greeting people, joining intercessory prayer groups, and setting out on street evangelism. Faith also had her accommodation paid by the church – she was responsible for three teenage granddaughters and the Senior Pastor of Kiweranga Life Fellowship had quite generously offered to pay for a rented *muzigo* for the family, after hearing that Faith was unable to support herself. Clearly this was quite a significant support for Faith and her granddaughters.

And yet, behind the public narratives of altruistic Pentecostal benefactors lay a reality of unfulfilled promises and unpaid labour. Faith herself would often be missing from church for quite a few consecutive weeks, and I would later discover that she would sometimes go and live with another pastor of Kiweranga Life Fellowship, in her home across town and care for the pastor's sick father. This work was unpaid, and although Faith may well have, at a later date, received something 'in kind' for her work, any payment was both indeterminate, and unaccountable. Over the time of the research, Faith's position as a client to this female pastor progressed further, Faith even being a 'right-hand woman' to the pastor in Sunday services, accompanying her into the building, and holding her Bible for her.

In the time we knew her, Faith did attempt some income-generating activities, although with little success. An aspirational and successful young teacher who attended Kiweranga Life Fellowship asked Faith to sell small items for her– snacks, sweets, chewing gum, pencils, and such like - outside the school in which she worked in a quiet peri-urban part of Kampala. There was no other form of stall or shop for many streets, and the business-savvy teacher, herself an informant, had been keen to monopolise on her private boarding school's students' wish to purchase small items. But despite getting this informal job from a fellow member

of Kiweranga Life Fellowship, Faith's employment conditions were no more favourable – she was paid a small daily salary, but after deducting money for transport to get to work (which was a number of miles away), it was not enough to enable her to feed herself and her granddaughters. Unsurprisingly, Faith left the job, remarking to me, in a narrative reminiscent of Martha's words above, that not only was the pay unsustainable but that she was missing being able to attend lunchtime services at Kiweranga Life Fellowship, and her evangelism activities.

It could be argued that it is this feeling of having been 'called' to have a spiritual vocation, something that could be heard in the narratives of Martha and Faith, amongst others, is a form of extracting oneself from an employment market and an economic system that is exploitative and in which there is little opportunity, if any, for people like these women to be able to earn a decent income. Without denying the potentially real spiritual experiential understandings of the world and motivations to act that these informants may have, this removal of oneself from Uganda's employment arena is not necessarily a form of ascetic withdrawal from the material world, but instead, could be seen as discovering that being involved in patronage relations as a client could be a viable alternative to being an employee (or indeed, being self-employed). I suggest that, despite their experiences of disappointment, these informants still have an expectation that by becoming a trusted and willing servant not only to God but to those whom it is thought have a special 'anointing' to preach his Word, they have the potential to sustain their lives more successfully. As with Martha and Faith however, there were also narratives of both disappointment and exploitation, of both unfulfilled expectations of benefactors, and unfulfilled employment agreements when an employer connected with the church failed to pay wages.

It was not only women who were involved in these sometimes disenfranchising non-Career Christian patron-client relations with elite members of the church. George, a young man who attended Kiweranga Life Fellowship had also become somewhat dependent on the church for his livelihood. Despite having a limp due to a work accident some years previously, George was still physically strong and would regularly help out around church, clearing the sewage and waste trenches, helping paint the church, and going with the evangelists on crusades around the

country to help erect the stages and lift the sound equipment. This was clearly voluntary work, and indeed George told us this, but he received food on the crusades, and now and then the pastor would thank him for his work on the church with a gift of a few shillings. As George explains it, *“maybe the Pastor can appreciate and say ‘go and have lunch’, ‘go and have supper, take this’ but not as a formal job.”* [Interview with George, 2nd January 2009.] In addition, when we first met George he was allowed to live, with two other young male church-goers, in a small one-roomed house that was on church land, and use the water from the church standpipe for bathing.

For George, who was out of work at the time, this free accommodation and small donations of money, even if irregular, was certainly his social security safety net: indeed, before moving into the house in the church compound George had come back from a month-long mission trip with Kiweranga Life Fellowship to find that the rent on his previous home had been increased so much he could not afford to live there, and this is how he came to be living on church grounds. He really loved church, his friendly and open character had won him many friends, and he seemed to genuinely take pride in his role of maintaining the church building and grounds. With the crusades, George had been able to travel across Uganda, and into Sudan and Tanzania, something few Ugandans would have the means to do, and he enjoyed the camaraderie of these evangelism missions.

As with Martha, being part of the church certainly helped George in many ways; but again there was evidence that being a client to the pastors also meant that, at times, his goodwill was exploited. For a whole week’s work cleaning the trenches, a pastor only gave George 5,000 shillings (equivalent to US\$2.5, and far less than even the most poorly paid jobs in Kampala). Later on in the period of fieldwork, the small house behind the church that George had been living in was demolished to make way for the expansion of the church building. He lost his home, but was instead offered work guarding the plot of land that the Senior Pastor had purchased high on the hill in the richer part of the neighbourhood near Kiweranga Life Fellowship, and on which the pastor had started to build a very sizeable house. George lived in the shell of the expansive two-storey mansion, guarding it from others that might want to shelter there, or use the premises for other means, but he was not paid anything for his help. Work as a manual labourer

building the house itself was promised but work rarely materialised as the building works stalled due to lack of funds.

The picture of the relationship between (non-Career Christian) clients and patrons is therefore a mixed one: for Martha, Faith, and George, their relations with elite church members certainly served, in some ways, as a social security net: all had roofs over their heads due to the benefaction of their patrons, even if that accommodation was sometimes less than adequate. Sometimes gifts of thanks, or seemingly miraculous return prestations were received (which were viewed as gifts of thanks from God for their commitment to the church). But on the other hand, as has been seen, being a client was as insecure as much of the employment options available to those in Kampala with little education or the right contacts, such as Martha, Faith, and George. Monies promised for jobs acknowledged as wage-earning were not received; a few hours of voluntary work for church maintenance became days or weeks of unpaid or poorly-paid labour; the hope of being the recipient of future offerings of goodwill ('miracles') from a wealthy client or benefactor meant that paid-labour or small-business opportunities were turned down; and those 'miracles' were not always forthcoming.

Discussion

In many ways then both these groups of clients in Kampala's *balokole* churches and communities, the Career Christians and those that did not have aspirations to climb the patronage pyramid, could be seen as seeking to make an income through their church and faith networks, as an alternative to an employment market (both formal and informal) that is characterised by its insecurity, low pay, and exploitation. In the case of the Career Christians, this was sometimes openly acknowledged. For example, Fahad explained that,

“you know in life whereby you have no any pass slip [educational certificates] and everywhere you go and ask for the job they ask you for the documents, which I don't have. And I decided, I said 'let me serve God now because I have no documents, things are not easy here in Uganda'. It is like getting in an office asking for a job, they just look at you like that unless

there is somebody who has taken you there who has seconded you. Things are not easy." [Interview with Fahad, 4th December 2008.]

Without appropriate educational certificates or connections, these informants whose experiences have been outlined in this chapter, and others like them, faced an uphill struggle to make ends meet. Unlike in Van Dijk's (2010) work amongst Ghanaians in Botswana, in which the church encouraged new migrants to start businesses to get ahead, with advice and support particularly from fellow believers, this 'social catapulting' as Van Dijk terms it, was not so visible amongst those I met in Kampala. It could be seen that the Career Christians certainly did see themselves in the future as being 'catapulted' to success, but through the opportunities that they saw in making a name for themselves as providers of *spiritual services* – most notably as pastors, healers, and intercessors. These were indeed seen not just as opportunities to make ends meet, but to also get ahead, to become 'bigger' (and wealthier) than they would ever likely to be through working in Kampala's underpaid and insecure employment market.

Indeed, the potential to *become somebody* in the Pentecostal church as a viable alternative to unfulfilling employment prospects could also be seen as an attraction for those who have even yet to convert. One young man I interviewed from those who initially self-identified as not born-again, Pascal, developed exactly this aspiration as part of his decision to become born-again. In a narrative now familiar, Pascal's family also lacked the money for him to continue his education to higher levels, although like Matthew, he had been able to complete his Senior Four school certificate. Migrating from the northern area of Lira, Pascal, like thousands before him, had sought his riches in the bright lights of the big city. But despite having achieved his leaving certificate, Pascal had found few sustainable employment or business opportunities available to him in Kampala and, at the time we knew him, was working as a petrol pump attendant for a global multi-national petroleum company; a job without employment rights, and in which Pascal's wages were regularly cut if a customer drove off without paying on his shift.

Although Pascal initially announced to us that he was a staunch Roman Catholic, he later started to tell us about how he would sometimes attend Kiweranga Life Fellowship with his born-again common-law wife, explaining that he liked to pray

in that church as he thought it might be 'more effective'. In fact, his interest in the born-again church grew considerably as we knew him, to the point at which he told us nearer the end of the research that he wanted to convert, and to 'accept Jesus'. His reasons were multiple: he wanted to give up drinking alcohol (he was usually a little under the influence in our interviews, although always good-natured), he thought the born-again church 'went deeper' spiritually, and he saw that his wife was 'very moral' and he wanted to become more like her.

However in addition to these reasons, it seems that the overriding motive for Pascal to consider converting was because he thought that becoming born-again might give him an alternative career choice, and indeed, might make him richer. To Pascal, praying from Kiweranga Life Fellowship could actually make you financially better off. He explains this himself in the following extract from an interview in which we were discussing this issue. At this point in the interview, Pascal had already indicated that he wanted to convert to born-again Christianity, and I had asked him why that was.

Pascal: "I think like the level of education where I stopped, I'm not contented with it and I feel really very bad, because the majority I were with [his school class-mates] and those who were from some better family, they are actually very well... And when they look at me and they see me [not in a good position] yet we were in the same level. Before joining high school, I was doing better than them. I feel very bad, and cheated. I say now what can I do with all this?... I would feel very bad; I would even think of leaving the little bit of work I'm doing because it is not meeting any of my needs actually, that is how I see it."

Sophie: "And how do you think being born again can help you?"

Pascal: "I think being born again is like serving your community... that is how I see the whole thing. I said now committing myself to the work of God would do me better than when I'm doing my other thing, that is how I see the whole thing actually."

Sophie: "What work of God would that be?"

Pascal: "Preaching; actually doing these other church services. I think it

would make me better off than even the work I'm doing now... Because I see it as the payment is from God." [Interview with Pascal, 20th October 2009.]

As with Matthew and Fahad, Pascal was on his way to becoming a Career Christian, in an attempt to ameliorate the disappointment he felt in his lack of employment and career options, and to hopefully get paid 'from God'. To Pascal, becoming a *mulokole* was not *just* about a sense of spirituality, morality, or a wish for behaviour change (although this was part of it), but about *choosing* to become a pastor as a means to great economic security, even though he had not yet even converted, embarked on any theological training, or felt any call from God that he should do so. But that theological training would not have necessarily been required anyway: to be a Pastor in Kampala, charisma, confidence and the ability to perform are as important as biblical knowledge (see Maxwell, 2005). Biblical study may sometimes be the key to success but it can be argued that *being seen* by others to have embodied spiritual attributes, or anointing, is sometimes more important than biblical knowledge in gaining a reputation as a pastor in Kampala. As acknowledged in Chapter Four, it was easy for a new church to be 'birthed' by a young pastor, and this lack of a central authority in the loose network of the born-again church seems to be key to this apparent ease with which born-again Christians (and indeed, nearly-born-again Christians such as Pascal) start their journey up this alternative career ladder. It at first seems therefore that anyone and everyone can become a provider of spiritual services and work their way up to the top of God's payroll.

This phenomenon of attempting to become a 'big man' through the Pentecostal church has already been acknowledged in other work (Smith, 2001; Jones, 2005; Lauterbach, 2010). Smith, whose work centred on Owerri in Nigeria, is right to suggest that the church offered young Nigerians with "unfulfilled individual desires to prosper... new networks of social ties with which to try to negotiate Nigeria's political economy" (2001:590, following Marshall-Fratani, 1998), and Gifford refers to the fact that the Pastors of some neo-Pentecostal churches in Kenya, for example, are "religious entrepreneurs" (2009:154). Furthermore, this phenomenon has also been identified in Uganda itself: Jones (2005), for example, highlights how becoming a 'big man' in churches in the Teso region allowed members to extend their new-found reputations in other institutions; and

Gusman (2009) identifies how a group of young men in Kampala, whom he calls the 'Joseph Generation', see involvement in the church not just as an opportunity to be 'someone', but also as an opportunity to forge a new generation of Ugandan leaders and be part of a moral re-birth of the individual and the nation. Whereas wider motives such as those Gusman identified in the 'Joseph Generation' might not have been at play in the 'Career Christians' I met, a cursory analysis of the young men that I have discussed in this chapter certainly do see Pentecostalism as a way to get ahead.

Indeed, Chesnut, based on his work in Brazil, has argued that young men utilise Pentecostalism to recreate power in their lives, after they have been "rendered financially impotent by the brutality of the social relations of production and fraught with a profound sense of powerlessness" (1997:62). Fahad and Matthew, both young men with little prospects in the open market of employment in Kampala, who could indeed be seen as having been 'rendered financially impotent', were certainly actively honing their spiritual (and rhetorical) skills and developing relationships in attempts to negotiate their ways into more lucrative patronage relations, and ultimately to become 'big men'. And furthermore, despite their public proclamations that they were somehow chosen *by God* to have the 'anointing' needed to be a 'real' or 'true' preacher or healer, that it was somehow 'His' doing, there is little doubt that the choice was not only God's. Instead, an element of active decision-making – indeed, of agency – was evident in their narratives, as with Pascal's. One got the impression that they had *chosen* this path of being a Career Christian, and that they were fashioning themselves to have the potential to be 'true' providers of spiritual services, or at least have the performative skills to suggest as much. As Fahad says above, "*And I decided; I said 'let me serve God now.'*"

And yet, whereas the Joseph Generation that Gusman identifies is restricted to the more educated elite, the young 'Career Christians' that I discuss in this chapter were certainly not from the more privileged classes of Ugandan society. In this respect, what I think is important to understand is that the patronage relations that develop for both the Career Christians, and indeed for those that do not aspire to climb the patronage pyramid, are a double-edged sword. Whereas Fahad had tasted success as a Career Christian, and had become a 'somebody'

and achieved some significant material gains, for most Career Christians their chances of realising their aspirations of prosperity through church work and the selling of their spiritual services, whether for cash or 'gifts', were slim. Instead, as with those that did not aspire to become Career Christians, these *balokole* in Kampala became involved in patronage relationships which were, of course, characterised by an imbalance of power, and in which those patrons achieved their status through successful assertions that they had themselves been empowered with a spiritual, but unaccountable, force.

Often migrating to Kampala and being separated from their previous communities and kin networks entails that social life of born-again Christians revolves around the church and the relationships that they make through their participation in Pentecostal forms of practice. Family is replaced by a "strong corporate feeling" (Maxwell, 2001:304) with their new Christian 'brothers and sisters', or indeed maybe a 'Father' or 'Mother' (see also Smith, 2004), 'Mummy' Sandra being a case in point. Hunt is right to argue that contemporary Pentecostalism, with its roots in Western ethics of materialism, "acclimatises itself to what it can do for believer in the here and now and towards this-worldly concerns" (2000:76). Clearly, whether a disadvantaged and disenfranchised *mulokole* is seeking to be a Career Christian or not, they enter into imbalanced power relationships with wealthy elite members of the new 'family' that they have become part of, in their search to meet their material needs and desires in the here and now, and as part of a rejection of secular employment opportunities in a city with few realistic options for decent pay.⁷⁷

But in doing so, they enter into relations that are as unaccountable and insecure as those from which they are escaping, but of course, placed within a knowledge system that asserts their 'right' to future wealth, whilst disallowing any doubt – or voice – as to how that wealth might be forthcoming. Pentecostalism can be seen

⁷⁷ An interesting line of enquiry would be exploring further issues of migration in urban Uganda, and relationships in religious networks. Patronage relations amongst the different ethnic groups in Uganda are not new, of course, but whereas in the past patronage and tribute relations between Buganda chiefs (under the power of the Kabaka, the king of Buganda) and subordinates might have been the norm (Mair, 1974:184), for example, such relationships would no longer be relevant to many in postcolonial Kampala, particularly those non-Buganda. It could be seen that, separated to an extent from their home place and kin and clan groups, migrants might seek out alternative forms of client relations.

as what Hunt calls an “enterprise religion” (2000:79), characterised by the “rugged individualist” of the charismatic leader. Some, such as Fahad, are able to make it, but for others without that charisma or particular ‘anointing’, their struggle continues, despite all their displays of ‘agency’ in their attempt to move on up.

To finish this chapter, in something of a postscript, I think there is something to be said then about the impact of such relationships and their potential impact on wider forms of governance. There are ways in which the structure of relationships between elite member of the church and poorer members of the congregation can be seen to support a wider neo-patrimonial form of governance that has been pervasive across much of sub-Saharan African politics. This relationship has already been identified by other scholars of Pentecostalism in Africa (in particular, see Gifford’s (2004b) analysis of the public role of Ghanaian Faith Gospel Pentecostal churches in Ghana, and his later work (2009) on the relationship between the Kenyan State and neo-Pentecostal groups), but I suggest this chapter offers further evidence, using a more adherent-centred approach, of how participation in Pentecostal Christianity might further foster patrimonial forms of relationships and thinking about social change.

Gifford (2004b:7) gives a clear definition of a ‘neo-patrimonial’ state as one that is characterised by clientism: “a relationship of exchange in which a superior provides security for an inferior, who as a client then provides political support for his patron”. He contrasts this with a ‘rational-legal’ system of governance whereby “power is exercised through legally-defined structures for a publicly acknowledged aim” (ibid.). In this form of governance, the individual does not influence power to the extent that it can in the Neo-Patrimonial system, nor is the rational-legal system maintained through kinship or client ties. Although Gifford acknowledges the difficulty in making such a stark comparison, there is, nevertheless, a fairly wide agreement that in Uganda, as in many other African states, neo-patrimonial forms of governance have become pervasive, and as in Gifford’s portrayal of Ghana (2004b:13), it is considered normal for the political elite to be incredibly wealthy.

The same can be said of Pentecostal Pastors and elite members of church in Kampala. The visible signs of wealth – well-fitted and ostensibly expensive suits,

top-range cars, regular air travel – are not simply seen as a benefit of being a Senior Pastor, but in fact have become the pre-requisite of an upcoming preacher being identified as a successful pastor. The displays of wealth are crucial in achieving such high status: junior pastors and ‘Career Christians’ take great care in their dressing in an attempt to often look more wealthy than they actually are, for to be dressed well is considered to be a sign that you have been the recipient of God’s blessings and that you are a ‘worthy vessel’ for the Holy Spirit to anoint. Again, this emphasis on appearances, not just dress but on being seen to be successful, are identified by Gifford as a characteristic of Ghana’s neo-patrimonial political system (ibid.).

Although the Senior Pastor in Kiweranga Life Fellowship has less of a personality cult surrounding him, in Alpha Tabernacle the Senior Pastor is something of a ‘superstar’ who is a household name in Kampala. Alpha Tabernacle is *his* church. When he was abroad on one of his many foreign preaching trips (usually to London, or the U.S.A), he would ensure that a foreign visiting pastor would be there to take his place when he himself was overseas, not one of his junior pastoral team, and in doing so the Senior Pastor thereby further ensured his role as somehow being extra special. These guest pastors (and I heard pastors preach from Nigeria, South Africa, Kenya, U.S.A, and U.K.) always ensured a high turn-out of congregants, believing as many did that association with these seemingly-blessed (rich) ‘men of God’ would rub off on themselves. There was no structure of deacons or church elders that served in some form as a ‘check and balance’ on the power of the Senior Pastor in Alpha Tabernacle, and the manner in which he was discussed by others was clearly in terms of his high, untouchable, status. It can be seen, therefore, that the form of church structure seen in this church, characterised by a personality cult surrounding the Senior Pastor, who is immune from criticism from within or outside the ranks of the church, certainly reflects a neo-patrimonial form of governance. Indeed, Gifford has recently suggested that many of Kenya’s Pentecostal churches should be seen less as institutions and more as “personal fiefs” (2009:251), and the same could also be said for Alpha Tabernacle in particular.

But furthermore, in this chapter I have also suggested that it is not only the figure of the Pastor, or other official members of the church hierarchy, that need to be

understood when understanding the power relations that develop between fellow *balokole*. Instead, a structure of patron-client relationships exist that sometimes benefit those at the bottom, such as Martha, with material assistance, but concomitantly, both for those like Martha, and for those who seek to rise the pyramid, fosters ways of thinking and relating that serve to uphold unaccountable, and potentially limiting, structures of power. Gifford has suggested that “[o]f all the ways in which these new churches might contribute to development, that in which they affect neopatrimonialism merits special attention” (Gifford, 2004b:19), and I hope that this chapter has gone some way in adding to his call for more consideration of power relations, and patronage, within the Pentecostal community in Africa.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

“[I]f the past makes us what we are, it is the notion of the future that transforms us into what we are to become” (Bawa Yamba, 1992:109).

Pentecostal Christianity is seemingly characterised by a discourse pervaded by issues of the future and change. It could be argued that the overnight New Year’s Eve services are more important than the Christmas services, in the eyes of the born-again Christian in Kampala, for example. Whereas the main concern on Christmas day seems to be displaying a new outfit, on New Year’s Eve, Pentecostals across the city stay up all night, participating in overnight services that are characterised by their emphasis on transformation and looking towards the future. In Alpha Tabernacle, each New Year is branded with an ‘aspirational’ phrase implying that *this* will be the year when blessings will be received: 2009 was going to be “The Year of Solutions in Your Life”. In Kiweranga Life Fellowship, sermons in January spoke about the devil’s plans for the year being cancelled and how instead, “God will fulfil your purposes as your enemy watches.” [From a sermon at Kiweranga Life Fellowship, Sunday 11th January 2009.]

And indeed, from speaking to born-again Christians in Kampala, it seems that they also have a distinctly rosy picture of the future. Some informants would explain that being born-again gave them ‘hope’, of course, but equally as prevalent, as has been identified in this thesis, was a stronger sense of *surety*, a belief that prosperity and ‘blessings’ were destined to be a *certain* feature of their futures. As has been discussed in Chapter Six, the unique forms of speech as practised in this form of Christianity, called positive confessions, were seen as forms of practice that, through proclaiming and commanding future wants, and ‘rights’, those things that were being spoken were being ‘claimed’ from God, and would necessarily be forthcoming.

Living in areas such as Kiweranga, with seemingly little prospects and facing a future characterised by poor and overcrowded housing, crippling low pay and

insecure employment, a lack of free or affordable education and health provision, the threat of disease, rising inflation and correspondingly high food costs but without land for urban cultivation, coupled with social issues such as domestic violence, there is certainly something to be said for the potential psychological comfort in such an active engagement with the future. As Wallman argues, the “[b]elief in the future underpins the sense of self and its survival” (1992:16). I do not doubt that for some interviewees their born-again religious practice did give them support when times were particularly tough.

But, importantly, Wallman also highlights that one’s idea of the future is intimately related to the idea of control, and this is at the heart of this thesis. Following Popper (1972:26), she writes that “[n]othing can be or needs to be done about a future which cannot be controlled by human agency: it neither directs nor is directed by the practicalities of life” (1992:9). Of course, a belief in a future that cannot be controlled could lead to fatalism, a situation in which a person relinquishes any control over their life and instead leaving it to ‘fate’, something that Wallman suggests is “tantamount to social suicide” (1992:10). However, this is far removed from the behaviours and ideas of those born-again Christians I got to know in Kampala. They certainly *did* believe that their agentive acts were influencing the future: as acknowledged in the substantive chapters above, to them, God had already secured their future prosperity and security, but it was up to them to ‘unlock’ these benefits through adherence to different forms of Pentecostal practice, including of course, positive confessions. As the preacher in Kiweranga Life Fellowship asserted, God was not going to disappoint ‘His children’ in 2009, but they had to play their part in ensuring those blessings would be received.

However, Wallman’s caution that we should understand ideas of the future in relation to relations of power is still relevant. As already identified in Chapter Six, these born-again Christian’s active constructions of the future, actions that would certainly be considered signs of ‘agency’, are potentially limited in their efficacy by others, including by forms of the Spiritual. Marshall has argued that in the language of Pentecostal conversion, in which the past and future are often spoken about in terms of contrasting tropes of “hopelessness, sinfulness, and destructiveness” versus “the security, hope and empowerment that new life in

Christ brings” (1993:223), the speakers are able to actively reconstruct their lives, both at the individual and the collective level. Marshall, writing about Nigerian Pentecostalism in the 1970s and 1980s, suggests that conversion could thus be seen not as a form of “false consciousness”, or “atavistic escapism” but more in terms of “pragmatic acts” of reconstruction in the face socio-economic turmoil, corruption, state violence, and ‘power monopolies’. However, I hope I have shown that although ‘blessings’ are supposedly guaranteed, *when* they will be delivered was certainly not considered to be within the control of the speaker, and nor should they ask about when they might transpire. Instead, like Guyer’s (2007) suggestion that the far-future in Evangelical Christianity is seen not only as the temporal place of ultimate truth but also as a ‘fantasy’, being the recipient of God’s blessings became something of a lottery, not really any more secure, it could be argued, than the disenfranchised situations in which they found themselves in the ‘real’ world of contemporary urban Kampala.

In this way, therefore, the experiences of many people I got to know do reflect Comaroff and Comaroff’s analysis of the state of (modern) capitalism, which they suggest “presents itself as a gospel of salvation; a capitalism that if rightly harnessed, is invested with the capacity wholly to transform the universe of the marginalised and disempowered” (2000:292). The biblical metaphors are, of course, no accident. One could quite easily omit the word ‘capitalism’ and insert that of ‘Pentecostalism’ and the argument would still be convincing. Both encourage the expectations of somewhat miraculous-seeming transformations in *this* world. In this regard, Comaroff and Comaroff see neo-liberal capitalism as contradictory; an economic system that on the one hand produces “desire and expectation on a global scale” and yet at the same decreases “the certainty of work or the security of persons” (2000:298), a state of affairs that I suggest reflects very well what is happening in contemporary Uganda, and particularly for Kampala’s followers of Pentecostalism.

There does, however, need to be caution in suggesting some kind of false consciousness, and at times Comaroff and Comaroff’s work errs on the side of suggesting that the contemporary post-modern globalising and urban world that Africans find themselves in is somehow too difficult to comprehend. Indeed, from his work on Zimbabwean Pentecostalism, Maxwell argues, in opposition to Gifford

(1991 and 1998), that new forms of Christianity in Africa are not opiates (2005:26) and that the theology of salvation from demonic influences does not "necessarily mystify the violence, corruption and poverty that shape the believer's existence" (ibid.). Instead, he argues, Pentecostalism employs a language that enables adherents to talk about their challenges and problems. Certainly I would suggest that the emphasis on communal speaking (such as in cell groups) *can* be seen as potentially creating both the time, space (and an audience) for the born-again Christian to voice his or her worries in life. However, it still remains that the causes of poverty, and ways of dealing with it, amongst the Pentecostals I got to know in this research, were still very much caught up with the *individual*, and wider structural issues were not considered in any great measure. Despite being aware of more pedestrian reasons for poverty and misfortune, it remains that through attempting to alleviate their problems through positive confessions, the burden of fault is still often placed on the individual if the promised (or demanded) blessings do not 'come to pass'.

At the heart of this concern then with a form of religious belief and practice that does little to engender positive long-term transformation, then, is the overriding centrality of the individual as a force for change in the born-again cosmology and understanding of cause and effect. Other scholars have also acknowledged the centrality of the individual to Pentecostal understandings of the world: Csordas, for example, identifies that Catholic charismatics emphasise "individual moral reform over collective social reform" (1992:15), and Comaroff and Comaroff have also related this more "individuated sense of personhood" (2000:305) in these 'occult economies' (which includes Pentecostalism) to a more abstract 'means of production' in the contemporary economic age. Indeed, I would also suggest that Pentecostals in Kampala, faced with a state of disenfranchisement and lack of power or 'voice' in society, try to become producers of their own futures, through claiming their 'rights' and speaking that future into being. In doing so, they construct a *feeling* that they are in control, that they are actively generating future wealth, in the form of a guarantee or a shareholder policy from God.

However, it is clear that not everyone can receive a dividend from their efforts. As Nyamnjoh (2004) suggests, the language of rights that we have seen is harnessed in positive confession may be very enticing and attractive but in reality people are

still “confronted with the myriad ways in which these rights are bargained away” (2004:34); a sentiment shared with Englund who also argues that rights talk could indeed be considered to be far more “rhetorical than emancipatory” (2004:3). In such ways therefore, Comaroff and Comaroff assert that what ‘occult economies’, including neo-Pentecostalism, share is “a single common denominator: the allure of accruing wealth from nothing” and that they can therefore be seen as forms of “casino capitalism for those who lack the fiscal or cultural capital” (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2000:313, italics in original).

Despite an awareness of more pedestrian reasons for poverty in addition to the spiritual, as discussed in Chapter Seven, it would still seem that there is much weight in the Comaroffs’ assessment, for whereas a few, like Fahad, ‘got lucky’, it has to be seen that for most, unless they were particularly favoured by an elite patron, they were unlikely to be in the winning game.

Politics, patronage, and power

In Chapter One I identified that Selinger (2004) had called for an understanding of religion in its political sense as well as its more personal (or individual) sense. This thesis has been primarily concerned with how adherence to Pentecostal faith has an impact on the individual, on their understandings of poverty and wealth and ‘moving on up’. However, as I also identified in the introductory chapter, the public and private manifestations of religion cannot be necessarily be separated. As Meyer (2004) has correctly highlighted, it has become obvious that in the African context, one cannot ‘disentangle’ religion and politics. In this way, it cannot be denied that the prosperity gospel movement and message is likely to have more public political “ramifications” (Hasu, 2006:685).

Although Pentecostalism in its African form has marketed itself as apparently non-partisan (see Maxwell, 2005), its close relationship with less democratic and more authoritarian regimes of governance has not gone unacknowledged. Gifford (1993), for example, suggests that whereas the Evangelical church in Liberia ostensibly distanced itself from politics, on closer examination its rhetoric and practice could be seen as “a solid vote for the status quo, an unflinching support for the beneficiaries of the system” (1993:142). Gifford is not the only one to

acknowledge a close relationship between Pentecostal churches in the developing world and more authoritarian forms of power. Within the Latin American context, although Burdick (1993) argues against seeing Brazilian Pentecostals as 'apathetic', Bastian (1993:50) has suggested that, "the Pentecostal leadership has been able to establish itself... as a political clientele of the authoritarian regimes in the traditional sense of corporatist mediator."

Furthermore, in Uganda at least, it is difficult to see some Pentecostal churches (indeed, potentially the Pentecostal church scene as a whole) as being able to continue to distinguish themselves as non-partisan. Although, of course, churches vary considerably in form, more recent outright support of Yoweri Museveni amongst some prominent Pastors, including Pastor Sematimba running for the capital's mayoral elections in 2011 under an NRM (ruling party) ticket, and the open lobbying by other prominent pastors in support of the anti-homosexuality bill currently going through parliament, entails that their apparent neutrality when it comes to party politics in Uganda looks less able to be supported.

But more pervasive than issues of partisanship is the issue of the 'political' in the more obtuse and abstract sense related to power, control, and justice. In this sense, an understanding of how followers appropriate the rhetoric of Pentecostal Christianity, and how their religious practice and beliefs mediate their identities and sensibilities, can also have implications on ideas of power and control. As Meyer (2004) suggests, the blurring of distinctions between the political and religious spheres in Africa (especially with their use of new media technologies) means that what becomes particularly interesting is "the way in which charismatic movements impinge on the imagination of communities, once the privileged sphere of the nation-state (2004:466, following Benedict Anderson, 1991).

This brings us to the issue of patronage relations. As acknowledged, Pentecostalism in some form offers adherents the opportunity to move away from familial and clan ties that might be seen as restricting a born-again Christian's ability to 'move on up' due to financial obligations, or generational and cultural restrictions on a person's ability to forge their own path in life, including those of patron-client relationships. In this way, it has been seen that Pentecostalism could offer "a critique of inequality that entrenched powers find threatening, and that ambitious, but mostly poor and powerless, young people

find appealing" (Smith, 2001:608). However, as Marshall (1993) and Smith (2001) both suggest, as Pentecostal churches have developed, "the movement has produced its own inequalities" (Smith, 2001:608), including new forms of patron-client relationships. Members become part of a new, potentially supportive, 'family in Christ', but hierarchies remain. Whereas prominent members of the church, often those seated near the front, are seen by Maxwell (2005:27) as "living examples of social and economic success actively inspiring the faithful towards better things", the ways in which those 'faithful' are able to achieve those 'better things' are not necessarily more numerous, more effective, or more fair.

Instead, I suggest that Pentecostal Christians' ways of 'moving on up' by trying to climb the 'patronage pyramid', as discussed in Chapter Eight, can be seen not only as part of a coping strategy, but also can be seen to support pervasive forms of patronage relations across sub-Saharan Africa. As Gifford (1993) identified in Liberia, churches there have been influenced by 'big man' methods of leadership, so could be the case in Kampala. In later work Gifford (2004a) thus argued that we should be cautious about seeing the rise of Pentecostal churches in Africa as "cradles of democracy" (2004:175), and instead suggests that many such church communities are "now composed of clients of a particular 'Man of God'" (ibid.), and that as such there has been a move towards more authoritarian forms of rule. He argues, therefore, that "most of Africa's new churches replicate rather than challenge the dysfunctional structures of patrimonialism and unaccountability that characterize Africa's political systems" (ibid.). I suggest that this 'replication' of patrimonialism that Gifford talks about can be seen at play in Chapter Eight. Not only those who I have termed 'Career Christians', such as Fahad and Matthew, enter into patronage relations in which they rarely benefit, but so do others, such as Martha and George, who still seek some form of material 'gift' for their spiritual or domestic services for the church or its elite. And furthermore, the relationships they make with patrons or 'big men' are, in a way, reminiscent of the norms of making positive confession: both characterised by unaccountability, stark power imbalances, and a culture of silence, of not asking for that which is due or expected but has yet to be forthcoming.

Returning to the issue of agency

The primary research question that has been in the background of all the substantive chapters in this thesis is whether belief and participation in Pentecostal Christianity in Kampala can be said to engender transformative 'agency' for its followers. Firstly, of course, it must be remembered that the idea of agency in itself has to be seen as a product of a particular historical / cultural time (Keane, 1997:675), inextricably related as it is to the idea of the bounded individual human. As part of this historical understanding of agency as something ascribable to the individual human, therefore, it has also been seen how Protestant Christian missionaries (and one could say, the progressive social sciences) saw, and indeed still do see, their projects as those of liberation, of 'restoring' lost agency to the subaltern, and of revealing "true consciousness" (Keane, 1997:678, 684).

In this sense, it is revealing that these ideas of liberation and freedom have also been extended to the concept of confession, as it has been traditionally understood that somehow the speaking of the 'truth' and the speaking of past 'sins' would exonerate and redeem the speaker, that it would liberate him (Foucault, 1978:62), and in the process of this liberation through speech the speaker would be *transformed*. Although it has already been identified that the Pentecostal form of 'positive confession' is different in form to traditional understandings of (predominantly Catholic) confession, I suggest that the concept of liberation through speech still stands in Pentecostal Christianity, the difference being that whereas a Catholic would be liberated through confessions of past sins, and through the mediation of another (the priest), the Pentecostal is thought to be liberated through their own agentive speech acts, through positively confessing that the future will be brighter. Pentecostal expressions of freedom, therefore, are very much expressions of freedom *as* positive change, freedom *as* positively transformative.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ Indeed, the very idea of confession, in its traditional sense, of speech being able to truthfully represent the self, and the purpose of speech as being able to represent some truth, are at the heart of the idea of self-transformation, and therefore the culture of modernity (Foucault, 1978:58-59; Robbins, 2001:905). Although the form that 'confession' takes in Pentecostal Christianity is different, it can certainly be seen that this emphasis on transformative speech, a speech that represents some inner (supposedly truthful) consciousness, still holds.

Furthermore, the element of choice in the theology of born-again Christianity is central to this upholding of a feeling of 'agency' and 'freedom'. Reader (2007) identifies that in experiencing life that is not dictated by matters of choice but is directed rather by necessity, the human is no less of a person. But in doing so, she acknowledges that the agential turn, with its focus on matters of free rational choice as constitutive of freedom, sees that human experience directed by need and want is somehow seen as "less personal, less expressive and determinative of me" (Reader, 2007:600). I suggest that the Pentecostal Christian also thinks along similar lines: the choice that they make in becoming born-again not only makes them believe they have 'freedom' from being one of the 'unsaved', but this emphasis on choice therefore means, in their eyes, that they are *more* of a person.

The historical and cultural constructions of these proclamations of freedom and agency through speech thus remind us that we need to look beyond a search for 'agency' or glib proclamations of 'empowerment', in the lives of followers of Pentecostalism, and that we should pay as much attention to issues of domination, power and disenfranchisement as we do to issues of agency. In doing so, then, issues of what Reader calls 'patency' – including when an individual (or indeed, a collective) is disenfranchised and disempowered - need to be given space in our analysis as much as issues of 'agency'. As much as it is easy to see very visible 'agency' in the practice of being Pentecostal in Kampala, we should not also lose sight of the constraints around such agentive action, and of the sense that the *balokole* are acted upon, as well as actively asserting, their 'agency'.

I suggest that Reader's analysis of the conception of agency, and its corollary, brings forth some interesting reflections on Pentecostalism in Kampala. As identified, Reader suggests that we should not deny that the subjects of our study are patients inasmuch as they agents. And yet, there is a sense in which the subjects of this study are actually denying this themselves. Through the emphasis in positive confession on *always* expressing the benefits that God has engendered in one's life, even in the face of acute hardships and oppression, and by believing that future obstacles can be overcome simply through their own agentive speech, there is a sense that the speakers of such 'confessions' are doing that which

Reader warns against – they are denying their full personhood, as human beings that are victims as well as ‘victors’.

Furthermore, Reader suggests that the agential turn – the focus in development studies (and social science more broadly) on identifying agency and capabilities - is partly due to a ‘Western’ association between “occurrent need and humiliation” (2007:600), that entails a denial of neediness. The corollaries with the belief system as experienced and practised by those I got to know in Kampala is quite apparent. Through positive confessions, asserting they are wealthy when they are in fact homeless, through acting like a ‘big man’ when they have no income, and even through the emphasis on dressing well even when there may be no *matooke* or rice in the house, Pentecostal Christians could be seen as denying their neediness, their poverty, with the belief that to do otherwise would somehow be morally (and to them, pragmatically) wrong. Not only scholars, therefore, have been taken in by the power of the agential conception, of finding the rose amongst the thorns (and denying the thorns are very sharp), and religiously stressing the agency of those who might need so much and who might be acted upon far more than they have the opportunity to act.

In Chapter Three I made it clear that, following Ortner (2006), I understood concepts of agency and transformation to be clearly related to issues of power. Returning to Ortner, who suggests, as highlighted earlier, that “agency is differentially shaped, and also nourished or stunted, under different regimes of power” (2006:137), it becomes quite clear from the research I have presented in this thesis that the agency of Pentecostals in Kampala *could* be seen as ‘nourished’ through their involvement in the faith (through enabling different social networks, spaces for collective relationships, access to what is thought to be spiritual forces and apparently transformational religious experience), but concomitantly must also be seen as ‘stunted’. As I hope by now is clear, the prohibition of doubt, the inability to question (both God and forces of domination), and the unaccountable power imbalances of patron-client relationships, in addition to a discourse that promises so much and yet is potentially as insecure in its delivery as the vagaries of urban living in Kampala that its followers are finding respite from, have the potential to uphold existing forms of governance and relations between people with more status and power

and those who have less.

Religion and development

In the introduction, it was acknowledged that scholars have suggested that a better understanding of religion needs to be incorporated into development studies and even development policy. But as I have suggested, it is less so the discourse that is spoken by those in power that should be at heart of such increased understanding (although they too are important to study), but instead research needs to focus on the followers of religions, on how they appropriate that discourse, and how their religious beliefs and practices construct their social relationships and identities. Jones (2009:162-163) is correct to acknowledge that the failure of some development initiatives is their neglect of beneficiaries' local systems of meaning and institutions, including that of religion. His argument, that external institutions (such as NGOs or micro-credit organisations) need to "borrow' from outside themselves if they are to seem legitimate and natural" (Jones, 2009:163, following Douglas, 1987:48) is therefore persuasive. And indeed, if the goal of development is to strive towards more justice and equality, then in doing so we should understand the "personal perspective" of people in our attempts to have a "balanced conception of the person" (Reader, 2007:597).

With regards to this research, however, it becomes clear that development theory and initiatives that seek to harness some 'ethic' of an agentive Pentecostal Christianity, or utilise some apparent collective force of mutual assistance and social capital, are making potentially naïve suppositions about the role of this popular form of religion. It is understandable why development would be interested in religious groups as a collective group of 'beneficiaries'. As with Ben Jones' research in the Teso region of Uganda (2009), few of my informants had many dealings with institutions of the State: those that worked did so primarily in the informal economy, not paying taxes or coming into contact with many institutions of the State apparatus. Nor did NGO or INGO activity have any significant impact.⁷⁹ The church as an institution was then by far the primary

⁷⁹ I only came across a few references to NGOs when interviewing, and these were referring to microcredit organisations that were out of bounds for my interviewees due to

means through which informants collectively associated, and it is therefore understandable that religious collectives or places of worship might be seen as a potentially productive partner or focus of development activity. However, to assert that being involved in the Pentecostal church, in Kampala at least, is a force for collective or individual 'empowerment', or positively transformative 'agency' for those on the economic and political margins, is a simplistic, and potentially dangerous, conclusion to make.

Pentecostal Christianity and a globalising discourse

There is little doubt of course that the coming of Christianity to Africa did not just bring different ideas of cosmology and spirituality. It did not only bring pews and scripture but also different conceptions of time, identity, personhood, relationships, and economy (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1991). Unsurprisingly, in Buganda itself, Christianity was seen as responsible for an increased desire for Western clothing, housing, and changing ideas of what materials things are necessary for living (Powersland, 1952). A belief in the salvation of the African 'soul' was of course part and parcel of the colonial experiment, of the Scramble for Africa.

Indeed, as identified in Chapter Four, to some, contemporary Christianity in Africa can still be seen as wholesale importation of a 'Western' discourse of 'freedom' and 'salvation', and to an extent, individual 'rights', achieved through individualist and neo-liberal means. Gifford has linked the discourse of individual 'success' and 'victory' of contemporary neo-Pentecostalism in Africa as related to the (mainly) American 'positive thinking' industry (Gifford, 2009:136-13). Furthermore, as Coleman asserts, Prosperity Gospel Christianity in particular offers poor Africans impractical but "alluring images of efficiency linked to foreign missionaries as well as forms of prosperity that do not rely on the initial possession of resources" (2000:32, following Gifford, 1993:186-9). The extent to which contemporary Christianity in Africa can be seen as a product of the West is, as I have suggested, a question that can only be answered by more subtle understandings of the ebbs

the need to offer expensive possessions such as TVs or refrigerators as collateral, which very few possessed.

and flows of a globalising movement such as Pentecostalism. However, Coleman and Gifford still have valid points to make. Whether these 'alluring images' are linked to missionaries, or (as I would also suggest) sharply-suited, transnational, and visibly wealthy, self-proclaimed 'Pastors', the reality is that without many prospects for viable employment and a chance of a decent standard of living, it is easy to see why Ugandans are keen to be part of this movement, a religion that indeed seems to offer grandiose riches for few initial resources: the ability to proclaim positive confessions, enter a few shillings into the lottery of tithing, and maybe become a client to one of those Big Men that embody the allure of this faith.

It is hoped then that this research adds to a better understanding of the way that those who identify as being Pentecostal in the developing world understand and try to mediate the future. Although analyses of how people's conceptions of the past obviously create their present-day identities, it should be remembered that the way we look to the future is also important, as people's ideas of the future can indeed "be seen as shaping and determining the strategies they adopt to fulfil their aims" (Bawa Yamba, 1992:109). I have tried to show, therefore, how what Davis (2004:698) called "arguably the largest, self-organized movement of urban poor people on the planet" (as identified in Chapter One), Pentecostal Christianity, may have a particular way of looking at the future that, whilst being overtly paraded as somehow 'empowering' and 'agentive', does in fact do little to address issues of inequality, justice, and the entrenched facets of a life of poverty and need. Instead, based on this research in urban Uganda, I suggest that some of the practices and relationships that develop from involvement in this very vocal, engaging, and popular religion, in particular the practices of future-building, can uphold structures of domination and disenfranchisement. Furthermore, Van Dijk argues that it is in fact this reorientation of time, an "ideology of discontinuity with the past, counterbalanced by a prognostic orientation" which makes Pentecostal Christianity particularly distinctive as a religion in comparison to others in Africa's cities (1998:166.) And it is precisely these declarations about the future, Van Dijk thus contends, are missing from analyses of the religion. I hope that this work on born-again Christians and their attempts to mediate the future therefore helps towards filling that gap in knowledge of this 'distinctive' religion in Africa.

Finally, a word is needed about the plurality of religious beliefs, practices and experiences. Whilst the focus of this thesis has been on Pentecostal Christians in Kampala, I have also identified that the influence of born-again ways of thinking about the world can have a wider influence than it might at first seem, and this hints at the need to incorporate such issues into our methodologies. But equally as important to remember is that, as shown in Chapter Five, these religious identities can be seen as a bricolage. As identified in the introductory chapter, some scholars, such as Ellis and Ter Haar, have suggested that we need to take seriously the different epistemologies on the African continent, including an awareness that 'development' might be seen in spiritual terms, and as something "dependent on the inner change or transformation of individuals" (2007:395). The symmetry with the goal of Pentecostal Christians, striving to transform themselves and their futures, is quite clear. However, whilst being sympathetic to an attempt not to impose one particular mode of thinking about the world onto another, their suggestion of incorporating issues of spirituality into development policy or practice is, I would suggest, fraught with problems of morality, definition, pragmatics, and of course, power. For whose spiritual epistemology would this be, and who would be defining its terms?

APPENDIX A

METHODS AND ETHICS

Methods

Research site

The two churches that formed a physical backdrop to the case study were chosen through 'purposive' sampling, as exemplary cases of urban African-led neo-Pentecostal churches in Kampala, one of which may be initially regarded as preaching the Gospel of Prosperity, and one which may be regarded less so. I chose one church which espoused more of a Health and Wealth gospel message, and one that did not partly because the difference between a Prosperity Gospel church and one that is not is not sharply delineated and I did not want my findings to be restricted to necessarily making statements dictated by these definitions.

I initially travelled to Uganda for three months from January 2008 to April 2008 to get a broad understanding of the churches in the city, and to negotiate access to particular churches. I visited a number of different Pentecostal (or born-again) places of worship to listen to the sermon content and meet some of the congregation. Once I had decided that I thought the two churches would be interesting case studies, I approached the main contact of the church administration that I had met in each church (in Alpha Tabernacle this was a junior Pastor, and in Kiweranga Life Fellowship it was a member of the interpreting team), and they facilitated contact with the Senior Pastors and Senior Administrators. Both churches gave me permission to be present in church services, and approach members of the congregation for interviewing. I was initially viewed with some suspicion, especially in Alpha Tabernacle: Pentecostal churches in Kampala often have negative press and my requests to research another two churches had already been turned down by the Senior Pastors of those churches. They did not explain why, but both of those churches had been embroiled in scandals in recent years, and it was likely that I was considered as a potential threat. Indeed, the Senior Pastor of Kiweranga Life Fellowship, when I was requesting permission to research the church said that not only was this fine

but that “here, we have nothing to hide”, suggesting of course that he thought that others might. Significantly, however, I explained to the pastors that my focus was not on the church, or its administration (including its finances), but on the individual lives of the congregation, and I expect that this eased my access into these two churches. As with my informants, I was always open with the fact that I was a non-Christian.

Ethnographic observation

“Proximity to reality... (is) a prerequisite for advanced understanding”
(Flyvberg, 2006:236).

From October 2008 to November 2009 I lived in the neighbourhood of Kiweranga Life Fellowship, in a small terraced house. It was hoped that through living in the neighbourhood close to one of the two churches I could attempt some degree of ethnographic observation. I chose to live nearby Kiweranga Life Fellowship, rather than Alpha Tabernacle mainly due to Kiweranga Life Fellowship being more of a community-based church, and the church being located just behind the main ‘stage’ (bus stop) of the suburb – a busy intersection and trading post with fresh produce markets, a small public transport intersection, small supermarkets and a multitude of wooden kiosks selling anything from charcoal to mobile phones. In contrast, Alpha Tabernacle was located down near a wetland swamp and straddling two more quiet residential areas, away from the hustle and bustle of everyday suburban life. Living near Kiweranga Life Fellowship, therefore, I was in a better position for chance meetings with my informants in the street or the market for example, than I would with my informants from Alpha Tabernacle.

Kampala is built on many hills with most valleys being swampy wetlands. The general rule-of-thumb about living in the city dictates that the higher up the hill, the more salubrious and comfortable the locale, and the further down the hill, the less desirable the housing - cheaper, more prone to flooding and closer to the noxious waste of the trenches that run down to the wetlands. I found a small house to rent down in the encroached wetlands area behind the church. In the interests of assimilation with the neighbourhood, I chose to live in a house without a gated fence, and although my house had piped water it was certainly not the most expensive house in the area. In fact, to walk down from the ‘stage’

to my rented house, would mean to pass a few gated houses opposite unfinished local mud-brick houses without electricity, which although still shells of houses, were being lived in and their inhabitants were using reclaimed materials for doors, and roofs. Living in this neighbourhood therefore meant that my house was not 'out-of-bounds', and I did indeed have neighbours and some informants make surprise visits, to update me on something that had happened, to pick up their child that liked to wander in and look around, to ask for aspirin, or to come and show me their new-born baby, for example.

Doing ethnography in urban areas can be difficult precisely because of the lack of a bounded residential space – the village (and particularly the communal areas of the village) within which the ethnographer can observe, and can potentially participate in, everyday life. My neighbours and my informants would regularly move house – most were renting and insecurities in employment and rental prices meant that tenants were regularly evicted and had to move on. But through living in the local neighbourhood of one of the churches, and having to walk through the same area every day to get to anywhere that I needed to go to - the bus stop, the church, the market, informants' houses – enabled a form of familiarity with neighbours, and chance meetings with informants, other members of church, and neighbours. In some way it meant that I kept up-to-date with some of my informants' lives outside of the more-structured interview context: I knew that Kampala City Council (KCC) had evicted an informant's fruit and vegetable stand from the 'stage' before he told me; I knew when a neighbour (and informant)'s house had been burgled before I spoke to her; I knew one informant had started employing the daughter of another interviewee in her second-hand shoe stall because I would walk past every day. The examples are numerous.

These more informal ways of finding out what was going on in the lives of informants were therefore not only very useful in *observing* what was going on, and also hearing from informants and others about local events and news, but they also provided more informal conversational stepping-stones in interviews: I could, for example, start a question with "do you remember the other day when I met you at the market, you told me that...", or "last week I saw David giving you some mangoes; does he often help you out with spare food?" By building relationships with informants away from the artificial social space of the

interview, I hoped that such “social proximity and familiarity (would) provide....conditions for “nonviolent” communication” (Bourdieu, 1999:610) between researcher and interviewee in the interview itself.

Another important form of ethnographic observation was attendance at church events. Pentecostals would often describe their faith as ‘not only for Sundays’. Time permitting, born-again Christians in Kampala would attend mid-week lunch-time fellowships, evening services, even ‘morning glory’ services at 6am, as well as the regular Sunday services. The Pentecostal church is rarely shut: there seems to be an endless cycle of sermons, prayer sessions, conferences, fellowship meetings for certain groups: intercessors, ‘marrieds’, youth, and ministers, for example. This last group can include anyone from the Senior Pastor down to a member of the congregation that sweeps the church floor on Monday mornings after Sunday’s large footfall. Many informants would have their ‘ministry’, something that they felt God ‘called’ them to do: for example, being in the choir, or an usher in the church; evangelising in the neighbourhood, or sharing their prophecies with fellow congregants. In both my churches there was then, a busy calendar of events, not only in the church building itself, but also on other sites – Alpha Tabernacle rented two separate old cinema halls located at either end of the busiest thoroughfare of the city centre for daily lunchtime services, and Kiweranga Life Fellowship often held public outdoor crusades in the church compound, but also in other sites in Kampala (and beyond), that members of the church were encouraged to attend. Therefore I attended Alpha Tabernacle and Kiweranga Life Fellowship not just on Sundays, but on other days, usually when a service or event would fit around meeting someone for an interview in that neighbourhood. I was not able to attend all services (I did not even know of any church member who could do so!), and neither was it my intention for this research to be led by a discourse analysis of church sermon content, and yet it was necessary to keep attending both churches for so many reasons: it was the primary way in which I recruited interviewees for the main method of the research, longitudinal interviewing, it was necessary to attempt to understand the message that was being heard by my informants, and it was an excellent opportunity for ethnographic observation of informants’ practice in church – how and when they prayed, where they sat, who they interacted with, as well as being an opportunity for informal meetings to catch-up with their lives.

Most sermons that were fully attended (and noted in Appendix B) were recorded. If the acoustics were clear enough then I would record the sermons using a digital voice recorder, but in the case of Alpha Tabernacle, the acoustics of the church, with its high ceilings, meant that it was quite difficult to clearly hear the message clearly in person, let alone record it. Instead, in this case I would purchase audio CDs of services from the audio-visual department of the church.⁸⁰ These sermons were then transcribed (and translated if necessary). Most services (except some lunchtime services at Kiweranga Life Fellowship which were exclusively in Luganda) were in Luganda and had live translation into English, or vice-versa.

In addition to attending scheduled services and events, however, my research assistant and I found ourselves spending far more time in both churches than is accounted for in the list of transcribed sermons. We would use the churches as meeting places not only to meet each other before travelling to informant's homes for interviews, but also for meeting interviewees when we had not yet known their place of residence, or when for various reasons they were uncomfortable with us conducting an interview in their home. These informal times 'hanging-out' at church when services were not being held were an added source of informal data-collection, both with informants and other members of the congregation.

Furthermore, we also attended (and to some extent participated in) a regular 'cell group', one from each church. Many Pentecostal churches have these 'cell groups', which are small groups of people, numbering anything from about three to fifteen, who meet once a week on a mid-week evening for Bible study and discussion, for chances to share 'testimonies' of how God has influenced their lives, and for collective prayer. Cell groups usually meet in someone's residential home, but in Kiweranga Life Fellowship some cell groups would meet in the church building itself, having not found a member's house that was big enough to

⁸⁰ As with many larger Pentecostal urban churches, both Living Waters Church and Kiweranga Life Fellowship broadcasted their sermons on the radio or TV. Kiweranga Life Fellowship had its own radio station broadcasting services and other shows (prayer phone-ins, for example) in the Kampala area, and Living Waters Church broadcasted its services on Uganda's premier born-again radio station (run by another faith gospel church), Impact FM, and also on LTV (Lighthouse TV), a Christian TV channel. The recording operation in Kiweranga Life Fellowship was subtle and low-key, but in Living Waters not only were there a number of stylish young people dedicating their time to the ministry of being church cameraperson, but there would also be others taking digital photo stills in every Sunday service.

accommodate all the cell group members. Whereas Gifford has suggested that cell groups might have limited impact in comparison to the message of the church Pastor (Gifford, 2004b:30), and certainly not all members have the time or the inclination to join a cell group, I did find them a very useful source of data collection.

As mentioned, I was introduced to cell groups by a junior pastor, in the case of Alpha Tabernacle, and by a translator, in the case of Kiweranga Life Fellowship. Both these men were critical in facilitating my acceptance by the church leadership in both churches and I trusted them throughout my data collection as being helpful and welcoming contacts. Having said that, I was aware that I could have been introduced to what they considered to be the more successful or exemplary cell groups. However, my research assistant and I very quickly made contacts for potential informants from the group, and I thus felt that it would be wise to continue visiting the same cell groups as the welcome we received was so warm and it soon became clear that this was a very good way of having a chance to meet our informants outside of the interview space. In addition, membership of the groups was very fluid, with many new members arriving as we followed the group over the year, and these people were certainly not 'chosen' by the Pastors. The method of joining the group was organic – most came as friends or acquaintances of existing group members, whereas others would simply ask the church to point them in the direction of the cell group closest to their home. The cell groups then became a particularly useful way of not only meeting informants, but keeping up-to-date with them, hearing their prayer requests, their testimonies, and having a chance to informally chat with those informants and other members of the cell group on our walks back from the host's home to the main roads where we would continue our journeys. They were a vital source of ethnographic observation of Pentecostal practice away from the church setting.

I specifically use the phrase 'ethnographic observation' rather than the phrase 'participant observation' because, as a non-Christian, it was not possible to participate fully in all Pentecostal forms of worship and practice such as speaking in tongues, receiving the laying-on of healing hands, or exorcism of satanic spirits. Certainly there is an increased threat of reactivity (see De Vaus, 2001:237) of a non-Christian researcher observing and participating in church social events, but I

was as subtle as possible with my activities in church, and in cell groups. I tried to keep chances for reactivity to a minimum: my personal belief system that might have differed with their conceptions of the world were not voiced, and I tried to keep my bodily movements in church as naturalistic as possible – I would stand when the congregation stood, clap when the church was clapping, sing when they would sing (at least for the English songs), and do some dancing when the church was getting excited! I was overt in interviews and with people I directly came across in ethnographic observations, such as cell groups, that I am not a Christian, as I found it ethically and pragmatically necessary to do so.

Aside from not being actually able to do a very good job of acting as a Pentecostal for covert research, neither would it have been ethical to have pretended to be a born-again, for I felt that if I were asking my informants to be open with me about their lives then I could not myself be carrying out covert research in this way. Furthermore, pragmatically I found it better to be open about my beliefs as it allowed me to be seen as ignorant of their doctrine and theology: I was able to ask questions of my informants that it would be have been strange to ask if I had announced myself as a fellow believer. For example, it would seem odd for someone who labels themselves as Pentecostal to ask another supposedly born-again what it meant to speak in tongues, and yet I could ask such questions with ease precisely because my interviewees knew me as an outsider, and indeed were very happy to ‘enlighten’ me as to the ways in which one can have a relationship with the spiritual being they see as a saviour (and furthermore, such exchanges allowed, to some extent, for the power inherent in the interviewer-interviewee relationship to be reversed, as I became the student and they became the teacher). I would not, however, announce myself as an agnostic or non-Christian (let alone an atheist) every time I was introduced to someone new – that would have made the encounter change course from the discussion being held, and made conversation less naturalistic. However, if I found myself sitting and having a longer conversation with one or two members of the congregation then I would bring up the issue at a natural point in the conversation, for example when they were asking whether I was a Pastor or a missionary, or what my ‘ministry’ was.

Longitudinal biographical-narrative interviews

The longitudinal biographical-narrative interviews form the backbone of my data collection. Although the number of non-Pentecostals is smaller than the main cohort of Pentecostals, the intention of interviewing the non-Pentecostals was not meant as a strict comparison or control group, but was to allow for some checking that the theory I was building regarding the Pentecostal interviewees' ideas of wealth and poverty, fortune and misfortune, and ways of dealing with challenges, were exclusive to them or not.

Sampling of Pentecostal interviewees

The sampling technique used was less of a formal structured method and more of an anthropological convenience and snowballing technique. Through ethnographic observation of church services and cell groups, my research assistant and I would get chatting informally with members of the congregation. At first people would approach us when we were new to the churches and these often became our first informants. However, being aware that to wait for people to approach us might mean a predominance of confident women who spoke very good English (as seemed to be the population who would come to introduce themselves), I would then purposively target certain members of the church, in particular men, elderly members, and those who maybe seemed more shy and / or less wealthy, so that we could get a good selection of different people to interview. In some of these cases I would ask my research assistant, Mable, to make initial conversation in Luganda, and then later I would also join the conversation, with Mable interpreting if necessary. We met many people through cell groups, but also through greeting people in church, and through snowballing - by being introduced to friends (and sometimes family members) of existing informants or contacts. In fact snowballing proved to be particularly useful as within our longitudinal interviewee population we had a husband and wife, and two sisters, and some close friends. This was not intentional but gave us added insight into the lives of each interviewee.

While some kind of random or stratified sampling might have been desirable, the reality is that church populations are fluid and church membership records do not offer a viable sampling frame (see Maxwell, 1999:194). Churches record their

membership based on who completes and deposits a tithing envelope (which asks for personal data such as name, telephone number, address, and sometimes email addresses). Not only is the information limited (people might not give or have contact details), but it is also an incomplete representation of the population that visits the church. There are many people attending church who would not complete or deposit a tithing envelope –those who think that the amount of their 10% tithe, or voluntary offering, is not enough to warrant an envelope and just put the cash straight into the offerings basket,⁸¹ those who are unable to write, and of course those who simply do not, or cannot, tithe. In addition to this, as I identify in Chapters Four and Five, many people I met in Kampala had their ‘home’ church but would also attend other churches for particular spiritual (and other) needs. In fact, a significant number of the people we did interview attended Kiweranga Life Fellowship for some services, but also had their own ‘home’ church. Considering that it is the norm for congregants to tithe in their ‘home’ church, using the church membership records would therefore limit the sampling frame to those home church members who were able and willing to pay a tithe, and who then also submitted a completed tithing envelope.

It should also be noted that access to participants was not mediated through pastors. Methodologically, a certain element of unwanted selection would be likely if a pastor did mediate contact in this way. Furthermore, pastors are influential people, and are in a position of power in the church structure, and I did not want congregants to feel that they have to be part of the research due to our introduction through a pastor. Participation in the project was voluntary and so we arranged interviews with informants independently of church influence.

Interviews with non-Pentecostals: reasons and sampling

It became clear through the course of the research that not only was religious worship fluid as mentioned above, but that religious identity itself was not necessarily easily categorised. Therefore it was felt necessary to interview informants who did not self-identify as ‘Pentecostal’, and it was this cohort of informants that were particularly instrumental in allowing for a more thorough

⁸¹ One informant explained to me that they do not complete a tithing envelope as they considered their tithe amount to be ‘too small’ (even though it still constituted 10% of their salary, which is what is required within Christian doctrine). Others indicated that they wouldn’t tithe only coins as the church wanted notes (i.e. larger amounts).

understanding of the complex forms of religious identity in Kampala.

I sampled the group of interviewees who initially self-identified as not Pentecostal through a form of snowballing in the neighbourhood in which I lived, near Kiweranga Life Fellowship. As this non-Pentecostal group was not supposed to be a control group as part of an experimental research design, and not intended to be necessarily representative of all Kampala residents, it was felt that a more fluid sampling method, such as snowballing within a neighbourhood, was relevant. I started the sampling of this additional cohort later in the research, once I had been living in the neighbourhood for at least six months, and therefore, I was already acquainted with quite a few of the informants, if only to say hello when I was passing their homes or businesses. I started with interviewing 16 non-Pentecostals but due to attrition only 13 out of those 16 non-Pentecostals who were originally interviewed were interviewed a second time.⁸² These second interviews were the most fruitful as the interviewees were understandably more relaxed. In fact, the benefits of interviewing non-Pentecostals proved to be those most unexpected: it transpired that a number of non-Pentecostal informants had initially expressed allegiance to Catholicism, for example, but also attended some Pentecostal services at Kiweranga Life Fellowship and elsewhere, without wanting to relinquish their Catholic identity. Their cases were discussed in more detail in Chapter Five, in which I explored the fluidity of religious identification in Kampala. In more ways than simply being a comparison with the main cohort of Pentecostal interviewees then, interviewing the non-Pentecostals was in itself a useful source of data-generation on the wider religious landscape of the neighbourhood.

Interview methods

What determines a 'life history', 'biographical narrative', or 'life story' is not clear-cut (Shacklock and Thorp, 2005:156), but I use the term 'biographical-narrative' to mean an interview which is concerned with both a biography (a history) of the

⁸² The reasons for attrition were as follows: one person went upcountry to care for her sick mother for many months and we could not meet her again; and another informant did not seem keen on being interviewed, although he had given verbal informed consent. We had interviewed the third person who we did not interview a second time in her hair salon kiosk at the main trading post of the neighbourhood, but a month after our interview Kampala City Council deemed her kiosk, along with others nearby, to be illegally erected on the land, and the kiosks were demolished (along with her livelihood). Despite asking around, we were unable to find out where she lived, and we did not have a telephone number for her.

interviewee's life, and also narratives about the present, and how it is experienced. The intention of the interview was not to encourage discussion of faith or religious belief but to allow these themes to be brought up by the interviewee herself. In the first interview, therefore, conversion accounts were not necessarily sought, but I encouraged interviewees to narrate openly about their life history. Informants were told they should feel free to begin telling their life history at whatever point in their life they preferred: some worked chronologically from the time of their birth; others would weave back and forth through time. Therefore, if conversion, religious beliefs and practice came up in interviews, they did naturally and were contextualised within a wider life history. Sometimes, although rarely, these themes did not arise until maybe the second or third interview, but more often they did in fact form a significant part of the interviewee's narrative from the first interview.

Thus most of the born-again interviewees would at some point share their conversion testimonies. As identified in Chapter One, in Pentecostal Christianity there is great stress on believers choosing the faith, and conversion experiences are memorised as significant moments, and are central to the process of self-transformation (Keane, 1997:676, 2002:65). Due to the importance of verbally sharing one's conversion testimony with others as a sign of God's ability to transform, the conversion narrative was often a particularly well-polished part of the informant's life history narrative. Despite this, conversion narratives should not to be disregarded as well-rehearsed stories that are somehow less 'real': as Cucchiari explains, "conversion accounts are interpretive reconstructions of experience" (1990:698). They are accounts that say something about converts' current values and past values, as mentioned above, and hence these narratives can be particularly good stepping-stones to further discussion in interviews.

Longitudinal interviewing was critical in allowing for more naturalistic, and valid, data-collection. It meant that the first interview gave time for the interviewee to narrate their life, highlighting the events or feelings that were most relevant to them. By having already interviewed them, and also having met most informants in other places, away from the interview space, such as in church, cell groups, or in the neighbourhood, the second and third interviews were usually far more relaxed and conversational, and were rarely stilted in discussion. I would usually

start by asking simple questions about how they had been since we had last met them. Many times this would elicit some longer conversation about what had been happening, but if not, it was usually a stepping stone to themes that I had pre-prepared to discuss with the informant. These pre-prepared questions, which were based on issues discussed in prior interviews, were not always covered as I tried to keep the interview flowing. The lack of formal structured questions was certainly not to the detriment of the interviews. The semi-structured form, allowing for a lot of improvisation in response to informants' new narratives and answers to questions, meant that not only did the concerns and interests of the interviewee have space to be voiced, but through this and the more conversational style that it allowed, my research assistant and I were able to gain the trust of the informants, and long, rich and sensitive discussions were often possible.

There were then many benefits to this method of data collection. As the primary focus was on the respondent's own perspectives, the interview style meant that our meeting with informants often felt more like a "conversation with a purpose" (Robson, 1993:228), although in some way guided by the research topics. It is not an exaggeration to say that many of the informants became friends of ours, and the interviews simply became a chance for a longer conversation than we usually had when we met in other spaces. Furthermore, I suggest that this style of interviewing meant that the power imbalance inherent in the relationship between interviewer and interviewee (Bourdieu, 1999:609) was less pronounced than it can be in more formalised data-collection settings.

Transcription and data analysis

All interviews and sermons were transcribed and translated by a team of five staff: four native Luganda speakers, and one native Lugisu speaker with fluent Luganda skills. Three of the transcribers were well-known to me and translated the confidential interviews, whereas two other people only translated sermon content. I ensured that all my colleagues understood the need to keep the identity and the content of the interview recordings confidential. Although all transcribers were, coincidentally, born-again Christian, they lived in different neighbourhoods to my informants, attended different churches, and did not meet the people I interviewed. My research assistant did not transcribe any interviews

as I wanted a third person to directly translate informants' speech from Luganda to English so that I could check my research assistant's interview interpretation in interviews.

Certainly there are always issues in translation, but my limited knowledge of Luganda somewhat eased some potential problems.⁸³ I embarked on some part-time Luganda lessons three months prior to starting interviewing. Although my Luganda was basic, it did help with building rapport with informants by being able to greet them in Luganda (if it was a language they spoke), and importantly, it also enabled me early on in the interviews to sometimes be aware of when an informant talked about a particular topic that my research assistant then neglected to interpret, and through this, Mable became aware of the need to interpret everything that was said, even if it might have seemed insignificant to her.

All interviews were analysed and coded using NVivo 8 software.

Interview locations

Interviews were held in many different places, wherever was most convenient and comfortable for the informant. If possible I would suggest that we hold the interview in the interviewee's home as informants are likely to feel more comfortable in that space, and homes *can* (although not necessarily) be spaces where a private conversation can be held. If interviewing in their home was not possible, we would conduct the interview in other places: in a church compound, in the garden of a home that hosted a cell group, at local cafes, and in people's workplaces (such as small grocery shops, or next to their vegetable kiosk, for example). Sometimes the reason for interviewing outside the home was one of convenience, or sometimes it was because the home was not a place where they felt they could bring people (in one case for example, the family of the informant were not supportive of their conversion to born-again Christianity, and in another case, they had many in-laws staying and the house was too full). Sometimes informants expressed embarrassment that they had a small home, or a home in

⁸³ For example, there is no gender difference for the third person (he / she) in Luganda. Instead a verb will take the prefix 'a' (for example, '*asaba*' means 'he / she is praying' or 'he / she prays'). Being aware of this enabled me to instruct my transcribers not to make an assumption of the gender of a third person being spoken about in an interview, and write 'he' or 'she' only when it is clear what the gender of the third person is.

bad condition, or without many possessions, and did not want an outsider such as myself to see it; but Mable was very good at explaining that we really did not mind at all how the house looked, or how little an interviewee possessed. Sometimes an informant would want to meet outside of the home for the first interview, but then once a good relationship had been built, we were invited to their home for the second and third interviews.

Research assistance

Before embarking on this research, I had the idea that it would be ideal to employ a non-Pentecostal research assistant. From my previous experience of the performativity of Pentecostal Christianity, I was concerned that a Pentecostal research assistant might inhibit informants' ability to speak openly, and to reveal to us their doubts, or aspects of their lives which might be considered by the Pentecostal community as 'non-Christian': I was concerned that a Pentecostal research assistant may cause the interviewee to self-regulate their answers with a view to portraying themselves as a good Pentecostal. When it came to choosing a research assistant however, I chose Mable, who is a born-again Christian, primarily as she seemed to possess the interpersonal skills that thought would help us make good relationships with our informants over the year or so that we would know them.

In fact, after working with Mable for some weeks, it became apparent that her identity as a fellow born-again Christian worked to the favour of the research. Working with Mable enabled me to be better accepted into the community, despite my status as a 'double-outsider' – both European, and a non-Christian. In church services, for example, Mable would be there worshipping with the congregation – her movements were 'correct' and she knew when to follow the actions of the choir, or when to improvise (and how to improvise). It would have seemed decidedly more odd if two non-Pentecostals were awkwardly swaying their bodies in the service, neither quite sure of what to do or how to do it properly! Mable was also a fantastic resource: not only did she know where to find churches that I wanted to visit, for example, but she was able to teach me small things that enabled better relationships with our informants. For example, she taught me how people greet each other in church, and as soon as I started to greet people with "*Mukuma y'ebazibwe*" ("Praise be to God" in Luganda) instead

of “*ossiibye otyano ssebo/nyabo*” (“Good afternoon sir/madam”) there were more hugs, more laughter, and, I suggest, a relationship more conducive to trust. Informants expressed how they liked the fact that I ‘moved with Sister Mable’, as they saw our relationship as one in which Mable was teaching me about Pentecostal ways.

The fact that Mable worked with me for the duration of the research, and that we became good friends, was also beneficial in making our informants feel at ease in our company. Her friendly approach meant that informants would often call her, or send messages, to tell us about something that was happening in their lives. One informant would regularly telephone to let us how their new baby was getting on, and the family of another called to tell us about the death of our informants’ husband, for example. Because of the good relationship that we had, and Mable’s approachability to those who did not speak English, it enabled us to have these more informal relationships with our informants.

Mable’s roles were two-fold. Firstly, she interpreted in interviews and in sermons, where necessary. Secondly, she facilitated making initial contact with potential informants when needed, and she also arranged interviews where it would be better to speak to the informant in Luganda. Most of our interviews were in Luganda, which Mable translated, although some were in English. The language spoken was that which the interviewee felt most comfortable speaking. Mable came with me to all interviews: interviewees that liked to talk in English would sometimes also use Luganda, and having Mable present in all interviews allowed for feelings of continuity for those that were participating in the research.

Ethics

Informed consent

All informants gave verbal informed consent to participate in this research. When Mable or I initially approached a potential informant we would briefly outline to them what their participation in the research would mean: in addition to explaining that I was interested in talking about their lives for PhD research, we would also indicate that the information would be kept anonymous, and that it

was always their choice to take part in the research. If after these initial introductions a potential informant was interested in becoming a participant in the research, then in that first interview we discussed ethical issues in more depth. In particular I outlined the following to informants before asking them if they consented:

- That I was an independent student who was not part of the church, the government, nor part of any NGO or charity;
- That all data would be made anonymous – that names and other key information (such as place of work) would be changed so as to protect as much as possible the identity of the informant;
- That their story and words might appear in a publication, such as a book, or in an academic publication online, but that I would remove distinguishing characteristics, making it very difficult for anyone except their close friends or family who knew the details of their story to identify that person;
- That, if the interview was recorded, a third party (the transcriber) would hear the interview as they would type up the recording, but that that person was not someone from their neighbourhood or church, and that they were trustworthy people who had agreed to keep the information they heard confidential.
- That they were under no obligation to answer any of my questions, and that neither Mable nor I would mind at all if they declined to answer a question;
- That they were also free to refuse to take part in any subsequent interviews if they did not want to;
- That at any time they could request that the information that they had already given be withdrawn from the research;
- That the data would be kept securely on my computer, and that to access it a password would be needed that only I would know;

I would also ask participants if they had any questions at all about the research or my role, and sometimes we were asked questions, usually regarding why I was interested in them in particular, and often about why I was not a Christian. It was initially my intention to ask for written consent, but it became apparent that asking people to sign forms would unduly formalise interview settings that Mable and I had already tried to make as informal and comfortable for our informants as possible. There is of course also the argument that asking informants to sign a form might intimidate them, as the signing of forms can sometimes be associated with authority and unwanted government or dominant institutional involvement. My reasons for not seeking written consent were more prosaic, as outlined. In fact, it became apparent after making the decision to seek verbal consent that seeking written consent would have caused potential discomfort for some informants who were illiterate. By keeping the interview space as relaxed as possible for my informants then, and not asking them to sign anything, I was able to hear about their education and literacy in their own time, not in mine.

In fact I was strangely pleased when one potential participant, Martha (who featured in Chapter Eight) felt able to say, after hearing about the research, that she was *not* interested in taking part. Her reason was that she feared that the Pastors of the church might hear her story. I felt pleased that she was able to say no, and that therefore maybe my presence was not too intimidating. This is especially because Martha was one of the more vulnerable people we knew at Kiweranga: she was an illiterate elderly woman who lived without proper housing, and had no employment or family support. After refusing participation in the study, however, Martha continued to be a very friendly and welcoming woman, and when we would happen to meet at church or in the neighbourhood, she would always try out a few words in English and I would do the same in Luganda, to much laughter on both sides. I would see her on a nearly daily basis as I passed her home and would always be welcomed with a big strong hug and a broad smile from this small-framed lady. Despite her initial refusal to be part of the research, however, one day many months later, when I was nearly finished with meeting new potential participants, Martha found Mable and told her that now she wanted to be part of the study. She explained that she had known that we had interviewed two friends of hers and she had trusted that there was no breach of confidentiality, and furthermore she had watched our behaviour over the

previous months in church and felt that we were trustworthy people. I was obviously delighted to be able to interview Martha, especially as by that point she was one of the most friendly and wonderful people I knew in Kiweranga, and in fact her interviews turned out to be some of the most relaxed, conversational, and informative. Interestingly, Martha was also one of those two interviewees who refused voice recording. She is therefore, a good example of the importance of spending time doing ethnographic observation or participation, and the time it can take to build good trusting relationships with informants.

In addition to seeking verbal consent in the first interview, Mable would also call each participant before the second and third interviews to check that they were comfortable to continue to be part of the research, and whether they had any questions about it. All but a small handful of participants had a mobile phone, or access to one through a family member or friend, and Mable would always call them a day or two before the interview to check they were still able to make the interview, and it was at this point that she would also double-check that they were happy to continue being part of the research, and answer any questions they might have.

Recording

Interviews were electronically audio-recorded where possible. With all participants we asked separately for consent for the interview to be recorded, in addition to the consent to be part of the research. With most participants Mable and I had to first explain what the small metal machine was. Some informants thought it was a mobile phone or a camera, and one in particular was concerned that it was a machine that was being brought over from the West to make men homosexual, as he thought had heard something about that on the radio. After explaining that it recorded speech (and speech only, not video or photos), we would tell our informants how it would then be saved on my computer, and that only myself and the transcriber would ever hear the recording. Two informants were happy to take part in the research, but not to be recorded (including Martha, as mentioned above), and so for these interviews hand-written notes were taken only. Neither of these women indicated why they did not give consent for the recording machine to be used, but I was happy that they felt able to say no.

I asked my transcribers to permanently delete all electronic files on their PCs after they had successfully transferred them to me. The transcripts were also saved on my password-protected laptop and back-up drive, again with pseudonyms lists kept separate, and also password-protected. Mable did not have access to the data after the interview.

Gifts and payments

The most common question that Mable received when double-checking informed consent on the telephone before the second interview was that of whether I was able to give the interviewee some financial assistance. At the initial point of asking for informed consent, we explained to interviewees that they would not be paid for participating in the study. Considering my position though, as a European who was able to fly over to Uganda, and employ people (despite being 'only a student'), some informants did, understandably, hope that I could make an exception for them. With all but one informant who pulled out of the study as he insisted that I should pay his rent, all other informants who asked for financial assistance at some point seemed to understand the reasons why I could not make an exception for them and help them with school fees, or capital for their business, for example. However, because my informants were giving so much of their time for the study and also because we were usually being welcomed into people's homes, I felt that small (unexpected) gifts were necessary. In the second and third interviews, therefore, I would take with me a small item for household consumption, something that was usually worth around US\$1, as a thank you gift for the informant for welcoming us into their homes. Mable and I would think about what was an appropriate gift: if the family was particularly food insecure, we would take a kilogram of rice, for example, but often it was sugar, or a bunch of bananas for the family to share.⁸⁴ I felt that a gift rather than direct payment was more appropriate in trying to continue the friendship-like relationship that we had built over the months with my informants. They were not expecting these

⁸⁴ Sugar is an important everyday foodstuff in the culture of eating in Kampala. Many informants would tell me that they would often have only one main meal in the day, around lunch-time, but that their breakfast and dinner would simply consist of tea, and if possible a slice of bread, bun, or a sweet banana. In the culture of Kampala, tea without sugar is a sign of poverty – not only is it considered to be unappetising to the palate, but also not sufficiently filling (I was considered decidedly odd for taking tea without sugar!). If the family has some extra coins then tea will be made with milk and sugar, but usually it is simply made with hot water.

small gifts, so the receiving of them, and then the talking about them, were also useful for the data collection. For example, sometimes interviewees would explain to me that in giving a gift to them I had “planted a seed” that God would multiply and give back to me in greater value, and in other times it prompted a prayer session in which God was thanked for sending the gift through me.

In addition to giving small gifts to the informants in the second and third interviews, I would now and then take a small gift, usually of sweet bananas and bread, to the Bible cell groups. In most sessions, the host of the meeting would provide sweet tea and a few snacks (bread, roasted peanuts, or bananas, for example) at the end of the session, and members would informally converse before breaking to go home. I noticed another member bringing a contribution one time, and so I started to do so myself now and then. Certainly the hosts were happy for a contribution, and it also meant, more selfishly, that time would be made for tea and snacks that evening, and that therefore I would get the chance to informally talk with members of the group before we made our way home.

I also put small amounts of money into the offering baskets in church, not only so I could participate and observe what people did when they gave, but also so that I could greet people I knew when walking back from the offerings basket (which was placed at strategic places around the church) to my seat.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEWS

1. Main group of Pentecostal interviewees

The following table lists the longitudinal interviews held with the core group of interviewees who self-identified as Pentecostals. I have included an approximation of their age at the time I first interviewed them, the church (or cell group attached to the church) in which I first met them, and the dates of the three interviews that we had together. Where an interview was interrupted and we returned another day, I have indicated this with two dates. Where an interviewee attended one of the two churches that formed the physical basis of the study, but I knew that they also regularly attended another church, I have indicated this with 'other' written after either 'Kiweringa Life Fellowship' or 'Alpha Tabernacle'. The interviewees in the table below have been listed in alphabetical order by pseudonym.

Key

AT: Alpha Tabernacle

KLF: Kiweringa Life Fellowship

Name	Gender	Approx. age	Church attended	Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3
Annette	F	66-70	KLF	12/05/09	24/08/09	21/10/09
Ayesha	F	31-35	KLF	01/01/09	30/03/09	14/08/09
Barbara	F	26-30	AT / other	05/01/09	06/03/09	17/08/09
Beatrice	F	21-25	AT / other	16/12/08	05/03/09	10/08/09
Bessie	F	56-60	KLF	07/02/09	01/04/09	27/09/09
Daniel	M	41-45	KLF	01/10/08	08/03/09	01/11/09
Diana	F	26-30	KLF	07/10/08	14/03/09	24/08/09
Douglas	M	16-20	AT	11/12/08	02/04/09	20/08/09
Edith	F	36-40	KLF / other	10/12/08	15/03/09	05/09/09
Edna	F	51-55	AT / other	09/12/08	06/05/09	31/08/09 08/11/09
Edward	M	21-25	AT	15/12/08	28/04/09	29/09/09
Eleanor	F	56-60	KLF / other	22/01/09	25/03/09	14/08/09
Evelyn	F	56-60	AT	12/03/09	02/07/09	17/09/09
Faith	F	61-65	KLF	25/11/08	04/03/09	18/08/09
Fahad	M	31-35	AT	04/12/08	12/05/09	28/10/09
Fiona	F	56-60	AT	20/01/09	26/03/09	08/09/09
George	M	31-35	KLF	02/01/09	16/03/09	18/08/09
Gina	F	21-25	KLF	02/01/09	14/03/09	03/09/09
Godfrey	M	31-35	KLF / other	23/10/09	10/05/09	18/09/09
Iris	F	26-30	KLF / other	26/11/08	05/05/09	26/09/09
Jacob	M	31-35	AT	18/12/08	24/03/09	20/08/09
Jennifer	F	26-30	KLF	12/01/09	29/04/09	25/08/09

Name	Gender	Approx. age	Church attended	Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3
Jonathan	M	26-30	KLF	14/10/09	14/03/09	29/08/09
Jenny	F	71-75	KLF	19/01/09	11/03/09	12/08/09
Judith	F	26-30	KLF	23/01/09	03/04/09	09/10/09
Julianna	F	16-20	AT / other	25/09/08	16/03/09	13/08/09
Luke	M	31-35	AT	02/10/08	09/03/09	10/08/09
Margaret	F	31-35	KLF	17/12/08	03/03/09	11/08/09
Martha	F	61-65	KLF	03/02/09	23/05/09	09/09/09
Matthew	M	21-25	AT	09/10/08	24/03/09	29/10/09
Maureen	F	21-25	KLF/ other	05/12/08	01/04/09	06/09/09
Mavis	F	41-45	KLF	04/01/09	10/03/09	11/08/09
Musa	M	26-30	KLF	05/12/08	04/03/09	02/09/09
Pauline	F	26-30	AT	08/01/09	25/06/09	15/10/09
Phoebe	F	71-75	KLF	28/01/09	07/04/09	07/09/09
Sheilah	F	41-45	KLF	08/05/09	15/09/09	21/10/09
Sylvia	F	31-35	KLF	06/01/09	11/03/09	29/08/09
Vincent	M	26-30	KLF	21/01/09	31/03/09	25/08/09
Yvette	F	60-65	KLF	27/01/09	08/04/09	07/09/09

2. 'Non-Pentecostal' interviewees

These interviews were held with residents of Kiweranga neighbourhood who all initially self-identified as having religious beliefs other than born-again. Where I have stated their religion, this is the initial religion that they self-identified as following / believing in. As identified in this thesis, it transpired that some interviewees had multiple, or fluid, religious identities. Where this is the case, I have indicated this in brackets after the religion they initially self-identified with. Again, interviewees have been listed in alphabetical order by pseudonym.

Name	Gender	Approx. age	Religion	Interview 1	Interview 2
Aaliyah	F	21-26	Muslim	09/07/09	07/10/09
Abraham	M	21-26	Muslim	14/07/09	22/10/09
Audrey	F	31-35	Jehovah's Witness	23/06/09	02/10/09
Dennis	M	21-26	Roman Catholic	14/07/09	13/10/09
Faizah	F	61-65	Muslim	30/06/09	10/10/09
Francis	M	31-35	Roman Catholic(also attended KLF)	13/07/09	10/10/09
Mark	M	31-35	Roman Catholic	17/07/09	16/10/09
Norma	F	26-30	Roman Catholic	05/05/09	07/10/09
Pamela	F	46-50	Anglican (also born-again)	30/06/09	10/10/09
Pascal	M	31-35	Roman Catholic (also attended KLF)	14/07/09	20/10/09

Name	Gender	Approx. age	Religion	Interview 1	Interview 2
Rabiah	F	21-25	Muslim	03/07/09	12/10/09
Sally	F	56-60	Roman Catholic (also born-again)	30/09/09	12/10/09
Stephanie	F	60-65	Anglican	03/07/09	12/10/09

3. Interviews with other Pentecostals

In addition to the main group of Pentecostals and the non-Pentecostals, as outlined above, I also carried out other interviews with members of Kiweranga Life Fellowship and Alpha Tabernacle. These primarily consisted of initial interviews that were arranged with a view to the interviewee becoming part of the longitudinal research, but for various reasons they did not develop into further interview sessions. Nevertheless these interviews did still provide valuable background information about life in Kampala, and being a born-again Christian.

In the following table, I outline the gender, approximate age, home church of the interviewee, and date of interview as in section 1 above, and then also briefly indicate why no further interviews took place with that informant. As above, interviewees have been listed in alphabetical order by pseudonym.

Name	Gender	Approx. age	Church attended	Interview date(s)	Reason for not interviewing again
Benedict	M	31-36	AT	16/12/08 17/09/09	Benedict was wealthy and did not fit the demographic that I was aiming to interview. Nevertheless, we would still meet informally at cell group and continued to have friendly discussions.
Bert	M	31-36	AT	11/10/08 14/05/09	We had two successful interviews but it then became difficult to organise a meeting with Bert again.
Blessing	F	21-25	AT	05/01/09	Blessing was hesitant to talk, despite signing an informed consent form. It was therefore thought that it was not appropriate to interview her again.

Name	Gender	Approx. age	Church attended	Interview date(s)	Reason for not interviewing again
Emily	F	41-45	AT	25/01/09 25/03/09	Emily was a valuable interviewee but unfortunately we were unable to get in touch with her for the third interview.
Fred	M	26-30	AT	26/01/09 26/03/09	Fred was also a valuable interviewee but again we were unable to get in touch with him for the third interview. We heard he had left Kampala
Gideon	M	61-65	KLF	27/01/09	Gideon was a wealthy man, and did not fit the demographic that I was looking for, although we still enjoyed meeting him in church.
Mummy Glenda	F	61-65	KLF	14/01/09	Glenda was hesitant to talk and did not seem comfortable with the interview. We did not interview her again, although as the host of the cell group at Kiweranga Life Fellowship we met her regularly and had a very warm relationship in the cell group.
Jean-Paul	M	41-45	KLF	09/01/09	Jean-Paul had serious mental health problems and it was not appropriate to interview him again.
Jeremy	M	21-25	KLF	18/01/09	We never heard or saw from Jackson again.
Laura	F	41-45	KLF	1/10/08	Laura was hesitant to talk, despite signing informed consent form, and we thought it was not appropriate to interview her again.
Leonard	M	26-30	AT	16/10/08	Leonard was angry on the phone because I did not pay his rent and therefore it was not appropriate to interview him again.

Name	Gender	Approx. age	Church attended	Interview date(s)	Reason for not interviewing again
Mercy	F	56-60	AT	26/01/09	Mercy had mental health problems and was not a reliable interviewee so we did not think it was appropriate to interview her again.
Michelle	M	61-65	KLF	21/10/08	Michelle left Kampala to live with her daughter in western Uganda. She had no mobile phone so we could not do a follow-up chat.
Mrs Wasswa	F	71-75	AT	02/10/08 and 05/03/09	Unfortunately Mrs Wasswa died, although before she did she was a valuable interviewee and friend.
Nick	M	26-30	KLF	12/01/09	Nick went to Iraq as a security guard; some phone and email communication was continued, but not full interviews.
Robert	M	26-30	AT	25/06/09	We could not get in touch with Robert again and later found out that he had been sent to prison.
Stacey	F	41-45	KLF	11/05/09 and 06/10/09	Stacey's narratives were not reliable and I suspected she was suffering from mental health problems. Her behaviour was erratic and slightly threatening. It was felt that it was not appropriate to interview her again.
Solomon	M	41-45	KLF	03/05/09 and 23/08/09	We were unable to get in touch with Solomon for the third interview, although the first and second were fruitful.
Sylvester	M	36-40	KLF	14/03/09	Although we thought the first interview went well, Sylvester did not want to be interviewed again.
Tessa	F	21-26	KLF	01/10/09	Tessa is a great friend, and was my laundry lady in Kampala. I interviewed her once as I was interested in sitting down for a longer chat and hearing more about her life story.

APPENDIX C: CHURCH SERVICES

The following is a list of church sermons and other church events that I attended over the course of the research.

1. Alpha Tabernacle

Sunday services

28th September 2008
5th October 2008
19th October 2008
23rd November 2008
11th January 2009
25th January 2009
15th February 2009
22nd March 2009
5th April 2009
4th July 2009
9th August 2009
20th August 2009
11th October 2009
25th October 2009

Lunch-hour fellowships (in the city centre)

Monday 22nd September 2008
Tuesday 23rd September 2008
Thursday 16th October 2008
Friday 17th October 2008
Thursday 20th November 2008
Monday 8th December 2008
Tuesday 9th December 2008
Friday 3rd October 2009
Tuesday 13th October 2009
Wednesday 14th October 2009

Mid-week evening services (in church)

Thursday 25th September 2008
Thursday 2nd October 2008
Thursday 5th February 2009

Other events (in church)

'Mary and Mother' Day, 9th October 2008
Youth Conference evening, 24th October 2008
Overnight service, Friday 12th December 2008
New Year's Eve overnight service, 31st December 2008
'Women's Empowerment' service 6th July 2009
'Women's Day' service, 9th October 2009 (Ugandan Independence Day)
Evening Deliverance service, 11th November 2009

Thursday evening cell groups (at the private home of the cell group host)

18th September 2008
15th October 2008
20th November 2008
4th December 2008
11th December 2008
11th March 2009
2nd April 2009
7th May 2009
16th July 2009
23rd July 2009
6th August 2009
17th September 2009
29th October 2009
19th November 2009

2. Kiweranga Life Fellowship

Sunday services

28th September 2008
12th October 2008
21st December 2008
4th January 2009
18th January 2009
1st February 2009
8th February 2009
8th March 2009
12th April 2009
10th May 2009
21st June 2009
12th July 2009
16th August 2009
27th September 2009
1st November 2009

Lunch-hour fellowships (in church)

Friday 10th October 2008
Monday 20th October 2008
Tuesday 21st October 2008
Thursday 23rd October 2008
Friday 21st November 2008
Tuesday 25th November 2008
Wednesday 26th November 2008
Tuesday 23rd December 2008
Friday 9th January 2009
Thursday 22nd January 2009
Friday 23rd January 2009
Tuesday 27th January 2009
Wednesday 28th January 2009
Tuesday 3rd February 2009
Friday 13th February 2009

Tuesday 3rd March 2009
Monday 23rd March 2009
Tuesday 7th April 2009
Tuesday 12th May 2009
Friday 13th July 2009
Monday 14th September 2009
Tuesday 13th October 2009 (not transcribed)

Mid-week evening services (in church)

Tuesday 30th September 2008
Tuesday 6th January 2009
Thursday 29th January 2009
Tuesday 23rd June 2008
Tuesday 28th July 2008
Tuesday 15th September 2009

Other events (in church)

Conference evening event, Friday 5th December 2008
Conference evening event, Sunday 7th December 2008
Conference afternoon service, Wednesday 10th December 2008
Christmas day service, Thursday 25th December 2008

Wednesday evening cell groups (at the private home of the cell group host)

24th September 2008
8th October 2008
22nd October 2008
11th February 2009
4th March 2009
8th April 2009
15th April 2009
29th July 2009
5th August 2009
20th August 2009

3. Other Pentecostal services attended in Kampala

Mutundwe deliverance church, 29th September 2008 and 10th July 2009.

American Evangelist Joyce Meyer at Namboole Stadium, Kampala (organised by Watoto/Kampala Pentecostal Church), 19th October 2008.

'Girl Power' event at Rubaga Miracle Centre, 14th December 2009.

Kiweranga Evangelical Church, Sunday 28th June 2009.

World Deliverance Ministries, Sunday 19th July 2009.

Pastor Jamada's lunch hour service, 21st July 2009.

Anointed Church of Jesus Christ, Sunday 18th October 2009.

APPENDIX D: GLOSSARY

Boys' Quarters (n.)	Single-room homes built within a residential compound for servants to live in.
Buganda (n.)	Area of central Uganda which has been historically populated by the Baganda people, and which includes the city of Kampala within its boundaries.
Gomesi (n.)	Traditional dress of central Uganda for women, worn at many ceremonial occasions.
Gonja (n.)	Barbecued plantain, a popular street-side snack.
Kabaka (n.)	Title referring to the King of the Buganda Kingdom.
Lubale (n.)	Buganda deities
Matooke (n.)	A type of savoury banana, and a staple food of central Uganda
Mulokole (n., pl. balokole)	'A saved one' – used to refer to a member of the <i>balokole</i> movement within the Anglican Church of Uganda, or to a born-again person more generally
Mumbwa (n.)	A particular fetiche used in local witchcraft made with clay and certain local herbs.
Muzigo (n.)	One-roomed home typically found in poorer areas of Kampala
Muzungu (n., pl. bazungu)	White person, or foreigner
Savedee (n.)	Ugandan English for 'saved person'
Shamba boy (n.)	Male servant who works as a gardener or groundsman (from the Swahili for plantation or cultivated piece of land).
Shilling (n.)	Currency of Uganda
Sigiri (n.)	Small clay stove for cooking with charcoal
Ssenga (n.)	Female herbalist, sometimes specialising in dealing with issues of sex.
Taxi (n.)	Public minibus

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