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**At the Edge of Faith: An Ethnographic Study of British  
Pentecostalism.**

**Helen Cookson**

Submitted for the degree of Doctorate of Philosophy

Department of Anthropology

University of Durham

2008

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# **At the Edge of Faith: An Ethnographic Study of British Pentecostalism.**

## **Abstract**

This thesis is an ethnographic account of four Elim Pentecostalist congregations in the North East of England. It is one of the very few studies of white British Pentecostal congregations and is part of the growing literature on congregational, denominational and Pentecostal studies. The study is also a growing part of 'anthropology of Britain' and more generally the anthropology of religion. The thesis foregrounds the words of participants who articulate their faith and reflects Pentecostal spirituality in the twenty-first century.

'At the Edge of Faith' is a title which considers the sociality of Elim Pentecostals. The thesis illustrates the ways in which Pentecostals view their 'faith' and distinguish themselves from other social groups. It is also an account of the articulation by Pentecostals of their faith and the future direction the Elim movement may take. The thesis presents an analysis of several key issues: time, boundaries, embodiment, risk and salvation, organisational theory and 'belonging'. These topics emerged as centrally important in the co-construction of Pentecostal identity.

Much of the thesis involves the 'emic' and 'etic' analysis of discourse presented by research participants during interviews. A range of social scientific methods were used in collecting data on these congregations -- participant observation, interviews, sermon analysis, surveys, photographs and the collection of Elim literature. The research was carried out with the full knowledge of the Pastors and members of the four congregations, who allowed extremely good access to all areas of their religious lives. To ensure ethical conduct and to preserve the integrity of the research, interview informants were provided with transcripts of their interviews and allowed to make minor changes to their transcripts if they so wished; however, changes were not commonly made.

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## **Declaration**

No material from this thesis has been previously submitted for a degree at this University or any other institution.

## **Statement of Copyright**

The copyright of this thesis rests with the author. No quotation from it should be published in any format, including electronic and the Internet, without the author's prior written consent. All information derived from this thesis must be acknowledged appropriately.

The length of this thesis is 99,076 words.

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## Chapter One

# Introduction

### Introduction

Pentecostal churches -- I mean they're so broad. You can have a bag of one sort of crisps and a bag of another sort crisps and they can be so similar and yet very different and the same is true of Pentecostal churches -- they're essentially the same thing but they can be very different. (Pastor Benjamin, Castletown).

This ethnography focuses on four Elim Pentecostal congregations in the North East of England, featuring their collective identities as Elim churches, and, also their individual and therefore unique attributes. Ethnography is the writing of a non-fictional description of the social life of real people; this is what social anthropology is primarily about. In this thesis, the words of the 'real people' who comprise the congregations of the four featured Elim churches -- Castletown, Redland, Sandysore and Riverside, are foregrounded. Throughout this thesis their stories and experiences, as told by congregants themselves, are given priority. Substantial extracts from congregants (including leaders within the churches) are interwoven to construct the fabric of this thesis. It is their individual lives which interlink with the collective body, the rest of the congregation, to form congregational narratives (Hopewell 1988, Collins 2004) and highlight their individuality and also their sameness. This is particularly noticeable in their manipulation of social boundaries within the world they situated in today, in the present time, and in particular the ways in which they represent their sense of difference or similarities.

The two main theoretical themes for my study are the topics of time and temporality: Gell (1992), Bash (2000), James and Mills (eds) (2005), Leach (1971) and boundaries in relation to social organisation as understood through the work of Barth ((ed) 2000, 1969, 1966), Cohen (2000, (ed) 1987, 1986, 1985) and others. Originally my intention was to focus solely on boundaries, however, after further consideration the theme of time shone through as a topic which is very important to the faith and practice of Pentecostals. They,

as a group, are continually looking forwards and backwards through time and situate themselves in the here and now, the present. However, Pentecostals, I discovered, also look forward to the time of the Second Coming of Christ, look backwards in time to the biblical age and other parts of Christian history yet they live in the present, in the twenty-first century and as such they make earthly plans to increase their numbers with evangelistic ministry and to be, as they would say, lights to the world today. As congregational groups they are grounded in this age but their hopes for the future of this world and the time after their deaths and as a result eras, places and events which are unseen, like heaven and hell, the end times and the final judgement underlie all they stand for as Christians and are regularly discussed in Pentecostal circles. The topic of boundaries was selected as a theme since I chose to follow a structuralist line of thinking. The Elim congregations all use binary oppositions -- Saints and Sinners, the lost and the found, the saved and the unsaved, to produce categories and define social boundaries. Discovering which people, objects and social influences are placed at the edges of a boundary is most informative in discovering the function and purpose of the boundary; for example, if the category of gender was to be considered people can be categorised as male or female, however, an hermaphrodite (or transvestite, homosexual or trans-gendered person) does not fall naturally into either category and hence probably perceived as neither fully male nor female; instead, the gender of an hermaphrodite is on the edge of the boundary which defines male and female.

All anthropological works on boundaries and ethnicity refer back to Barth's influential 1969 essay 'Ethnic Groups and Boundaries', around which the discussion of anthropological boundaries first began.<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that both Barth (2000) and Cohen (ed. 2000) emphasise that boundaries can mean different things to different people even when the same boundary is being discussed. I am aware that when considering boundaries there is a danger that all aspects of difference in congregations may become viewed as acts of boundary construction and maintenance rather than some other factor which makes them distinct. If the concept of boundary becomes an element ever-present in Pentecostal life then the concept becomes an idea that explains little.

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<sup>1</sup> I am using the term 'ethnic group' (and 'ethnicity') to refer to people who live in the same environment and share 'similar' cultural experiences, genealogy or ancestry. It can also relate to people who have shared cultural, linguistic or religious characteristics. Later on in the thesis the individual accounts of specific cultural differences between members will be accounted for.

Congregational narratives are never static but constantly evolve and develop over time in accordance with the environment in which they function. The past heritage of the North East for coal mining and heavy industry is an integral part in congregational narratives, although these can be interpreted by congregants in different ways in twenty-first century Britain, so the influence of this within Elim is also considered. The region of the North East is, relatively speaking, ethnically homogeneous (98% white), yet Pentecostalism is often associated with ‘black charismatic’ gospel worship.<sup>2</sup> The churches featured here, although incorporating black and Asian Christians, are all ethnically predominantly white. The ethnic make-up of these congregations is changing over time, just as the North East region is, more generally, becoming more ethnically diverse so too are Elim churches. Another aspect which varies is the population of the church -- congregants and pastors alike join and leave the church/area over time, and, so these changes are a feature of the social structure of congregational life. What are not pre-set features are coincidences -- Elim Pentecostalists often believe that God purposely places specific people and resources at their disposal, as part of His greater plan. This is a viewpoint which non-Christians do not necessarily hold and may consider these occurrences to be coincidences. These coincidences (although never considered as coincidences but acts of God by congregations) are a feature which binds Pentecostalists together as they all wish to fulfil God’s plans.

### **Structure of the Thesis**

This thesis is divided into eight chapters. In the present chapter I attempt to situate the four congregations in their socio-cultural and primarily Christian context. I present a brief introduction to Elim before considering the broad characteristics of each of the congregations in terms of history, location and demography. The importance of place, that is, the location of all congregations in the North East, emerged from frequent references made to local places and from jokes told about the local football teams of Castletown United and Redland A.F.C.

Chapter two outlines the social scientific methods used to collect data, including the failed use of journals for collecting data within these congregations. This latter experience did not

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<sup>2</sup> The ethnicity of the North East is currently 98% white. The largest ethnic group is Asian/Asian British which makes up 73% of the other 2% of minority ethnic groups. Figures for all other ethnic groups, including Black/Black British, Chinese and Mixed, are under 1% each and cannot be accurately estimated. This information is taken from [www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/census2001.asp](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/census2001.asp) on the 30th November 2006.

affect the study adversely as I was given complete access to all aspects of the religious lives of the congregants. The ethical guidelines set out by the University Ethics Committee were adhered to throughout this research; informants were provided with their interview transcripts which they were able to alter if they so wished but changes were not generally made. This ethnography incorporates and showcases the voices of a wide range of people, though there were those with whom I could not speak directly, most significantly, with children. I have tried to access young people through direct observation, speaking to parents and youth workers and by drawing upon the experiences of those who have grown up in the church.

In chapter three I deal with the organisation of Elim and its structure, with particular attention paid to the fact that congregations are voluntary organisations which people choose to attend, and the characteristics imposed by this form of organisation. It contains information on the structure of the Elim Movement at international, national, regional and grassroots levels. An important discovery related to the existence of not one but two types of Elim Church -- Elim Church Incorporated (ECI) churches and Elim Foursquare Gospel Alliance (EFGA) churches. This study provides ethnographic data on both types; three are EFGA churches -- Castletown, Sandysore and Redland and one is an ECI church: Riverside. The ECI comprises churches which were set up, predominantly, as new churches both in the UK and elsewhere. Although they are part of the umbrella of Elim ECI member churches do not pay tithes to Elim whereas EFGA churches do. Interestingly, the Elim national leadership team on the main positions of General Superintendent and Regional Superintendents are all men. I discuss this gendered aspect of local and national Elim organisation in some depth.

Chapter four focuses on the concepts of risk and salvation, with particular reference to the Pentecostal mission to prevent non-believers going to hell by spreading the gospel message of salvation to all people -- and in particular friends, family and work colleagues. The need for salvation was a common theme of sermons and church services generally featured individual testimonies. All four congregations also had a time when there was an 'altar call' when non-believers were invited to give their lives to Jesus and repent of their sins. The notion of 'backsliding' for believers -- from being part of the saved to being part of the unsaved -- was common. Here, sin played a major role in their thinking and highlighted the

dangers of 'backsliding.' At any time, I suggest, the saved must be aware that they should commit themselves to God at regular intervals and continue to grow spiritually to prevent 'backsliding.' I also found that congregants dwelt at length on their perception of Satan -- as a bringer of misfortune, and embodiment of one part of the binary opposition: good/evil. Satan and God were often mentioned together; as some might expect, Satan stands, ideologically, for 'evil' and is represented as a figure that should not, on any account be trusted, whereas God is considered as entirely 'good'. These two characters set the perimeters of the extremes of the boundary between what is considered 'good' and 'evil'.

Chapter five focuses on denominational adaptations, the idea of selfhood, identity and belonging. I consider the perceived need of people to belong and to feel part of their congregation. Activities within individual churches which encourage a sense of 'belonging' in participants are considered, including the roles which individuals choose to take on and the function of House Groups which consist of roughly ten people and meet for a couple of hours during the week. I consider the organisation of Elim's involvement as a movement in politics and the debate between science and evolution is considered. Elim as an organisation is engaging in the mainstream debate which is putting forward the case for intelligent design versus the scientific theory of evolution. This issue is regularly covered in *Directions*, the official magazine of Elim, in which leading figures in the intelligent design camp include the Americans, Professor Phillip Johnson and Dr Andrew Snelling. Here the global reach of the Elim movement can be seen.

Chapter six deals with the treatment of the body, by pentecostalists, as a moral vessel. I describe and discuss the ways in which Pentecostalists view their own bodies as a gift provided by God. Pentecostal attitudes to sin in relation to the teachings of St Paul who distinguishes between the 'soma' (body) and the 'sarx' (flesh). The 'body' is considered to be neutral whereas the 'flesh' is negative. I consider the work of Csordas (1999, 2002) on embodiment in considering how we, as human beings, are agents who experience and interact with the social world around us. Pentecostalists believe that part of their embodiment is characterised by the presence of the Holy Spirit, and should reflect this to others through their everyday lives via their words, action and choice. One of the key features which this chapter deals with in more depth is the binary opposition freedom/constraint, often termed structure/agency in anthropological circles. I discuss how

Pentecostals frequently refer to themselves as people who are liberated and free from the world yet choose to be restrained in their behaviour. The responsibility of Christian parents to socialise their young into being moral beings who will continue on their faith into the next generation. The section concludes with a discussion of 'death', the final destination of the earthly body. I agree that Pentecostals, like all Christians, have transformed death from being 'the end' into the 'beginning' of a life with God in heaven.

Chapter seven is on ritual. Ritual is an important facet of Pentecostal faith and practice I consider two types of rituals; the first is life-cycle rituals or 'rituals of transition' and the second is repeating rituals. Life-cycle rituals are those rituals which occur only once in life, for example, childhood, adolescence and adulthood. In contrast repeating rituals occur regularly, such as Easter, Christmas and New Year. In this chapter I also take account of specific Christian and Pentecostal rituals, such as the taking of the bread and the wine and Sunday worship. I also outline ritual acts which are important to Pentecostals and some other Christians such as dedication, conversion and baptism. I account what happens in Sunday worship in Elim churches and the key details of the ritual events of Christmas and Easter. I outline Pentecostal use of the gifts of the Spirit, speaking in tongues and their interpretation and use of Prophecy. In particular I discuss the Christian belief of the Second Coming and how Pentecostals interpret prophetic signs. These signs I discover can be taken from biblical prophecies and are interpreted in light of modern events.

The thesis is brought to a close with Chapter eight. The Conclusion summarises the main findings of this ethnography, the changes I would make in doing the study again and finally a discussion of the future direction that research among Elim Pentecostals might take.

### **Putting Pentecostals in Their Place: The Academic Context of the Thesis**

The ethnographic work I have undertaken with Elim Pentecostals fits primarily within the field of congregational studies and specifically within the study of Pentecostalism. The study of congregations has a multi-disciplinary framework which includes the work of anthropologists, organization theorists, theologians and sociologists. Each of these groups brings a different perspective to the study of congregations and often cross the boundary from one discipline to another. Sociologists are often attracted to the influence of secularisation in society particularly in relation to religion (Martin 2005, 1978, Chambers

2005, Bruce 2002, Norman 2002, Brown 2000) and organization theorists too (Morgan 1997, Druker 1993). Theologians are attracted to aspects of belief, congregational narratives and styles of worship in congregations (Hopewell 1988). Anthropologists take a rather holistic approach to the study of congregations through which all aspects of congregational life are valued (Coleman 2000, Stringer 1999, Toulis 1997). This often means that ethnographic studies are often more ad hoc in nature than seamless 'commentaries of agreement' between researcher and research participants. Research with British Elim Pentecostal congregations is a largely untapped area -- apart from Kay (2000) which reports relatively limited research with Pentecostal ministers.

Research carried out within religious congregations and, in particular, Charismatic or Evangelicals, is often undertaken by adherents of the faith (Kay 2000). Studies undertaken by non-adherents have often noted proselytising attempts by members in an expectation that the uninitiated will eventually join the faith. Voiced expectations that I would join the faith were rare and often extremely subtle with unobtrusive comments like 'I pray that one day you will be in the kingdom' or 'One day I hope you will come to know God.' These were often said out of their individual hope that I might find the salvation which they so enjoy. It was only on very rare occasions that a member would take the opportunity to evangelise and question my lack of faith. On the whole, members and especially the Pastors were very aware and comfortable with my role as a non-Christian observer. During fieldwork my experience was similar to Coleman's (2000:10-12) in that I was provided with an identity and reason to be there by others:

...I found people to be readily accepting of my presence. Some simply assumed that I was a Pentecostalist myself, while others, who asked me about my own beliefs, took me for what I was, a sympathetic outsider...While a number of people tried to convert me or assumed that the real reason I was there was because God had led me to the group in practice my beliefs were rarely questioned since I became merely one more semi-familiar face at services.

Coleman found that Pentecostalists in Sweden provided him with a role, assuming him to be either a practising Pentecostal or, for those who did ask, an interested onlooker. Another explanation for his presence was the prospect that Coleman has been led to them by God.

Finally, after a period of time spent with the group Coleman notes that he gained a measure of acceptance, becoming a familiar face at services (2000:12).

This ethnography is about Elim Pentecostals at the beginning of the twenty-first century, specifically those living in the North East of England between January 2003 and September 2005. On leaving the field I realised that what I was about to write would soon become outdated -- further work is always needed to keep up with how any social group changes and what it is 'about' at any one time -- an ethnography can never be as dynamic as the social interaction it attempts to describe and analyse.

### **Time and Temporality**

These terms have a multitude of meanings; they can refer to millennia or minutes, to the past, present and future, to a particular occasion or period of time in history. Chronological time can be both linear and also circular. Gell (1992) outlines the work of McTaggart who suggests that there are two types of time -- A and B time. A-time is categorised as being an event in the past, present or future, whereas B-time is purely chronological. A-time allows for events to 'move' from one category to another; an event might be seen to 'move' from the future to the present and then to the past. In A-time an event, such as a university graduation can be a future event prior to the ceremony, a present event on the day, and finally a past event after the day. In contrast B-time denotes that the order in which events occur is in relation to a fixed point, either being 'before or after' that fixed point. In B-time events exist in a permanent order; for example, the graduation previously examined will always be taken to be on the fixed date of (for example) June 26<sup>th</sup> 2006, with any considerations of 'before' or 'after' revolving solely around that date as opposed to any particular agent's position in time relative to any that event.

Although McTaggart's theory of time is useful in establishing that there is more than one definition (and thus perception) of time, I have decided to use the more graphic concepts of *circular* and *linear* time in relation to Pentecostals' understandings of their 'place' and 'faith' in time. The terms circular and linear time are concepts which Pentecostals use and are often used in services. Linear time can be considered as a time line of set dates that never repeat. Pentecostals consider this type of time, for example, as a development of their faith -- believers are continually moving forward in their faith and cannot return to the past. Circular time, in contrast, is the notion that certain elements associated with the past are repeated in the future. Circular time for Pentecostals is the



notion that events that are repeated, such as times of renewal and revival like that of the Riverside 'falling of the Spirit' in 1907. This event is considered to be like the time of the 1904-1906 Welsh Revival or the falling of the Spirit in Los Angeles in 1906 and, today, the Toronto Blessing is related to these times.<sup>3</sup>

One of the most suggestive pieces I have read on time is by Leach (1971). Leach emphasises how the English word time has a multitude of meanings. Other languages such as Kachin, (North Burma) have no single word equivalent for time; instead, the Kachin word used is dependant on the individual case. Leach (1971:195) asks:

How do we come up with such a verbal category as time at all? How does it link up with our everyday experiences?

Time, as a verbal category, is used by humanity to express 'our' social experiences, an understanding of time which I believe Leach is correct in expressing. It is easy enough for us to see that the seasons are cyclical and also that changes in life are inevitable. This last point, perhaps, comes out more clearly in work on rites of passage in which life is seen as a progression of transformations and adjustments marked by changes in social status, such as marriage. As time progresses we age from the moment of birth to death. Leach (1971:125) goes further and makes the interesting point that:

It seems to me that *if it were not for religion* we should not attempt to embrace the two aspects of time under one category at all. Repetitive and non-repetitive events are not, after all, logically the same. We treat them both as aspects of 'one thing', *time*, not because it is rational to do so but because of religious prejudice. (*My italics*).

These two aspects of time, the circular and linear, are each commonly used by Elim Pentecostals since both concepts are part of ordinary everyday language when speaking about time in the UK. Elim Pentecostalists also speak of time sociologically and

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<sup>3</sup> The Toronto Blessing was a phrase coined by the British press to describe 'ecstatic' Christian occurrences of 'spiritual blessings' and the gifts of the Spirit, for example, glossolalia, at Toronto Airport in January 1992. Other For more information on the Toronto Blessing see Poloma (2003), Hilborn (ed) (2001), Pietersen (ed) (1998), Mitton (1995).

theologically for the past, present and future. Pentecostals speak of time sociologically by including their own social experiences as religious believers. These modern day experiences include accepting people who are in other circumstances excused -- such as unmarried mothers, into their congregations, using modern resources such as technology, the providing of modern facilities and planning for their church's earthly future by, for example, expanding their buildings. In contrast, time is considered theologically because the Bible for Pentecostals is often interpreted fundamentally -- as demonstrated through Elim's stance that the world was created in six days as Genesis says and also Elim's theological stance against practising homosexuality.

Although the main focus of this thesis is ethnography rather than history, ethnographers, anthropologists and other social scientists often include the 'historical past' in their work. Each uses the concept of historical time in relation to its function in the present. In this section I will be providing a brief history of Pentecostalism, religion in Britain and also world wide to provide a context for roots of the Elim Movement. James (1998) considers that the anthropologist, Mauss, uses historical information in conjunction with how it is used by the contemporary society being studied. Radcliffe-Brown (1952) and Evans-Pritchard (1950) came to reject an evolutionary perspective that societies could be understood without reference to their historical past. Historical time is not discussed by Gell (1992).<sup>4</sup> I am taking the 'historical past', in this section, to mark out key events which happened in history, as Levi-Strauss (1966:258) says: '...there is no history without dates.' Rather, I provide a brief outline of the history of Pentecostalism and religion in Britain and worldwide, primarily to support the ethnographic focus of this thesis. My aim in this ethnography is to inform the reader of the present day practices, opinions and formations of these four Pentecostal congregations, in the form of a collection of narratives from a specific time and place in history. I will begin by locating them as Elim Pentecostal congregations within the broader context of Christianity.

### **A Christian Context**

Christianity began as a Jewish sect with the main premise 'that God came to Earth as a man, to pay the necessary sacrifice for the sins of mankind, so that God and man might be reconciled' (Barrett 2001:115). The Christian movement grew due to the evangelism of its

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<sup>4</sup> James and Mills (eds) (2005:1-14).

followers and a prominent follower, St Paul, who taught that Jesus was the Christ, the long awaited Jewish messiah. The writing of the gospels and missionary activities of early Christians to both Jews and Gentiles enabled the religion to spread. Today Christianity is an established world religion, of which Elim Pentecostalism is a branch. Pentecostalism in Britain and Ireland is split into four main branches: Assemblies of God (AOG), Elim Pentecostal Church (EPC), New Testament Church of God (CG) and Apostolic Church (AC). These churches are traditionally known as classical Pentecostals. The number of churches and ministers for these congregations in Britain and Ireland according to the International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements (2003:43) for Assemblies of God is over 670 congregations with over 900 ordained ministers, for Elim over 580 churches and over 600 ministers, for New Testament Church of God over 100 churches and over 250 ministers and is mainly made up of Afro-Caribbeans, finally the Apostolic Church has over 115 congregations and 76 pastors and workers. In the 1950s and 1960s another branch of Pentecostalism shot up in Britain called the House Church Movement. These House Churches, according to Walker (1998), were tremendously influential until the late 1980s but are now in decline. It is likely that most House Church members have returned to classical Pentecostal churches and other charismatic movements. A number of valuable studies are presented within this thesis from multi-sited ethnographies, such as Martin Stringer's (1999), in which four Manchester congregations featured in a multi-denominational ethnography, to single group ethnographies, such as Matthew Guest's (2002) work with an evangelical church in York. British Pentecostals are also part of the wider ecumenical community so studies are included from outside the UK, including those by Martin (2002), Coleman (2000) and Cox (1996) each dealing with some aspect of the globalization of Pentecostalism.

### **British Pentecostal Studies**

A pioneering study of British Pentecostals was made by Calley (1965) who worked with 1960s immigrant West Indian Pentecostals in Britain. Calley (1965:2) provides important comparisons between native English Pentecostal churches and West Indian congregations, as well as facilitating historical comparison. Calley notes that glossolalia (Speaking with Tongues) and other experiences of the Holy Spirit were not widespread except in Pentecostal churches and describes West Indian Pentecostals as being viewed by others as 'eccentric'. He also interestingly refers to these Pentecostal churches as 'sects'. Today,

Pentecostal groups are not considered to be 'sects' and are rarely represented as 'eccentrics' within Christianity. This is due mainly to the rise of the charismatic movement. In all denominations, people have become more aware of the use of gifts of the spirit. Consequently, today there are Catholic Charismatics, Anglican Charismatics and various others that use these gifts.<sup>5</sup> This is a point noted by Coleman (2000:22) who says:

Particularly for the 1950s and 1960s, charismatic forms have grown within more established denominations, sometimes in previously non-charismatic contexts, sometimes even in Catholic churches.

A recent study of British Pentecostals has been published by Toulis (1997). Toulis, an anthropologist, provides an ethnographic study of contemporary British Pentecostals in Birmingham. Her study focused purely on first generation Black Afro-Caribbeans, predominately women, who have migrated to Britain. Due to the church population being mainly female Toulis examined only women's constructed identities, expressed through the medium of Black Gospel Pentecostalism.<sup>6</sup> Toulis noted that they frequently use kinship terms and specifically kinship language, such as 'brother' and 'sister' in reference to one another, as the early Christians did on the New Testament. The term 'son' and 'father' are also commonly used by Christians as specific titles to distinguish between the different aspects of the Trinity, for example, in expressions such as 'God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit'. The context of the use of kinship terms indicates how the terminology is being used and today Pentecostals use the terms 'brother' and 'sister' in greetings to one another which is usually accompanied with a hand shake or a hug. The use of kinship terms by Pentecostals as common greetings to each other is reaffirmed in my own research as Elim Pentecostals commonly use the term 'brother' and 'sister' as a greeting when referring to each other. The kinship term 'son' is sung at times just after the taking of the bread and wine in which the words '*Now I am your son I am adopted in your family*' are repeated. The word 'son' on this occasion is specifically non-gendered and at times is replaced by 'child' to emphasise that all people are part of the family of God. Toulis notes the use of the term 'saint' to refer to believers; this was something that Calley

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<sup>5</sup> For more information on different Charismatic groups see Burgess, Stanley and Van Der Maas (eds) (2003).

<sup>6</sup> Toulis (1997:25): '...estimates suggest that over two thirds of African Caribbean church membership is female...'

(1965) found to be present in Britain with West Indian Pentecostals in the 1960s. 'Saints' was a term I found still to be used by Elim Pentecostals today but was less commonly used than 'brother' or 'sister'.

Toulis' study is particularly helpful to my work as it is a specific ethnography of a British Pentecostal group which incorporates the use of social scientific methods with regard to ethnic identity within Pentecostalism. Her work is extremely useful when considering the multitude of ethnic groups present within Elim and also within the North East. Toulis comments (1997:167-168):

In the different multi-cultural context of Britain, the emphasis of African-Caribbean Pentecostalism may not necessarily be weighed towards ethnic and racial expression. Any assumption that Pentecostalism is ethnic expression ignores the gains made from the analysis of conversion and Pentecostal participation; the transformation of the individual with received categorical identities to an individual with a self-ascribed and self-achieved identity as a Christian.

Toulis' comment that within the multicultural context of Britain ethnic identity as 'ethnic or racial expression' should not be assumed to be something specifically embodied within Pentecostalism. Her findings with regard to my research meant that I considered the background of the informants, including ethnic identity, to the experiences of the convert. Toulis' work is extremely useful as a specific ethnographic study on British Afro-Caribbean Pentecostals and contrasts well with the British Elim Pentecostalism studied in this work.

### **Elim Pentecostals**

The four groups I have worked with are all part of the Christian denomination of Elim Pentecostalism. Elim is a denomination of Pentecostalism native to Britain. The Elim movement was first formed by George and Stephen Jeffreys in 1915 in Belfast, Northern Ireland, following their conversion to Pentecostalism during the Welsh revival in 1904 (Kay 2000). The first Elim Pentecostal church opened in Belfast, after which the denomination spread across the rest of the UK. The name 'Elim' is taken from Exodus 15:27 as the place the Israelites were led into by Moses after being cast out of Egypt. Elim

is one of the four main Pentecostal denominations in Britain and is the second largest Pentecostal denomination in Britain, the largest being the Assemblies of God (AOG). The Elim movement has nearly 9000 churches worldwide, with over 500 of them in Britain (Kay 2000:21). A specific study of Elim Pentecostals has been produced by Kay on Elim Pentecostal ministers. Kay surveyed a large number of Pentecostal leaders and his work is currently the most valuable study I have found specifically about Elim Pentecostal leaders. Kay was able to gain good access to Pentecostal ministers in his role as an Elim Pentecostal minister and a notable British academic. One of the areas that Kay does not discuss and which I will address briefly in this thesis is the role of female leaders in the church. These women comprise a category about which there are very limited resources yet I believe they are an important factor within churches. Kay writes that 'most Pentecostal ministers are married' (2000:203) and that '10% of Pentecostal ministers are in danger of burn out' (2000:298). This suggests that the wives play an important part in supporting the ministers, thus, their role and the role of women may be of interest to study in itself (see chapter 3).

### **Pentecostalism and Religion in Britain**

Much work has been produced on the history of Pentecostalism and Pentecostal faith.<sup>7</sup> Most modern Pentecostals are concerned with the present and what the movement means to them right now. Most are not much concerned about the early history of British Pentecostalism -- which does not in any case have a clear start date. However, the 30th September 1907 (Confidences -- November 1912:260) is often referred to as important to British Pentecostals as the day the 'Spirit first fell' in Riverside, Redland. Lack of knowledge about Pentecostal history is clear in the responses of informants. Lily, a typical research participant, says:

Well it's not important to me; it's what it is today that's important.

A similar response came from Martha when I asked 'Could you tell me about church history, either the history of Elim or the history of the church?' Her reply was:

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<sup>7</sup> For Further information on Pentecostalism more generally and its history see Anderson (2004), Burgess, Stanley and Van Der Maas (eds) (2003), Jacobsen (2003), Wacker (2003), Land (2001), Anderson and Hollenwegger (1999), Randell (1999), Warrington (ed) (1998), Hollenwegger (1997), Hocken (1997), Cox (1996), Surrmond (1994).

I don't know if I could. I don't know much about Elim churches because this is the first Elim church that I've been to and we've been here for two and a half years and I kind of know bits and pieces but it's quite fragmented. I don't think that I could really. Is that okay?

Martha did not know a lot about Elim churches and had been in the church for two and a half years. Her fragmented answer suggests that she is not the most comfortable with not knowing but is not alone in her answer. Martha and Lily's lack of knowledge of history suggests they are most concerned with the here and now. In order to contextualise the significant history of Pentecostal religion for the reader a brief outline of American Pentecostalism, British Pentecostalism, religious climate of Britain, Elim and, finally, the rise of the Charismatic Movement and House Churches is provided next along with some of the anthropological literature available on these movements.

### **Pentecostalism as a Global Movement**

Traditionally, Pentecostalism is considered originally to be an American movement which began in Azusa Street, Los Angeles in 1906. Cox (1996:45) describes the beginnings of the American movement which has influenced British Pentecostalism as follows:

April 9, 1906 fire came down on a small band of Black domestic servants and custodial employees gathered for prayer in a wooden bungalow at 214 North Bonnie Brae Avenue in Los Angeles. The leader was a self-educated travelling preacher named William Joseph Seymour. He taught that if they prayed hard enough the spirit would come like at Pentecost 'this latter-day outpouring of the spirit would be demonstrated with tongues of flame, healing, speaking in tongues and other signs and wonders'.

The happening in Los Angeles among black migrant Americans but is a movement which encompasses all races (Anderson 2004). The 1906 manifestations at Azusa Street are what Pentecostal Christians would call 'being moved by the Spirit' which effectively means that

these people felt God was present in this place. These manifestations of the Spirit are what the Pentecostal movement is most renowned for and serve as modern embodiments of the happenings of Acts 2. The formation of the Pentecostal Movement in America was led by Charles Parham (previously a Methodist minister) and William Seymour, both of whom contributed theologically and aided the spread of Pentecostalism via mission and Seymour's publishing of a periodical *The Apostolic Faith* (Hollenwegger 1997). The American movement was able to really take hold with the flamboyant preaching of Aimee Semple McPherson and the missionary activities of African American, Lucy Farrow. The 1906 Azusa Street occurrences, according to Anderson, were not the first manifestations of the Spirit, although they lasted the longest (roughly 3 years). Instead Anderson cites earlier independent occurrences of manifestations of the Spirit in Pyongyang, Korea, Pune, India (1905) and Wakkerstroom, South Africa. Manifestations of the spirit are also confirmed prior to 1906 (Burgess 2003:887) at Topeka, Kansas (1901) and Fardo-Moorhead (1891) with Swedish-Americans. If these findings are accurate then Pentecostalism had multiple beginnings and occurrences in different geographical locations, cultures and religious atmospheres. Some more literature on non-British Pentecostals is provided next for those interested in the wider Pentecostal community.

A number of global ethnographies about non-British Pentecostals also contain material of relevance to my research.<sup>8</sup> A recent ethnography of non-British Pentecostals was published by Walsh (2003). He emphasises the theme of identity, like Toulis (1997), but applied it to men, women and youths, unlike Toulis. Walsh looks at three Pentecostal denominations: the Assemblies of God, Victory Outreach and Vineyard (a large American Pentecostal group). Vineyard churches are described in a number of ethnographies (Toulis 1997, Austin-Brooks 1997, Becker 1999). Walsh's work is ethnographic and includes long passages from informants to illustrate key points. Coleman (2000) is a careful and detailed ethnography describing the Word of Life Pentecostals in Uppsala, Sweden. Coleman (2000:11) describes the group in comparison to the pre-existing Pentecostal church in Uppsala:

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<sup>8</sup> For International studies on Pentecostalism see Anderson (2004), Gifford (2004), Walsh (2003), Poloma (2003), Martin (2002), Coleman (2000), Dempster, Klaus and Peterson (eds) (1999), Anderson and Hollenwegger (1999), Hollenwegger (1997, 1974, 1972), Lehmann (1996), Cox (1996), Petersen (1996), Suurmond (1994).



The Pentecostal church ran a shop, had a small radio station attached to its premises and supported various missionaries in foreign lands, but was clearly focused to a large degree on its long-standing and locally based congregation. In contrast the Word of Life organisation comprised far more of a congregation approaching a thousand or so members even in 1986, when I first encountered it: an extensive multi-media business, educational facilities for younger children and a conference centre were also in operation. Furthermore, members of the group were running what they claimed to be the largest Bible School in Europe.

The Word of Life church, Coleman (2000:9) notes, ‘...turned out to be rather more than a thorn in the side of local Christians: in fact, it was fast becoming nationally known, even notorious, cultural phenomenon.’ He considers how the ‘Faith’ or ‘Health and Wealth Movement’ features in the lives of Word of Life members. For Elim Pentecostals healings were a feature of their faith but did not appear to have the same eminence as for Word of Life members. Coleman outlines the role of globalisation the rise of Protestant charismatic religion as a global process. One of the strongest features of his study is the fine-grained ethnographic fieldwork that Coleman draws upon in what his study of ‘narrative, ritualised movement, art, architecture, use of mass media and deployment of money, showing how each reinforces a globalising, charismatic habitus.’ (Coleman 2000:15).

Other literature valuable to the present study relates to Pentecostalism and Christian congregations (Anderson 2004, Martin 2002, Dempster, Klaus and Peterson (eds) 1999, Anderson and Hollenwegger 1999 and Hollenwegger 1974). Although these studies generally refer to non UK populations, they do have some value in that they are useful examples of social scientific research on Pentecostalism, but the type of Pentecostals studied are often very different to UK Pentecostals and in particular to North-East Elim Pentecostals. For example, in the North East of England, congregations are predominantly white whereas in the US the traditional association of Pentecostals is with poor black American immigrants (Martin 2002).

## **British Elim Pentecostalism**

The actual date British Pentecostalism began is not clear. According to the Elim website ([www.elim.org.uk](http://www.elim.org.uk)) under a section entitled 'About Elim' they cite the history of Elim as follows:

The Elim Pentecostal Church was founded in 1915 by a Welshman in Monaghan Ireland. George Jefferies was an outstanding evangelist and church planter. He had a Welsh congregational background, was strongly influenced by the Welsh Revival of 1904, and was introduced to Pentecost by an Anglican vicar, Rev Alexander Boddy of Redland. Between 1915 and 1934, George Jeffery's conducted some tremendous evangelistic missions. This unknown preacher would commence a mission with a mere handful of people, and by the end of the week, thousands would clamour for a seat. Amazing miracles of healings had taken place. After the mission very large churches were established...As the movement grew with amazing rapidity against the background of dramatic decline in the historic churches, it proved to be a fitting symbol of spiritual refreshing. Elim continued to grow despite the ravages of World War two and other difficulties and soon established itself as a Pentecostal power in the evangelisation of the United Kingdom.<sup>9</sup>

George Jefferys, a Welshman converted during the 1904-1906 Welsh Revival is the founder of Elim. He was a man first introduced to the Pentecostal experience by Alexander Boddy -- vicar of All Saints (Riverside) Redland.<sup>10</sup> From this he undertook successful missions which established Elim churches and aided the growth of evangelicalism in the UK. First accounts of Pentecostal experience in Britain appear to be at All Saint's Church Hall Riverside, Redland in September 1907 (now home to the Riverside Elim congregation).

British Pentecostalism is considered by some Pentecostals to have its beginnings in 1907, when Thomas Barrett (a Norwegian Methodist Minister) was invited by Alexander Boddy, vicar of All Saint's church at that time, to come and preach. The invitation was taken up and the Spirit is reported to have fallen in this place. All Saints Church Hall,

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<sup>9</sup> Taken from [www.elim.org.uk](http://www.elim.org.uk) on the 12<sup>th</sup> May 2006.

<sup>10</sup> For more on Alexander Boddy see Wakefield (2001) and Blumhofer (1986).

Redland, according to Hollenwegger (1972:184), became a place to which people flocked to experience the happenings of the Holy Spirit -- including speaking with tongues. A memorial stone tablet was erected on the side of the Church Hall to remember the blessings of the Holy Spirit in this place. This tablet is still there today and had since this time has another tablet placed next to it in September 1996. This latter tablet commemorates the Riverside's congregation purchasing of all Saints Church Hall and says 'When the fire of the Lord fell again there was no debt.' A picture of the stones on the Riverside Christian Fellowship's building is shown on the next page:



**Figure 1.1 Photograph of the 'Stones' on the Riverside Christian Fellowship's building**

All Saints' Church Hall is now the deliberate home of one of the congregations (Riverside) featured in this study. The significance of this building being the place where the Spirit is believed to have first fallen was an aspect the Pastor of this congregation was eager to speak about. Pastor Adam believed that this building had God's hand placed over it,

particularly as it survived the heavy bombing of Redland during the First World War. He also notes that Alexander Boddy, vicar of All Saint Church remained an Anglican minister and never wished to start a new movement. Pentecostalism first appeared in Riverside, Redland within a Church Hall of the Established Church and not within a non-conformist denomination. Boddy, however, had been to Azusa Street in 1912 and visited Norway in 1907 during the time when these places were witnessing manifestations of the Holy Spirit.

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The First World War was a time of social change in Britain -- men went to war while many women took over traditionally male-work. At the time Elim was founded by George and Stephen Jefferys. Pickering (1989:48) notes how the First World War (1914-1918) caused major social changes to occur in Britain and a greater tolerance religious attitude. The Elim Movement was founded during a time of major social and religious changes and this may have aided the growth of this non-conformist movement. The religious climate of Britain which led to the formation of Elim in the early Twentieth century will be considered next.

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The next major historical development in British Christianity was the rise of the Charismatic Movement in the 1960s. In order to understand contemporary Pentecostalism we need to appreciate the importance of this brief movement in British Christianity. As Bebbington (1989:240-241) notes, the Charismatic Movement was extremely influential in the 1960s and 1970s in changing the format of traditional services and introducing a greater usage of charismatic gifts in British churches. The twentieth century saw the emergence and worldwide growth of Pentecostal, Charismatic and Neocharismatic movements (Burgess, Stanley and Van Der Maas (eds) (2003:xvii). Barrett discovered that the final group, Neocharismatics, are more numerous, with more followers than the other two put together.<sup>11</sup> Neocharismatics follow the principles and style of earlier Pentecostalism or

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<sup>11</sup> For a full breakdown of results see Burgess, Stanley and Van Der Maas (eds) (2003:281-302).



Charismatic Movements. The actual terms Pentecostal and Charismatic are often used interchangeably and are difficult to separate into distinct entities. However, according to 'the new dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements' Pentecostalism was often associated with the lower social-economic classes and is not mainstream whereas the Charismatic Movement is linked to the experience of the gifts of the spirit in mainstream churches. The other major difference between the Charismatic Movement and Pentecostalism was theological: Pentecostals, traditionally, believe that after baptism candidate should experience glossolalia and another act of grace after the act whereas Charismatics do not necessarily require an act of grace or glossolalia as proof of conversion (Burgess, Stanley and Van Der Maas (eds) (2003:xviii-xxii).

The final group which relates to the religious environment which Elim is part of is that of the House Church Movement which has its origins in the Restoration Movement. The Restoration Movement is considered to have two roots; firstly with the Irvingites, followers of Edward Irving and the Brethren Movement<sup>12</sup> (Walker 1998: 51). The House Church Movement, in the words of Walker (1998:51), 'is a hybrid strand of Pentecostalism that began to emerge in the 1950s.' It is a movement that was highly influential from the 1950s to the 1980s and one which Walker (1998:17) cites as 'the fastest growing Christian movement in Britain in the 1980s'. Today the House Church Movement has slowed to a near stand still (Walker 1998:17). Walker suggests that today, Elim, Assemblies of God and other classical Pentecostal churches have recovered from the move to House churches of the 1980s. He suggests that this has lead to these groups having a greater confidence and more integration with other evangelical churches (Walker 1998:19).

Elim contains members who were once part of House Churches, Chloe, who is now an Elim Pentecostal at Sandyshore was previously a member of two house churches. She spoke about joining a house church:

I went to a small House Church and we met in a dentist's waiting room and so my Mother was very worried...we have flourished in the House Church Movement more than anywhere else. We were part of that small group which developed from about a dozen people in a dentist's waiting room to about one hundred and fifty...we found it [the House Church] through this little green book on House Churches. We worshiped

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<sup>12</sup> For further information on Edward Irving and the Irvingites see Strachan (1973)

there for five years and that was very much a community again and a relationship style church, very small about twenty people and we left there because we had a difference of opinion on the vision of the church. We were then currently worshipping on a council estate where we wanted to stay but one of the other elders who had been there a lot longer wanted to move and we could not agree with that because there was no other presence of the church on that estate...I think the House Church for me was very much relationship centred and very much, there was very much this unspoken covenant relationship really. It was just more open, more friendly, not religious, not legalistic and yet in a fundamental way it had a fundamental perspective on the scriptures but it wasn't as legalist as the Pentecostal church is.

For Chloe, the House Church Movement is obviously something which is important to her. She articulates her time in the movement with fondness and notes how it was a time in which she grew as a Christian. Chloe, in comparing her House Church experience to that in the Elim church she is in today, notices that the House Church Movement is less legalistic than Pentecostal church. Today, the Charismatic Movement is influential in many British denominations, including Elim Pentecostalism. The history of Pentecostalism and the religious climate of Britain have resulted in the Elim movement being a fusion of the roots of its Pentecostal heritage, the religious climate of Britain and the social and cultural environment of British congregations.

### **A Brief History of the Four Congregations**

Each of the four congregations, Redland, Riverside, Castletown and Sandyside, which are the focus of this study, each have their individual histories and formation stories to tell. Aside from the Riverside congregation, history, especially the history of their particular congregation was rarely spoken of in public but was as I later found out known by the various members of the congregation. During interviews I took the opportunity to find out how the congregations came into being. The first of the four congregations formed was Castletown. Mathew, a member of this congregation, in his early twenties, told me:

...the church here began in 1957 from a crusade that was held in the City Hall, I think it went on for about three or four weeks. You can look in the Evening Chronicle and the advertisements are there. They put an advert in every Saturday. I think it was...was it P.S. Brewster, I think, or have I just picked that name out of a hat? I think it was him, he was the guy who was preaching and the reports when you look in the adverts, after the first meeting, they have this sort of report; healings and people being healed from different diseases and sicknesses and infirmities, people becoming saved. The City Hall was packed out on different nights and that was the roots of our church, which is incredible, it really, really is and it's quite mind blowing when I look at that and think the City Hall was filled by people wanting just to see what it was all about. And then they found an old church building in what was the Cruddas Park area of Castletown which I think was an old...if I'm right, an Old Catholic Apostolic church which I had never heard of (as a denomination) before but that's what the building was originally. So they were there for a little while. Then Cruddas Park was redeveloped so the streets were knocked down and I think it was in 1961 that they bought the building here, which we've been in ever since, in Heaton. So that was quite a big move to move from what was the west of the city to the east side...

Despite his relative youth young age, Mathew knows the history of his church. He outlines events which led to its establishment in an informal and understandable manner. Only a few key dates are mentioned which are of particular importance to Mathew. For example, 1957, the year in which a Crusade in the City Hall led to the formation of his church and 1961, the year they moved to their current premises. It is interesting that although Mathew (because of his age) could not have possibly have been at the City Hall crusade that he speaks of the event as if he was actually there during this time. This, I have noted, is also true of Pastors and other congregants when talking about other key events or Pentecostals, such as Alexander Boddy. Pentecostalist generally speak about their history or prominent figures within it as if they were actually present at the actual event or even as if they knew the person, despite this not being the case. It is from this church that two of the other three churches which form part of this study were created. Charlie, a man who is also part of the Castletown congregation informed me:

There were three churches birthed out of the Castletown church; there was the Redland church, there was the Sandysore church and South Shields church which is closed now. The South Shields one did not progress, it was only a few years ago when it closed...There was an evangelist in Elim called Andy Shell and he was the person that you would probably bring onboard if you were going to do a campaign. We'd had I think three weeks of systematic campaigning down in Sandysore. Was it held in the play house? I can't remember. We had a bus at the time, a single decker bus and we used to transport people from here, from Castletown, the ministry team down. When I'm talking about the ministry team you'd have a piano and that kind of thing. San Fields came up for three weeks and stayed at our house whilst we did the campaigning. Louise (his daughter) had just been born; she was only one at the time. So that's how we maintained that, with the contact. So Sandysore was then birthed out of that evangelistic campaign and a number of core people from our church because they were living in the costal area set up this congregation with them, as they became Christians and likewise with Redland. We had that at...I'm sure it was the University that we hired out for meetings and South Shields, so three were birthed from here...Our work then was basically to see those (churches) birthed and support it for a period of time and then they took on their own identities really from there.

Charlie speaks about the formation of the three churches with great fondness and pride that he was involved in their formation. Once again the language used is simple and understandable. The Castletown crusade in the areas of Redland, Sandysore and Sheldon appears to be a common feature in many congregant narratives when speaking about the history of their church. Charlie, uses the term 'birthed', a metaphorical term which is often associated with childbirth and the creation of 'new life'. Although the Sheldon congregation did not flourish, both Redland and the Sandysore congregations are still going strong today. The Redland congregation was formed in 1971 and the story of its formation was told to me briefly by its Pastor:

It was, it was birthed, it must be thirty-four years ago now that an evangelist came to the city Pastor Andy Shell, an Elim minister and he took a crusade. He led a crusade at what was the Polytechnic which is now the university. And took a, I don't know



how long the crusade lasted, probably about a week and out of those people which were converted during that crusade plus a few other Pentecostals that didn't have a Pentecostal church to go to and were maybe settling into a different style of church, they got together and started the church directly after the crusade.

Once again, this church, like the Castletown congregation and the Sandysore one also, was formed after a crusade. Like Charlie in the previous extract, the Pastor of this church also uses the organic term 'birthed' a common, organic metaphor which Pentecostals use when talking about the creation of new congregations. The actual creation of the congregation is described without reference to any key dates and with a simplicity typical of such accounts. The Sandysore congregation was also helped in its formation by the Castletown congregation. It has its beginnings conveyed to me by Pastor Samuel:

The church was started as an outreach from Castletown Elim church in 1976. It was started by a series of meetings by a visiting evangelist called Andy Shell and those meetings were held in the playhouse in Sandysore. My involvement in that was...Bethany and I came back from holiday one summer, 1976 and found an invitation amongst our mail and went along to see what it was about. We were already Christian believers; we were involved in a small Christian Brethren (church) at the time. We had a deep sense of unrest where we were because we had already experienced and were experiencing the move of the Holy Spirit in a way such as described earlier and we felt the need as Christian people to have a bigger impact, to be involved in reaching out to people who didn't know the Lord. And so we took up this invitation to go to a meeting at the playhouse, we wanted to go and see what it was about and we liked what we heard. We got involved with the start of the church then, which started off in quite a small way; a small group of people from that meeting. The church building was formally the Baptist church and the development of the church was fairly slow, that was 1976...

The Pastor, in his re-telling of his church's formation, adds in personal touches about what

was happening in his life when the church was formed. In particular he notes his own unrest at the time in the church which he and his wife were part of since they had both experienced the gifts of the Spirit. These Spiritual experiences are perhaps indicative of why the formation of a Pentecostal church was so important to Samuel. He includes actual dates as he remembers these times with great affection. The final congregation at Riverside was formed in 1995 by the previous Pastor of Redland which is often referred to informally by congregants as 'Elmsdon Road':

I was at Elmsdon Road Elim church at that time and then I was asked if I would pioneer other work in Redland. So I then moved to North of the river and pioneered Riverside Christian Fellowship...We didn't know where we were going to meet so we wrote and asked if we could rent the hall at Riverside, All Saints Parish Hall which is as you know where Pentecostalism began in 1907. So we rented the hall from September '95 to January '96 for £40 per week and that was for a Sunday service and a Tuesday service. We were allowed to put loud speakers up and operate our own PA which we took every week. And then they said they were going to sell the building and so they wrote to everybody who rented the hall and said 'we're putting it on the market', this was January '96. And just after that I had a cheque given for £50,000 to purchase the hall and I later discovered that they wanted £60,000 and within two days another cheque came in for £10,000. So we were able to buy the hall in '96 debt free and then we spent between £13,000 and £15,000 on renovations. The work we did mainly ourselves and got it into the condition that it's in now. So that was nine years ago. So I've pastored here for the last nine years and we're here today.

The history of his congregation, like the history of Pentecostalism, is clearly paramount to Adam. What is fascinating about the formation of this congregation was that Adam originally commenced the project as an exercise in outreach from the Redland church, where he was Pastor. For Adam, the formation history of his church is clearly linked with it being part of God's greater plan. The location of the church is embedded in Pentecostal history as a place where the Holy Spirit is considered to have first fallen in Redland. The recent history of the purchasing of their building is relayed by Adam. This event is spoken

of as if it were as miracle with God had His hand in bringing in the money to purchase the building so quickly. The history of this church is much shorter than the other three congregations but is certainly no less important. The self-conscious emphasis on ‘history’ is a clear indication of the strength of narratives of time and temporality within all four congregations.

Today, the congregations have developed and progressed as individual congregations form their first beginnings. They have developed into congregations which follow similar service patterns, usually commencing with a choruses before prayers, often a testimony and then a sermon. This structure is common to nearly all services, although ‘spontaneity’ in accordance with ‘the moving of the spirit’ or other events is not unusual. Each of the congregations has their own personal narratives of how they commenced and individual hopes for their futures. The demographics for the four featured congregations follow.

**Demographic Outline of the Congregations**

From the questionnaire data, demographic information on the congregations is known. This information was collected during the period of May to September 2004. 400 questionnaires were given out and a total of 227 were completed.<sup>13</sup>

Congregation	Returned Questionnaires
Riverside	33
Redland	29
Sandyshore	79
Castletown	86
All	227

**Table 1.2 Questionnaires completed**

<sup>13</sup> For a copy of the questionnaire see the appendix and for other information on the questionnaire, its design and questions see chapter 2.

The population of the North East and for England is also provided with each of the following tables in this chapter to compare the demographics of the Elim congregations with the rest of the North East and also England. This data is all taken from the 2001 key statistics data.<sup>14</sup> The data presented for the North East and England has all been tailored to best fit the questionnaire categories from the 2001 census data but the original data is available for the UK 2001 census.

The results (as percentages) were as follows for the demographics of gender, age, and ethnicity in the congregations in table 1.3 and for the wider population of the North East and England in table 1.4 on the next page.

Gender/ Congregation	Male	Female	Not Answered
Riverside	42.42%	54.54%	3.03%
Redland	44.82%	51.72%	3.45%
Sandyshore	40.50%	53.16%	6.33%
Castletown	44.18%	46.51%	9.30%
All	42.73%	50.67%	6.61%

Totals rounded up or down to two decimal places.

**Table 1.3 Congregant Genders**

<sup>14</sup> See [www.statistics.gov.uk](http://www.statistics.gov.uk) as accessed 4<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

Gender/ Geographical Area	Male	Female
Newcastle	48.35%	54.65%
Sunderland	48.65%	51.35%
North Tyneside	47.85%	52.15%
North East	48.44%	51.56%
England	48.68%	51.32%

Totals rounded up or down to two decimal places.

Taken from [www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/demographic\\_uk.asp](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/demographic_uk.asp) on the 4th March 2008.

**Table 1.4 Gender of the North East and England**

All congregations had a similar gender reply rate. Just over 50% of replies came from female respondents and over 40% from males, in all congregations except the Castletown congregation. In this congregation both male and female reply rates were in the 40% range, however, this congregation had nearly 10% of respondents not responding to this question. The UK statistics on gender were similar, there are slightly more females than males in the whole of the North East population and England as a whole.

Age / Congregation	18-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-70	71+
Riverside	3.05%	24.21%	18.13%	18.13%	15.17%	12.14%	9.17%
Redland	0.00%	13.82%	10.33%	13.82%	10.33%	37.88%	13.82%
Sandyshore	5.10%	12.62%	16.47%	17.73%	24.02%	17.73%	6.33%
Castletown	3.53%	24.68%	23.51%	23.51%	16.54%	2.36%	5.87%
All	2.92%	18.83%	17.11%	18.30%	16.52%	17.53%	8.79%

Totals rounded up or down to two decimal places.

**Table 1.5 Congregant Age Ranges**

Age / Geographical Area	18-19	20-29	30-44	45-59	60-74	75+
Newcastle	4.46%	21.05%	27.45%	21.15%	16.28%	9.61%
Sunderland	3.60%	16.78%	28.50%	24.34%	18.33%	8.46%
North Tyneside	2.67%	14.05%	28.68%	25.19%	18.81%	10.60%
North East	3.31%	15.26%	28.49%	24.88%	18.48%	9.57%
England	3.10%	16.37%	29.28%	24.41%	17.09%	9.75%

Totals rounded up or down to two decimal places.

Adjusted ‘nearest match’ age range results from census data, only using data from ages 18+. Taken from [www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=949](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=949) on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

**Table 1.6 Population Age Ranges in the North East and England**

The age range of congregants is fairly evenly distributed. However, the Redland congregation has a greater number of replies from the 61+ age range.

<b>Ethnic Group/Congregation</b>	<b>Asian-British</b>	<b>Asian-Other</b>	<b>Black-British</b>	<b>Black-Other</b>	<b>Chinese-British</b>	<b>Chinese-Other</b>	<b>Mixed-British</b>	<b>Mixed-Other</b>	<b>White-British</b>	<b>White-Other</b>	<b>Not Answered</b>
Riverside	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	9.09%	0.00%	3.03%	0.00%	0.00%	84.85%	0.00%	3.03%
Redland	3.45%	6.90%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	82.76%	3.45%	3.45%
Sandyshore	0.00%	1.26%	1.26%	0.00%	0.00%	1.26%	1.26%	0.00%	87.34%	7.60%	0.00%
Castletown	1.16%	2.33%	8.14%	19.77%	0.00%	4.65%	1.16%	1.16%	59.3%	2.33%	0.00%
All	0.88 %	2.20%	3.52%	8.81%	0.00%	2.64%	0.88%	0.44%	75.77%	3.96%	0.88%

Totals rounded up or down to two decimal places.

**Table 1.7 Congregant Ethnic Group**

	<b>Asian or Asian British</b>				<b>Black or Black British</b>			<b>Chinese or Chinese Other</b>	
<b>Ethnic Group/ Geographical Area</b>	<b>Indian</b>	<b>Pakistani</b>	<b>Bangladeshi</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Caribbean</b>	<b>African</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Chinese</b>	<b>Chinese Other</b>
Newcastle	1.19%	1.87%	1.00%	0.32%	0.05%	0.28%	0.08%	0.72%	0.52%
Sunderland	0.33%	0.14%	0.41%	0.12%	0.03%	0.09%	0.01%	0.03%	0.11%
North Tyneside	0.34%	0.56%	0.26%	0.06%	0.03%	0.14%	0.01%	0.36%	0.14%
North East	0.40%	0.09%	0.25%	0.13%	0.04%	0.10%	0.02%	0.24%	0.17%
England	2.09%	1.44%	0.56%	0.48%	1.14%	0.97%	0.19%	0.45%	0.44%

(see the following page for more results and the rest of the table)



	<b>Mixed</b>				<b>White</b>		
<b>Ethnic Group/Geographical Area</b>	<b>White &amp; Black Caribbean</b>	<b>White &amp; Black African</b>	<b>White &amp; Asian</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>British</b>	<b>Irish</b>	<b>Other</b>
Newcastle	0.15%	0.16%	0.35%	0.22%	90.65%	0.67%	1.81%
Sunderland	0.08%	0.06%	0.16%	0.09%	97.12%	0.29%	0.73%
North Tyneside	0.11%	0.09%	0.17%	0.11%	96.96%	0.30%	0.82%
North East	0.11%	0.06%	0.19%	0.12%	96.43%	0.35%	0.84%
England	1.27%	0.16%	0.37%	0.31%	86.99%	1.27%	2.66%

Totals rounded up or down to two decimal places.

Taken from [www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=459](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=459) accessed on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

**Table 1.8 Population Ethnic Groupings in the North East and England**

The Castletown congregation is the most ethnically diverse and has a great number of Asian, Black and mixed race members that the other congregations and the wider area of the North East and also England. All the congregations fewer white people who class themselves as ‘white British’ that the rest of the North East and England.

<b>Marital Status/ Congregation</b>	<b>Single</b>	<b>Married</b>	<b>Divorced</b>	<b>Re-married</b>	<b>Widowed</b>	<b>Co-habiting</b>	<b>Other</b>
Riverside	39.40%	48.49%	0.00%	3.03%	9.09%	0.00%	0.00%
Redland	6.90%	65.52%	10.34%	0.00%	13.79%	3.4%	0.00%
Sandyshore	24.05%	55.70%	11.39%	3.80%	3.80%	0.00%	0.00%
Castletown	24.42%	66.28%	4.65%	1.16%	3.49%	0.00%	0.00%
All	24.23%	59.91%	7.05%	2.20%	5.73%	0.44%	0.00%

Totals rounded up or down to two decimal places.

**Table 1.9 Congregant Marital Status**

<b>Marital Status/ Geographical Area</b>	<b>Single (never married)</b>	<b>Married</b>	<b>Divorced</b>	<b>Re-married</b>	<b>Widowed</b>	<b>Separated (still legally married)</b>
Newcastle	38.10%	37.04%	8.11%	4.95%	9.04%	2.76%
Sunderland	30.85%	43.93%	8.20%	5.92%	8.94%	2.16%
North Tyneside	26.96%	44.04%	9.05%	7.37%	9.91%	2.68%
North East	28.97%	43.96%	8.50%	6.83%	9.31%	2.43%
England	30.23%	43.50%	8.21%	7.35%	8.3%	2.40%

Totals rounded up or down to two decimal places.

Taken from [www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=1652](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=1652) on the 4<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

**Table 1.10 Population Marital Status for the North East and England**

In all of the congregations there is a larger percentage of married people than in the wider population of the North East and England. There is also a lower percentage of people in the congregations who are re-married than the national average. The Redland congregation has the highest number of widows than the other congregations. The only congregation with someone co-habiting is the Redland congregation.

A photograph of each of the buildings and information on each of the featured congregations is provided next.

**Individual Congregations**

*Redland*



**Figure 1.11 Photographs of Elim Pentecostal Church, Redland’s building**

Redland has a congregation of around 80 people on Sunday morning and 35 for evening worship. The congregation has roughly 10 children who attend frequently. The evening service is almost entirely made up of people who attend the morning service. This is a more mature congregation overall, although it does contain members in their twenties and thirties. The congregation is mainly white but also has a prominent black Afro-Caribbean constituent. The worship of the church is evangelical but is quite structured with a blend of chorus’ and traditional hymns, biblical teaching/sermon, prayer, dealing with lifestyle choices and finally testimonies. The church is close to Redland University, within walking distance of the central shopping area of the city, with reasonable access to the larger city of Castletown.

*Riverside*



**Figure 1.12 Photographs of Riverside Christian Fellowship’s building**



This congregation is situated roughly three miles from Redland's main city centre. The congregation is the smallest and has a congregation size of roughly 50. The church is evangelical in stance which means that the congregation places a special emphasis upon the authority of scripture.<sup>15</sup> It has one Sunday morning service which contains a balanced mix of sung choruses, Bible teaching/sermon, prayer and testimony. The congregation is a predominantly white group including middle-aged people and others in their twenties and thirties. It is common for between 2 to 8 children to attend on a Sunday. The building previously used as their church hall belonged to 'All Saints' Anglican Church. This church hall was specially selected by the Pastor and other founding members of the church due to it being the place where the Holy Spirit was believed to have first fallen in Redland in 1907. Alexander Boddy, vicar of 'All Saints' at the time, invited an itinerant preacher to Redland to preach at 'All Saints Church Hall' after being enthused by the 1904 Welsh revival and his subsequent conversion to Pentecostalism in Oslo in 1907.

### *Castletown*



**Figure 1.13 Photographs of Elim Pentecostal Church, Castletown's building**

This congregation is within a short distance of Castletown city centre and attracts some of the local student population. The church is situated in a small multi-cultural (although over 50% white) suburb of the city with a healthy shopping area. This congregation is the largest of the four congregations with around 120 members attending on a Sunday morning and about 40 in the evening. The congregation has roughly 25 children who regularly attend. The congregation has a wide variety of age groups including many older teenagers and early twenties being a treasured group within the church. It will be enlightening to see why and how these youths are attracted. The congregation is multi-cultural, although still over

<sup>15</sup> For further discussion of evangelicalism please see: McGrath, Alister E, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, (Oxford: Blackwell publishers, 1997), 121-124



50% white, and has a vibrant Afro-Caribbean feel to the worship from time to time. It is not, however, a gospel church<sup>16</sup> but is evangelical in so far as they place the main emphasis upon preaching rather than the praise of God via singing. The worship songs used are modern choruses rather than the 'Afro-Caribbean gospel songs' common in black Pentecostal gospel churches.

### *Sandyshore*



**Figure 1.14 Photographs of Sandyshore Christian Fellowships' building, Sandyshore**

The church building for this congregation is situated in Sandyshore, a small non-tourist town by the sea. It is surrounded by small villages and a nearby port. The congregation has around 90 members attending on Sunday mornings with about 20 of these being children. On Sunday evenings a special youth service is held for teenagers and those in their twenties with numbers being around 30. The evening service is specifically for youths and it the church's youth service covers contemporary issues that influence youths, during my time spent with this congregation these included the topics of sex, the supernatural, the occult, witchcraft and many more issues which appeared to interest teenagers. It was enlightening to discover that many workers for Youth for Christ (YFC) attended this church<sup>17</sup> (for more about YFC see chapter 7:233). The ethnic configuration of this congregation is predominantly, although not entirely, white. This is also the case for the town. The congregation contains members whose mother tongue was not English and it runs classes to

<sup>16</sup> as defined by Toulis (1997)

<sup>17</sup> Youth for Christ is an international mission organisation and has been going in the UK since 1964. The aim of YFC is 'to take the good news relevantly to every young person in Britain.' The gospel is spread through the organisations work with churches, schools, young offenders and prisons, summer camps, beach missions and other evangelist activities. YFC appears to be a very vibrant modern organisation with its own creative arts group, a skate team, training academy and evangelism team. I suspect that YFC may have contact with this congregation as it is one of the two main organisations providing a range of material to use with the young (the other being scripture union). More information about this organization is available on their website [www.yfc.co.uk](http://www.yfc.co.uk) accessed on the 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2005.

improve their English. The majority of these people have an East Asian background. There are, however, other members of the church who are missionaries visiting Britain in order to spread the gospel, often via singing and entertaining people rather than street corner preaching. Many of these people have come from countries where Britain has traditionally provided missionaries.

The congregation contains a minority deaf group. This is the only church that I have attended where the entire service is signed, both morning and evening, and the church also runs classes to teach the non-deaf how to sign. The town of Sandyside to the North of the cities of Castletown and Redland is an area which seems almost cushioned to some extent by the effects of de-industrialisation in the Castletown and Redland areas. The town, due to its location, is on the shores of the North Sea and within a short distance of the Port of Sheldon. The majority of the congregation live in and around this town and would consider they are 'locals'. The local environment of the congregations is often referred to in sermons. For example, the Stadium of Light, St James's Park and the Angel of the North have all been referred to.

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Dialogue surrounding identity in relation to the present often centrally focuses on what Cohen calls 'its *absolute* character' (Cohen (ed) 2000:1). This means that for predominantly white British Pentecostals their '*absolute* character' is conversant with their cultural identity rather than the historical roots of black migrant American Pentecostalism. For Pentecostals in the North East this is expressed through pride in their geographical area. Many of my informants have lived in the North East for much or all of their life and have a strong sense of attachment to the area. The culture of Britain and in particular the culture of the North East is part of the social background of nearly all members. In a similar way Toulis (1997) discovered that the Afro-Caribbean culture of the Black Pentecostal women in Birmingham was part of the fabric of their identity. Toulis found that the identity of Black Pentecostal women in Birmingham was 'self-ascribed and self achieved as a Christian' (Toulis 1997:168). Toulis when speaking with one of the mothers of the church about her research plans received the comment:

My culture is different from yours, but that doesn't mean we can't learn from each other's culture. I may be Black, but we're from the same hand, the hand of God. We're born the same, we wee [sic] the same and die the same. (Toulis 1997:168)

This monologue indicates that the Black identity of informants was not to do with race but rather part of an outward expression of who they were. Faith and ethnic identity for these women were not concepts that were separable or exchangeable. Cohen (2000:7) expresses a similar point:

...societies and social groups extend themselves into the world through the webs of their relationships, their economic activities and their inscriptions of themselves on the landscape and their boundaries are located at these points of their furthest extension, the points at which they see themselves located in geographical space and time.

The expression of social groups relates to the commonality which members have with each other and their own personal experiences. For Black Pentecostal women their personal experiences and circumstances were as Afro-Caribbean women. Just as the personal experiences and circumstance of my informants are as predominantly white British Pentecostals. Knowledge of social and cultural environments where congregations are formed is vital in understanding their history. A brief history of the North East is provided next.

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### **The Regional Context**

This summary is intended to provide the reader with an insight into the culture and environment of the North East, the social space which members of the four congregations encounter in their every day lives. In essence it is an important component within what Bourdieu (1990) defines as 'habitus', the background of any social situation -- the habits, assumptions, norms of any particular social situation that are taken 'as given', they 'go without saying' so to speak. I will now consider the cultural and conceptual environment in



which people from the four congregations live, work, socialise and worship God. The local area being considered a 'source of identity' by many congregants implies that geographical and social environments must be contextualised in order to understand the multiple identities at play in this thesis. Just as an account of the history and subsequent implications of this history must be accounted for, the geographical locations must also. All four areas -- Castletown, Redland, Riverside, and, Sandyside are associated with nineteenth century industrialisation.<sup>18</sup> They are all part of local communities which were once reliant upon local heavy industries such as coal mining and shipbuilding in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. In the words of Lily a congregant at Riverside:

...well there was shipbuilding and there were coal mines in the area. The college when I attended it was a place where you went to learn about teaching and it was all women. And now, I mean, the university that's here's enormous. And I think they've done a really good job since the mines and the shipbuilding finished. They've now got some good residential areas to the river and they've got light industry so it's a much pleasanter place to live. And in fact the area where I am now is a very short distance from where I lived as a child but now it's one of the top areas that people want to live in because it's near the coast. So it's quite amazing how a real lower class area is now a much sought after place by people.

The legacy of the North East shipbuilding industry and connections with other local industries (usually in relation to coal mining and other heavy industry) which were most prevalent remains even now these industries have gone. The landscape shows the scars of these industries and the local area indicates that a sense of community was once very important (permanent reminders remain from mining communities -- workingmen's clubs, miner's homes, brass bands and galas, and from shipbuilding -- quaysides, docklands and ports). It was in 1989 that the last shipbuilders effectively closed on Sandyside and in 1993 the last pit closed (Rivermouth) resulting in the loss of the major sources of employment in the area. This meant that social and economic transitions needed to be made in terms of employment in Redland and Castletown for the towns to have a future. The economic and

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<sup>18</sup> For literature on the Industrialisation of Britain in the Nineteenth Century see Morgan (1999), Williamson (1997), Berg (1988), Thompson (1973).

social environment of Redland and Castletown in the twenty-first century can be dealt with only briefly here.<sup>19</sup> State intervention at both local and national levels has caused visual changes in the area of Redland and Castletown. The city centres of Redland and Castletown and the majority of their surrounding areas have all been redeveloped and no longer look as industrialised as they once did. The creation of Luxon Park, a business park in Redland, the opening of a Nissan plant in Hillside and the opening of out of town retail centres; the development of the Tear Valley just south of Castletown, the Route Centre in Shoresmouth and Tendal Park to the South of Redland now offer a different kind of employment. Heavy industry has been largely replaced by the service industry.

Mathew, from the Castletown congregation in describing his local community notes how Castletown and Briersley (the adjacent areas) have extremes:

...Briersley is a very working-class area, a lot of people on long-term sick, unemployment benefit, lower end of the social spectrum, the social economic social spectrum. Whereas in Castletown, there's about 30% students, there's a lot of upper-working-class, young professionals and some middle-class working people as well. So the immediate community that we're in, there's some quite polarised ends of the spectrums. There are a lot of different needs in our community.

Mathew describes his area, just to the North of the city centre as an area which contains students and professionals whereas Briersley is a more economically deprived area. Jacob, a congregant from Sandysore, talks about how the local environment of the North East has changed:

Industry has changed, obviously the traditional jobs up the Wear and the river a lot of that has changed, that's fair enough. Sandysore has changed, less in some ways and more in others. It used to be a very big holiday town...Castletown central, as you've seen, obviously there's a lot of building, there's a lot of office work goes on. There always has been, it's a place for office work, insurance companies, accountancy and all those sorts of things. So all that is there but probably more so and bigger...people

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<sup>19</sup> For more on the North East see Beynon, Hudson and Sadler (1991) and Hudson (1989).

were coming from different parts of the country and were pleasantly surprised that it wasn't out in the sticks, that you could go a few miles and were out in the country or you could go a few miles and you were at the seaside. There was culture; there was a cinema, museums, pubs for students obviously and it was surprising how many came up here and wanted to stay in this area rather than go back to the south. Once they'd discovered Castletown...Well Shoresmouth was always the poor community but that's obviously building up now and it's...although the two (Castletown and Shoresmouth) are sort of working together as one in some things...even then when people moved up in the mid-seventies they liked it. It was a small city with everything apart from the weather. And as far as the university was concerned they did a range of things because we...there has always been a strong medical presence in the town as well for medical students to come to. So it has changed but in a sense it's still quite compact and good and people like coming...

Jacob, in the above extract, describes how the North East and his area of Sandysore has changed from being a popular seaside resort to one which now attracts few tourists. Jacob, having attended University and worked in Castletown, is very keen to note the strong presence of the student population in the city and also people's unexpected surprise that they like the city. The strong medical presence, which Jacob notes in relation to the Castletown area, is reflected in the disproportionate number of the congregation that work within the caring professions (especially from ethnic minorities). This is also evident in the Redland and Riverside congregations but less so in Sandysore. Callaghan (1988) writing about the world of young people in Redland (unpublished 1988:345) says: 'People take conscious reflexive action in all fields but they must also rely on the resources with which their habitus equips them for life to go on.' The local environment is the social space that reflects their hopes and strategies with coping with future life. This came through powerfully in an interview I conducted with Charlie who talked about the social environment of the North East and its connection to his life when I asked him about how God had been working in his life:

...well I am a time served sheet metal worker...at the time of the mid-seventies when we had the oil crisis and then we had the Thatcher government in, right, at the end of

the late-seventies and being in industry in the North East, it was a real challenging time for people just living here and surviving I suppose. I guess that myself and many others were casualties of the declining industry and all sorts of things. So after the third redundancy that I faced and with a small family as well but also having a ministry...There was a family that joined the church and he was training to be a social worker and it was through that connection that happened, that really God started to do something and started to stir something up about that kind of direction about the skills that you've got then you can build on those skills and perhaps be called to do something that God wanted you to do in another dimension...I did a foundational course, I had left school with no qualifications at all, none, when I was fifteen and did the trade...then God opened up for me to go full-time at Elmsdon or Redland and Elmsdon was the place that God wanted me to be, Elmsdon University. So I did the course there, the Community Course there and that was a fantastic challenge and as someone who had been miles away from education, having to fit back into this...I was the first person to be on placement at the Farsdon Youth Project, there I used to do detached work and city centre work around young people's issues and it was probably about two or three months before the course finished in 1986 that Barnardos, who I work for now were advertising a new post for a new project. It was the launch of a new project, it was a pilot and it was around church and community values and it was absolutely amazing. And because the faith in the city report had just been written, just over those couple of years in the Thatcher era the churches were challenging themselves 'What are we going to do?' in terms of 'It's alright us criticising the government but what are we going to do to try and change the situation?' And it was out of that being formed that key people at Barnardos in the North East had a vision to start a project and their vision was that on every street corner where a church was they would want to be supporting new developments, social action for young people and their families...sadly though they closed that project down last year, it was tragic but that was amazing.

Charlie, who had been trained as a sheet metal worker, was made redundant during the decline of heavy industry in the North East during the 1970s and 1980s. He describes it as a time where there was a lot of uncertainty about his future and also the futures of those

around him. Charlie found himself returning to education and going to University to become a social worker, a career which led him to work for Barnardos supporting local people during a time of economic depression in the North East. It is just this connection of individuals with a remembered social environment (whether geographical, political or religious) to the present social environment which Bourdieu (1990) refers to as 'habitus'. The structure of a congregation is constantly changing; hence the present structure of a congregation must be related to its past structure. Consequently, the social environments of the four congregations are best viewed as a structure which, in a sense, structures another structure (Bourdieu 1990:96). The economic and social environment in which the congregations are fixed is reflected through the form the congregation takes. In the words of Bourdieu (1990:53) 'conditions of existence produce "habitus", systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to act as structuring structures'. What Bourdieu is saying is that the 'social situation', for instance, a shared local environment, ethnic background and upbringing (which together partly define the congregations), influence the structure (or form) of those congregations. Changes in the economic texture of these cities are clearly important to these congregations and are best measured by the words of the Castletown Pastor one Sunday Morning in May 2004 when he relayed the surprise of one of his university friends when returning to the area:

Pastor: I had a friend who came to Castletown in the 1950s, he's from the south, he's a typical southerner, Brian Hunt; he's a good friend of ours. He said when I came in the 1950s all, he speaks like this, he's a bit of a southerner, it was dire...

Congregation: Laughter.

Pastor: ...when he came to college in the 1950s - it was dire. Four year ago or something he was up here. He said its fantastic, what a beautiful city. I'm amazed at the quayside - and that was before we got the Sage centre and everything else. He said this is amazing, this is a fantastic place. He felt the atmosphere was different.

During my time with the congregations, pride in the North East, in its ability to change from a region in decline to one which was experiencing regeneration, was clear. For these

congregations, the past heritage of the North East for heavy industry was not forgotten but rather seen that time had moved on and they must look to the future.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I present a brief history of Pentecostalism and religion in Britain and note that the beginning of British Pentecostalism does not have a clear date although some refer specifically to the 30th September 1907 when the 'Spirit first fell' in Riverside as a particularly significant date for Elim Pentecostals in the North East. I chart the religious background in Britain at this time and note that although Alexander Boddy, Vicar of All Saints Church, had an interest at this time in revival and direct experience of the Holy Spirit. After the First World War people were much more open to non-conformist religion due to the change in people's experiences because of war, especially the social circumstances for women who did traditional 'male work', like factory work and farming, during this time.

I focus on time and, partly for heuristic reasons, consider the multiple concepts of time by considering how Pentecostals view the past, present and future. The multitude of meanings for the word 'time' allows the concept of time to be ambiguous without a specific context. I concentrate, in the first instance, on Gell's (1992) work. Gell, following McTaggart, indicates how time can be couched, conceptually, in terms of A and B time. A-time relates to the past, present and future whereas B-time refers to specific chronological events in time, such as the procession of ritual days in the Pentecostal calendar: Advent preceeds Christmas, which precedes Easter, Ascension Thursday, Pentecost Sunday and so on. I explore two fundamental ways in which Pentecostals talk of time: in sociological terms, that is, how people feel about the here and now; and theologically, based on biblical beliefs, as in an ongoing interpretation of prophetic writings, including those relating to the Second Coming of Christ. A-time or linear time is much more common in Pentecostal faith and practice since time is understood as a uni-directional movement towards the second coming of Christ and the Final Judgement. Pentecostals appear only to think of time as B-time/circular time when referring to the ritual year and what that means to each of them and their personal considerations of their faith.

In chapter two I outline in some detail the social scientific methods used to collect the data which provides the foundation of this thesis.

## Chapter Two

# Studying Congregations

### Introduction

This thesis is based on fieldwork carried out over a two and a half year period with four Pentecostal congregations in the North of England. This thesis is principally a contribution to the ethnography of British Pentecostalism. The ethnographic study of Pentecostal congregations spans many fields and cannot be purely relegated to one discipline. Any anthropological study of religious groups will contribute to ‘our’ theological understanding of their faith and practice. Anthropological studies are often in the form of a report nature whilst theological studies hope to draw some conclusions about the groups; they aim to find some ‘theological truth’ and so the aims of these researchers are often different. Walsh’s personal experience and understanding of Pentecostalism, as a member, is a trait of his work (2003: xii):

I cannot say that I agree with everything I captured on tape and in my notebooks – many ideas, especially those that appeared to be steering Christianity into one political camp or another, distressed me.

The writing of ethnography is for me about the retelling of the experiences of members rather than the making of judgements about the theological correctness of their experience. Differences in backgrounds between anthropologists and theologians can result in different conclusions being drawn from the same material<sup>20</sup>. In particular anthropologists often lack in-depth theological knowledge of the subjects and their groups resulting in varied misinterpretations, whereas theologians (Walsh 2003, Kay 2000) often chose groups of their own denomination to study and thus their conclusions may be influenced by this.

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<sup>20</sup> See Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995:5) ‘...there is no “natural” or “correct” way to write about what one observes. Rather, because descriptions involve issues of perception and interpretation, different descriptions of the “the same” situations and events are possible.’

An emerging field of interest within the field of studying congregations in the UK is that of denominational studies. The study of British congregations dates back at least as long as studies in North America (Guest, Trusting and Woodhead 2004). Comparative studies of multiple congregations of one denomination are limited in number. It has been more common to perform studies of multiple congregations of different denominations (Ammerman 2001, Stringer 1999) and studies of a single group (Guest 2002, Coleman 2000, Toulis 1997). This oversight in the investigation of comparative studies within the vital area of denominational studies is one which I hope to address in this thesis. Ritcher (2004:169) suggests:

The role played by denominational cultures has seldom been widely considered within the field of congregational studies. When cultural analysis has been applied, there has been a tendency to focus on the particular and sometimes idiosyncratic culture of individual congregations.

Ritcher notes that denominational cultures have often been overlooked by researchers who have tended to look at individual congregational attributes. He suggests this lack of analysis of denominational cultures is due to a decline in denominational loyalty by its members. Ritcher continues (2004:169):

If individuals are increasingly switching their loyalties from one denomination to another (Roberts, 1984, p. 158), this might suggest that denominational cultures have become attenuated and that individuals attach little importance to specific denominational cultures, consciously or tacitly perceived. In Britain's increasing post-Christian society, denominational labels have become less significant to churchgoers than shared Christian (counter-cultural) identity. Individuals may be more aware of stylistic, rather than denominational, differences between congregations.

Ritcher believes that in modern society people feel free to shift from one denomination to another, sometimes several times. He suggests that denominational cultures have become



less important to individuals. The results from the questionnaire bear out Ritcher’s argument. My statistics (see Table 2.1) indicate that 77.5% of respondents had attended other denominations prior to Elim. A full break down for each of the Elim congregations of congregants attending other churches (prior to conversion) is provided next.

**As an adult have you attended a different church or churches?**

<b>Response/ Congregation</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Not Answered</b>
Riverside	72.7%	24.1%	3.2%
Redland	75.9%	24.1%	0.0%
Sandyshore	82.3%	13.9%	3.8%
Castletown	79.0%	14.0%	7.0%
All	77.5%	19.0%	3.5%

Totals rounded up or down to one decimal place.

**Table 2.1 Congregant Attendance of Other Churches**

The denominations previously attended by research participants were wide ranging and often each congregant had attended many different churches. I include the tabulated results on conversions within Pentecostal churches for each of the congregations on the next page.

**Was your conversion through the Pentecostal Church?**

<b>Response/ Congregation</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Unconverted</b>	<b>Not Answered</b>
Riverside	48.5%	48.5%	0.0%	3.0%
Redland	79.3%	20.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Sandyshore	36.7%	62.0%	0.0%	1.3%
Castletown	57.0%	38.4%	2.3%	2.3%
All	55.4%	42.4%	0.6%	1.7%

Totals rounded up or down to one decimal place.

**Table 2.2 Congregants Converted in a Pentecostal Church**

I discovered that despite the high percentage of congregants having attended other churches (77.5%), the average was a little over 50% of all believers initially converted to Christianity in a Pentecostal church. The greatest proportion of responses indicating that they were converted in a Pentecostal church was within the Redland congregation (79.3%). This could be due to respondents being older when I analysed their ages than the other congregations (see table 1.5 in chapter 1), possibly because many of these older respondents were converted during the original ‘outreach mission’ of this church in the 1970s. In contrast, the Sandyshore responses indicated the fewest converts within Pentecostalism. I am unsure why this is but one possibility is that this congregation has the highest number of congregants who had attended other churches (82.3%, see table 2.1) and may have converted in one of these ‘other churches’ before moving to Elim.

**Congregational Studies**

The study of congregations is not new but much more work needs to be done. Two influential books on studying congregations have been produced by Stringer (1999) and Hopewell (1987), an American minister. There are a number of other significant studies

which contribute to the work on congregations, such as the recent publication on Welsh congregations by Chambers (2005), and the work of Guest (2002) and Becker (1999). Stringer's ethnography is of particular interest as a British study. Although not about Pentecostals, it demonstrates a number of useful methodological techniques. Stringer, an anthropologist and ethnographer, spent two years in the field with four Manchester Congregations, spending six months with each. The four congregations he considered were diverse – a Baptist Chapel, a Roman Catholic church, an Independent Christian Fellowship and an Anglican church. Stringer (1999) considered the role of worship in these four congregations as he compared their differing approaches to worship. Stringer (1999) has independent sections in his book on each of the four congregations which he ties together at the end. Stringer (1999) notes in his ethnography the difficulties he encountered and the need to remain independent of his subjects choosing not to live amongst them during his fieldwork. Like Stringer, did not wish to cross this boundary.

Hopewell (1987), a theologian and practising minister, considered congregational narratives and the stories of individual congregations which formed their congregational culture. Hopewell used social scientific methods to analyse how congregational members interact with one another and how they negotiate their faith through story telling. Hopewell considered the role of environment for congregations:

No house or apartment is entirely isolated; it is set in an environment that not only physically surrounds the building but also conditions all household activity.

He notes the cultural importance of the environment of congregants and how the social and physical surroundings of the congregations are embodied within them. Hopewell relates how the environment of congregants is constructed into their narratives or stories. Setting is a principal element of storytelling: it describes the story's universe. Drawing on the work of Hopewell I have attempted through the words of informants to identify the principal elements of the narratives of the Elim congregations and their social universes. The social universe of congregants is known to change over time; this is demonstrated through the work of Hollenwegger (1972, 1974) and Calley (1965) who studied groups in the 1960s and 1970s compared to Toulis (1997) and Walsh (1995) who studied groups in the 1990s. Hollenwegger and Calley's historical perspective of 1960s and 1970s Pentecostalism are

enlightening in comparison with the modern day Pentecostal movement. These comparative studies clearly demonstrate that the movement is continually evolving.

Following the lead of other ethnographers of Christian groups I have used social scientific techniques to collect my data.<sup>21</sup> These include participant observation, surveys, interviews, sermon analysis and the collection of material produced by these congregations. These were chosen in order to present, in all their complexity, the words, actions and social activities of Elim Pentecostals in an ethnographic form. I take a different approach from Stringer (1999) in studying four congregations as I studied all four congregations simultaneously over a two and a half year period rather than spending six months with each. I believe this was a reasonable strategy given that I was studying solely Elim Pentecostals; it was beneficial in building up trust and in identifying similarities and differences between congregations. This was also useful during the interview stage of the research process, as research participants would occasionally comment on the other congregations taking part. An example of this is Charlie, a congregant from Castletown, who spoke to me about how the Sandyshore, Redland and Riverside congregations came into being as he knew I was interested in these congregations as well as his own. This was a 'luxury' that Stringer, through studying four different denominations, could not draw upon. In writing up I also made the decision to take the four Elim congregations as a collection of narratives within a thematic framework. The decision to do this came from the four congregations having similar outlooks and beliefs. However, I have also provided the reader with an account of the individual aspects of each congregation which makes them unique in themselves, such as their specific plans for the future. Next, I will consider the methodology of studying congregations.

## **Methodology**

The methodology I use in this ethnography is, of necessity, quite broad and deals with data that can only truly be qualitative rather than quantitative in many respects. I want to develop two main strands of social research over the course of this study, to develop the theoretical base of knowledge about Elim Pentecostals, and secondly to inform ethnographical practice. The range of literature on methodology, specifically on planning

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<sup>21</sup> See Guest (2002), Ammerman (2001), Coleman (2000) Stringer (1999), Hopewell (1988), Toulis (1997).

and carrying out ethnographic research is massive.<sup>22</sup> An ad hoc approach to gathering ethnographic data from the four congregations seemed most effective, as any organised co-ordination and direct comparison to one another along a particular line of enquiry would be difficult to organise and would require an interference with the way the churches are run, adversely affecting the nature of the information collected. Crook and Crang (1995:92) say:

Ethnographies may lack the apparent 'concrete' results of other methods, (with hypotheses proven or not), but an honest and serious engagement with the world is not a failure because it admits that things are messier than that and tries to think through the various complexities and entanglements involved rather than trying to deny them.

This acknowledges that ethnographic research cannot be a 'mechanical application of techniques' (Shipman 1997) but must be dynamic and fluid enough to deal with the multitude of different influences and information strands which a researcher may encounter. This requires the constant development and refinement of theoretical techniques to inform practice, which are themselves developed from the actual experience of ethnographers, and so any approach which stresses either the theoretical or practical to the detriment of the other cannot be said to be an effective ethnographical tool.

Because of these concerns, this approach must be illustrative rather than definitive, as it cannot be said to be testing any particular established hypothesis or theory. Rather, it is preparing the ground for further comparisons to be made in the future and to serve as a point of reference to other social scientists who make an attempt to study Elim congregations. This has had an effect on the methods, structure and language of the thesis. The first of these areas will be addressed later, with a detailed account of the data-gathering methods used and the thought behind them. The latter two are interdependent and help each area to further clarify themselves. Because of the minimal research done thus far on Elim Pentecostals, they cannot be addressed in their own terms, as there is no scholarly awareness of their language and practice. For this reason the thesis is interspersed with

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<sup>22</sup> See, for example Hobbs and Wright (2006), Pink (ed) (2006), Walliman (2006), Blaxter, Hughes and Tight (2006), Spickard, Landres and McGuire (eds) (2002), Bryman (ed) (2001), Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte (1999), Bernard (ed) (1998), Rose (1990), Ellen (ed) (1984), Ruby (ed) (1982), Brim and Spain (1974), Garfinkel (1967), Bruyn (1966).

explanatory comments on Elim terms that would be used without any thought or analysis within the churches themselves.

Following on from this point, much of the comparison and discussion of Elim practice is done purely with regard to scholarly discourse around particular topic areas. This is so that the work can be located within the language and understanding of anthropological study, and thus made accessible to other scholars. Any other method of comparison, for example a detailed examination of how closely the selected churches follow centralised Elim doctrine, towards the goal of establishing how ‘typical’ these churches are of Elim churches in general, would be useless as an academic study as many the terms of reference used by both the subjects of the study and the point of reference would be inscrutable to many scholars, regardless of the exact method used.

The diverse range of analytical methods which can be used in the production of ethnographies means that selection of suitable methods is required within the constraints of time and availability of subjects. The research process for this project can be classified into four distinct areas:

- Ethical considerations
- Researching in churches
- Research outside of churches
- Coding and Writing up

Each of these areas will be dealt with systematically in this chapter. All methods (apart from the use of journals) have been previously tried and tested as successful techniques in the study of congregations.<sup>23</sup> Within this chapter I intend to provide a coherent outline of how the process of research is formulated through this thesis. I will chart the reasons for use and the success or failure of the methods employed. The nature of the research meant I had relatively easy access to participants and was in a situation where I lived within easy access of the four sites. The period of the writing up of the thesis did overlap with the collection of data. This allowed me to check that what I was writing was representative of the congregations.

Discourse analysis as a method of analysing both interview content and observed vocabulary that is not explicitly reproduced is not used in the thesis. This is because although an analysis of the methods of communication on both a formal and informal level

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<sup>23</sup> See Guest (2002), Ammerman (2001), Coleman (2000), Stringer (1999), Hopewell (1988), Toulis (1997).

may prove enlightening as to how far the language and knowledge set used controls the power structures within the congregations under study, after observing the congregations I do not consider that this would add to an ethnographical understanding of the congregations in question, nor that critical discourse analysis in particular is particularly relevant as there is little control of language throughout the congregations; although there is a common language set used in certain situations, there does not appear to be any form of power structure vested in the use of such language.

From the outset of the research it was clear to me that in order to represent accurately the congregations the project would need to be a partnership between myself and those being researched, and so I had to be an observable presence within the setting of the study in order to allow this partnership to function. The study proceeded with the permission of the 'gatekeepers', the four Pastors of the congregations.<sup>24</sup> We met in order to discuss my plans and they were helpful in making further suggestions. I believe that telling people about what I was doing encouraged participants' interest in the research, an indication of which was their willingness to talk freely about their faith and practice throughout the course of fieldwork. The response of congregants to the production of a thesis about them is summarised succinctly by a comment made by Mary one Sunday morning:

Will it [the thesis] be made available as I'd love to read it once you've finished it -- it will be good to read what you've written about us.

A copy of the final thesis will be given to each of the four congregations, enabling all members to read it if they wish. This practice is in accordance with the University Ethics Committee regulations but also allows for the possibility of continuing dialogue between researcher and research participants. Ethical considerations are discussed in the section below. The careful consideration of research ethics was an important part of the first stage of the research process. Permission from the University ethics committee was required prior to performing research and data acquisition in the field.

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<sup>24</sup> See [www.theasa.org/downloads/ethical\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.theasa.org/downloads/ethical_guidelines.pdf) accessed on 6th April 2006.

## *Ethical Considerations*

Ethics considerations and in particular the obtaining of ethical clearance for research from the University was vital to the success of the project. Ethical choices did not end with ethical clearance; these considerations run throughout the project. Even in the final stages of writing up I had to strike a balance between including details about the congregations and maintaining my research participants' anonymity. I have changed all the names of participants and congregations. Although preserving the anonymity of the congregations did not seem critically important in this case I have chosen to do in order to remain consistent with common anthropological practice. The changing of all research participants' names will hopefully protect their individual identities from the majority of readers.

There are numerous sources available in formulating an appropriate ethical approach to research.<sup>25</sup> One of the most useful sources is produced by the Association of Social Anthropologists (ASA).<sup>26</sup> This document follows the 'educational model for professional codes' which is categorised under four major headings: 'Relations With Responsibilities Towards Research Participants', 'Relations With and Responsibilities towards Sponsors, Funders and Employers', 'Relations with Home and Host Governments', and 'Responsibilities to Wider Society.' I will be taking the most relevant topic of 'Relations With Responsibilities Towards Research Participants' and briefly outline what is contained within this section. These guidelines deal with professional relationships with research participants and with moral and ethical considerations for their well-being. This includes causing as little disruption as possible during research activities, such as during participant observation and being aware of the wishes of participants, as well as the negotiation of informed consent in what methods can be used and also how data collected will be used. Anonymity and confidentiality has become a key concern in recent years to prevent infringement on the lives of participants after publication. Participants should not be exploited. Participants have certain rights to information recorded and should be aware that they have the right to withdraw from research if they so wish. Researchers should try and involve participants and the host community as much as possible and contact may not

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<sup>25</sup> See Lassister (2005), Meskell and Pels (eds) (2005), Smyth and Williamson (eds) (2004), Olivers (2003), Fluehr-Lobban (ed) (2003), Lee-Treweek and Linkogle (eds) (2000), Laine (2000), Caplan (ed) (2003), Moody-Adams (1997), Appell (ed) (1978), Hobbs and May (eds) (1993).

<sup>26</sup> These can be found at [www.theasa.org/downloads/ethical\\_guidlines.pdf](http://www.theasa.org/downloads/ethical_guidlines.pdf) accessed on 6th April 2006.



end with complete separation from the field after the completion of fieldwork or the project.

The project was granted ethical clearance by the University of Durham ethics committee (Application Number 03 EAC R150). All methods were approved and all steps which the committee recommended have been carefully adhered to. Where appropriate, personally identifying information acquired by myself was not used, ensuring that participants remained anonymous. All subjects were required to give written consent, via specially prepared consent forms, to allow use of their data including interviews, photographs and journals. All participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence. Due to early concerns voiced by the ethics committee no person under 18 years of age took part in this study. This limitation to the scope of the research brought to mind the words of Hardman and Palmer (1999:4):

No self-respecting researcher today would disregard the voices of women, but they rarely bother to listen to children.

Adolescents and children are an integral part of each congregation yet it was not considered practical by the Ethics Committee to study them through use of standard ethnographic methods, such as interviews, focus groups or group observation. The only way I found to access their voice was to ask adult research participants about their experiences in cases where they had been part of the church as a child or adolescent. This is clearly problematic in that memories fade and it is difficult to substantiate the claims made for experiences which may have taken place thirty or forty years ago. I also asked research participants if they had children, what they thought of children's activities and the materials used for work with children and adolescents within the congregation.

I am aware that as a researcher I have a responsibility to represent accurately the participants' experiences while at the same time keeping information about them confidential and anonymous. Contracts between the researched and researcher are now common practice in the Social Sciences as Potter (ed) (2002:161) says:

There should be some kind of ‘contract’ between researcher and ‘informants’ – not necessarily a written document, but at least a series of implicit and/or explicit agreements by which the researcher is bound.

Problems can still occur even with the consent of a participant since it may happen that a contributor could feel that they have been misrepresented in the final account. To help address these two issues I have used participant feedback so as to ensure that the material I have collected has been used appropriately by me. Finally, it is true to say that the methods I adopted could only be used effectively with the co-operation of the congregants.

### ***Researching in Churches***

I chose to study four congregations for a variety of reasons. Two of the most dominant reasons were that studying four churches allowed for ‘triangulation’ and also to make comparisons between all four groups. This could have occurred with just three sites but having a fourth allowed for the possibility that one congregation could withdraw and triangulation comparisons could still be made. I adopted a range of methods in this study to enable data to interlink with one another; for example, the questionnaire data helped inform the type of questions I asked during interviews. In recording sermons it allowed for the actual words congregants heard from church leaders and one another in prayers or testimonies to be transmitted to the reader in this thesis. This was often information which could not have been accessed in any other way other than directly observing services and recording their oral material. Triangulation of methods also helped to identify key areas, such as time and salvation as being integral to the ideologies and belief of Elim Pentecostals. Finally, in trying different methods it enabled me to discard a method, such as the journals, if it did not work, without the study being damaged through lack of material. In fact the data I collected was extremely wide ranging and only part of what I collected could be included in this thesis, yet it was not until all the material was coded that a clear picture could be determined of the collective value of participants ‘words’ as British Pentecostals in forming a meaningful ethnography.

### ***Participant Observation***

Participant observation is one of the most common methods for collecting data in the construction of an ethnographic account of social life.<sup>27</sup> The most appropriate form in observing research participants was as an 'active participant'. I observed the customs and actions of Pentecostals but also adhered to their cultural rules of behaviour. It was extremely beneficial as an observer that although I had been brought up in the Christian tradition my high Anglican background was extremely different to Pentecostal practices. This allowed me to note subtle and unsubtle differences between this group and High Anglicanism and ask questions about what was taking place both during services and outside of the church setting. This led me to gain a greater understanding of what was taking place during church services and more specifically during times of ritual behaviour.

'Cultural themes', a term coined by Morris Opler, who studied Apache culture, can be used when noting reoccurring cultural rules and concepts within this group. Spradley (1980:141) describes the concept of cultural themes:

The concept of theme has its roots in the general idea that cultures are more than bits and pieces of custom. Rather, every culture is a complex pattern.

Complex patterns within cultures suggest that many different aspects may be at play in situations being observed. Finding common patterns in the social actions observed and discovering the explanations for these customs is necessary to understand what is culturally taking place.

Participant observation is a means of paying attention to people as they go about their everyday lives; for me this meant observing Elim Pentecostals in churches, during social events and also at other times, for example, during cell group meetings or during an alpha course. In the field of Pentecostal studies several researchers have utilised this approach to data collection (see for example, Walsh 2003, Coleman 2000, Hinson 1999, Toulis 1997, Austin-Brooks 1997). These studies have been almost entirely made up of observations by the ethnographer and quotations and stories from interviews with members of the congregation. They provide a strong contribution to recent and current research on

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<sup>27</sup> See DeWalt and DeWalt (2002), Reason and Bradbury (ed) (2000), Jorgensen (1989), Anderson (1981) Spradley (1980), Johnson (1975), Hammersly and Atkinson (1983).

Pentecostalism. The success of this technique in these studies and in countless other ethnographic accounts demonstrates the effectiveness of participant observation.<sup>28</sup>

Participant observation was the most useful technique during the 'getting to know' stage of research and one which I continued to use throughout my time in the field. It allowed me to collect a large body of information on which to base hypotheses or rather 'hunches' and to plan further investigations. My observations were written down and, where possible, also digitally recorded (whether aural or visual) at the time. When this was not appropriate (e.g. in a cinema) then notes were written up immediately after the event.

There are numerous literary sources on participant observation and in particular taking fieldnotes.<sup>29</sup> Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995:4-5) describe fieldnotes as:

...accounts describing experiences and observations the research has made while participating in an intense and involved manner.

Fieldnotes are a researcher's own account of their observations of the experiences of the field. They are in Geertz's terms, 'interpretations of interpretations' (Geertz 1973:3-32). The taking of field notes for me was a dual process of working with both taking written notes and taking recording of the actual language used by participants. For example, to accurately note the exact words said during baptism by the pastors and the baptism candidate it was more appropriate to record the process, whereas written fieldnotes not only allowed participants' words to be written down but also allowed the recording of body language and other non-verbal actions. Fieldnotes for each of the congregations were recorded individually rather than as a collection. Notes were always dated and a commencement time and conclusion time were indicated. The number of attendees during services and other events were noted in the fieldnotes. The process of integrating fieldnotes with other data collected proved less tricky than I imagined. In studying Pentecostal congregations key acts and words are commonly repeated by leaders and were often extremely memorable. First impressions and feelings of my time in the field were refreshing to return to after leaving the field and were an aid during the writing up process.

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<sup>28</sup> Edgeworth (2003), Bloustein (2003), Denzin (2003), Shereen (2002), Heilman (2001), Frankenberg (1990), Hey (1997), Rose (1987), Strathern (1981).

<sup>29</sup> See Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995), Sanjek (ed) (1990), Spradley (1980).

Participant observation enabled me to note, in-situ, both verbal and non-verbal communication. However, there are some disadvantages to using participant observation. For instance, it is possible that I missed important aspects of social interaction, misunderstood some of what I saw or simply forgot to note some observations. Testing the veracity of the results of participant observation is difficult, although remaining in the field for a long period (in my case 30 months) allows one, in many cases, to cross-check observations by asking those involved to verify them. It is, in any case, impossible to record every single detail of human interaction: there is simply too much going on. In many instances, I preferred to concentrate on certain aspects of interaction; for example, the body language of pastors when presenting a sermon. However, participant observation did effectively capture both the environment of interaction as well as the interactions of the participants and it seemed to be the least disruptive and intrusive method. If one wants to understand the ways in which congregants interact in their 'natural setting' then participant observation remains the most appropriate method.

### ***Photographs***

Visual anthropology comprises a number of techniques, including film, video and photography, that has been developed over the last thirty years and is best described by Ruby (2000:ix):<sup>30</sup>

...visual anthropology logically proceeds from the belief that culture is manifested through visible symbols embedded in gestures, ceremonies, rituals, and artefacts situated in constructed and natural environments. Culture is conceived of as manifesting itself into scripts with plots involving actors and actresses with lines, costumes, props and settings.

The recording of events through the taking of pictures was vital in this research in that it contributed a visible understanding of a scenario over and above the usual discursive description. Photographs are used in the thesis in conjunction with descriptions and interpretations of what was happening to produce a more balanced account of the

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<sup>30</sup> For authors on visual anthropology see Fadwa (2004), Pink, Kurti and Afonso (eds) (2004), Grimshaw (2001), Pink (2001), Ruby (2000), Banks and Morphy (eds) (1997).

congregations. Photographic analysis has been used by a variety of anthropologists including James (1986) to provide visual images and strengthen points made throughout their works.

From the outset, the pastors gave me permission to take photographs. Very few photographs are included in this thesis due to the tight restraints of the ethics committee forbidding me to include photographs with members in, unless consent had been provided. The tracking down of members after events in the four congregations who appear in photographs is extremely difficult and proved impractical when taking photos during services and at social events. Often, during these times, members were physically close together and trying to take photos of just one or two people in a natural environment proved impractical. It was agreed, while in the field, that photographs could be taken as and when necessary by myself or a friend. I have, therefore a large collection of photographs of which very few are reproduced in this thesis.

### *Surveys*

Surveys are the most appropriate way to collect demographic data.<sup>31</sup> A questionnaire was distributed within the four congregations and collected on Sundays.<sup>32</sup> A week before the distribution of questionnaires, information was placed in church bulletins announcing the questionnaires and providing an introduction, including information about the content of the surveys. On entering the church every member of the congregation was verbally requested to complete a questionnaire. The actual distribution of the questionnaires took place in the months of May to September. This range of distribution dates was required to meet the wishes of the pastors as to when it was appropriate to give out questionnaires. Pens were made available and participants had the option of completing the questionnaires there and then or taking them home and returning them at a later date.

A number of copies of the same questionnaire were also left in each of the churches with a return box. It is a method which has been used to good effect by Kay (2000). Kay collected information through 930 surveys and interviews with Pentecostal ministers beginning in 1994. He was able to use this empirical data to support results with statistical analyses. For example Kay was able to analyse the types of training and academic which

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<sup>31</sup> For more on surveys see Fink (2003a), Fink (2003b), Bulmer (ed) (2002), Aldridge and Levine (2001), Gilham (2000), Peterson (2000), Oppenheim (2000), Gillham (2000a), Czaja and Blair (1996), Foddy (1993), Sudman and Bradburn (1982).

<sup>32</sup> See appendix for a copy of the questionnaire distributed.

ministers held. This included the type of degree they had received, such as BA, BTh. BD. MA, PhD and so on. Kay also collected and analysed data about eschatological beliefs within different Pentecostal denominations, including Elim, in which only 56.4% of Elim ministers believed that the church would be taken from the earth before the millennium (Kay 2000:147). This figure was the lowest out of the other denominations surveyed in which figures ranged from 71.2% to 96.0% (Kay 2000:147). These figures were useful to bear in mind when asking Elim congregants about their eschatological beliefs.

I distributed 400 questionnaires of which a total of 212 were completed and returned (percentage rate of return 53%).<sup>33</sup> To maximize the number of completed questionnaires returned a number of practical issues had to be addressed in the stages of design. The questionnaire commenced with general tick box questions for age, gender, ethnic group, marital status, education and so about conversion and other aspects of religious life. The next section was a free writing section with spaces for congregants to fill in about God's plans in their life, their church and their community. This was the least successful section as many congregants chose to leave this section blank. The final section was on choices and opinions as Christians, this involved tick box questions on issues, such as homosexuality, shopping on a Sunday and whether they drank alcohol or smoked.

Tick-box style questions had the best response rate across congregations, whereas questions requiring a longer response (for instance questions concerning God's 'vision' for the church, community and people's lives and so forth) were the least successful. Space for extended answers to questions was made available on the questionnaire, but completing these sections was optional and the overall length of the questionnaire was limited to four A4 pages. The questionnaire was designed to draw out any obvious areas of difference and areas of unity between the congregations as well as to help identify and direct further areas of research for later in the study. The questionnaire contained a tear-off interview request sheet at the back through which was designed to obtain candidates for one-to-one interviews, in order to fill out any gaps arising from them. The data resulting from this was processed using SPSS to identify patterns and assess statistical validity.

There was one fault in the questionnaire which I failed to identify during the trial, regarding the question of marriage. I had not considered that a response was needed to cater for those who may have already been married prior to conversion. I am aware that this

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<sup>33</sup> It is likely that some congregants took more than one questionnaire but returned just one.

weakness in questionnaire design may have deterred respondents from fully answering this question. On the whole, the questionnaire served its purpose in producing a substantial amount of worthwhile data. I might add that there were initially less obvious benefits of carrying out the survey, including its inclusiveness -- a very high proportion of congregants completed one -- and the opportunity it gave for further discussion within each congregation, both between researcher and congregants and between congregants themselves.

### ***Sermons, Church Events and Church Literature***

I decided early on during fieldwork that sermons would be included as significant data in need of analysis and consideration in the final thesis. In each church, either the Pastor or a visiting preacher would present a sermon to the congregation each Sunday. Sermons served as a means to identify significant issues, topics and themes and are a source all believers hear, such messages about heaven and hell or religious festivals, such as Lent. A total of 64 sermons were recorded and transcribed; other sermons, as well as the majority of visions, words and prayers were recorded in field notes. Both field notes and photographs were taken at Church events held throughout the year these ranged from special services at Christmas to themed social evening like '70s night' or 'Oscars' awards ceremonies' celebrating the talents of members, such as in children or youth work in various areas. It has not been possible, for reasons of space, to refer in this thesis to all of the events I observed during fieldwork. Church literature, which I class as service sheets, *Directions* magazine which is available in all the churches and any other material which are produced to be taken away I collected. This material was useful in keeping track of events coming up, and in the case of *Directions* magazine, topical issues in Pentecostalism.

### ***Journals***

The use of journals was a technique for data collection not used by others working in congregational studies. I agree with Denzin (1997:4) that:

Any social text can be analysed in terms of its treatment of four paired terms: (a) the 'real' and its representation in the text, (b) the text and the author, (c) lived



experience and its textual representations, and (d) the subject and his or her intentional meanings.

I had planned that journals would be used to gather information about times when members felt the presence of God the Father, God the Son or God the Holy Spirit present in their lives outside of the church setting. Unfortunately, this method produced little worthwhile data. The books which were given out were A5 size books and were to be filled out for approximately one month. I requested that books should be filled out when the participant had a supernatural experience (e.g. glossolalia, visions, etc.) including a time, date and place inserted next to each entry to see if there was any correlation between events. The main problem with the journals was that the research participants were required to remember to fill them in. I had relatively little control over whether the information recorded would be useful to me nor whether the book would actually get filled in at all. There was also the possibility that the journals would be lost or forgotten. I would like to have given research participants access to digital technology to record their entries but cost made this impractical. Participants gave me permission to read their journal and I have an obligation as always in using the material, to ensure writers' anonymity.

I thought that journals could have been successful and would provide an opportunity for subjects to write down details of supernatural occurrences at the time or soon after the event, hence reducing the risk of details being forgotten. I found that journals were hard to keep track of and that the guidelines I provided proved too loose; the use of journals on this occasion did not work well in terms of collecting more data. The technique is one that may have been more successful with individuals in a more enclosed and structured religious environment, such as a monastery, since people in those circumstances have more time to reflect and fill in a regular journal, however I found most Pentecostals to be extremely busy people, with children, full-time jobs and other commitments -- who were also often spontaneous people. When gathered together in groups, individual Pentecostals would tell their testimonies, words, visions and other spiritual experiences to the whole group. These were the type of experiences I originally intended to capture in journals.

## *Interviews*

One-to-one interviews are standard in virtually every ethnography and there is abundant literature on the topic.<sup>34</sup> During this fieldwork, in-depth interviews were held primarily with congregants who completed a contact slip provided with the questionnaires. I interviewed 19 people in total; the number was originally due to be twenty (five from each congregation), however, at Redland one candidate dropped out at a late stage of the project and no replacement could be found. Candidates for interview were selected purely at random with the exception that the four Pastors were pre-selected to be interviewed due to their central 'gatekeeping' position.

I interviewed in total eleven men and eight women. I chose to try and interview roughly two men and two women from each congregation plus the four pastors who were all male. Although selection for interviews was random the racial break down was that seventeen of participants were white, one was black and one was Asian. The age range was fairly evenly split with two participants being in the age category of 21-30, five between the ages of 31-40, five between 41-50, six between 51-60 and one being 70+. All candidates had been in the congregations for varying lengths of time, although two participants had become Christians in the last two years, five had become Christians as youths and the others had become Christians as adults, often for substantial periods of their adult life. I discovered that five of the interviewees had been converted in a Pentecostal Church with one of them being converted during my time in the field and fourteen had not. Fourteen of those participants were married, four were single and two were widows. Five candidates had a child or children under the age of 18 and of these all had children involved in church organised youth activities, such as Sunday School.

Interviews lasted between one to two and a half hours depending on the wishes of the informant. Interviews were recorded on to mini-disk; the quality of recordings was good and hence easy to transcribe, limiting the possibility of transcription error. A copy of the transcript of the interview was provided for every research participant with a consent form to make sure that they were happy that the transcript represented what they meant to say. All consent forms were received back with very few changes needing to be made to any of the dialogue of the interviews. Generally I found that women's responses in interviews

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<sup>34</sup> For instance see Atkins and Delamont (2006), Schostak (2006), Gillham (2005), Rubin and Rubin (2003), Ritchie (2003), Sommer and Quinlan (2002), Wengraf (2001), Gillham (2000), Atkinson (1998), Holstein (1995), Kvale (1996), Foddy (1993).

were relatively brief in comparison to their male counterparts. Interviews were used to collect information from congregants in their own words about themselves, about their beliefs, attitudes and experiences as Pentecostals and to help provide balance in my study between my observations and their experiences.

A further ethical issue arising from conducting interviews was that some of the responses from participants were too personally identifying to be used. The interviews were relatively informal and as a whole were successful, with the majority of research participants being extremely articulate, often talking at length about whole a host of issues, many of which they themselves introduced into the conversation. Under the conditions of the ethics committee every participant had to give consent to be interviewed and were free to withdraw at any point. One advantage of using this method was that detailed information could be gathered about subjects. For interviews to be productive the questions I posed had to be clear and jargon-free, focused and understandable by a 'layperson'. I devised open-ended questions so that interviewees felt free to talk about things that were important to them, and less about things that were primarily a part of the researcher agenda. For example, I requested people to 'tell me about their life before they became a Christian', and then for them to recount 'how they became Christians' and 'what changes, if any took place in their life after they became a Christian?' Through use of open-ended questions I encouraged participants to give full and complete responses. The problems of language in an interview situation, setting the scene of the interview and stating the context of the research are highlighted along with a warning by Hollway and Jefferson (2000:10-11) about the use of language:

That is that the words mean the same thing to the interviewer as to the interviewees. In other words, the researchers, in taking this for granted, are assuming that a shared meaning attaches to words: that the question will be the one that is understood.

To ensure that terms commonly used by congregants was fully understood to have the same meaning by both myself and the participants I asked if they could explain to me what words like 'Pentecostal' and 'evangelical' meant to them. This proved extremely useful when later analysing common linguistic terms used.

To ensure that participants were happy with what they had told me during interviews I sent out a second consent form, which stated that they were happy for me to use their interview, along with a copy of their transcribed interview for research participants to make changes if they wished. Only one person decided to remove a section from their transcript. The majority of research participants changed nothing or only minor details of their transcripts, and often these changes produced further clarity to their speech. Very positive feedback was given from speaking to research participants after they had received a copy of their transcript. This was usually in the context that it was a pleasure for them to read through what we had discussed in their interview.

### ***Elim, Outside Events and Cell Groups***

To gain an understanding of the Elim movement from a national and regional perspective I wrote to both the National Superintendent of Elim and the North East regional superintendent. Both returned correspondence, one by letter and the other by e-mail. Use of the Elim websites -- regional and national -- also helped to inform me of official Elim views and provided indications of what they believe is important enough to place on their website. Web material can be categorised in four main sections: significant history, churches, leaders, events, *Directions* magazine and probably most significantly mission -- a topic which is a major force in all four of the North East congregations.

At outside events, as at indoor events, I took photos and notes, where possible, at the time. What I have called 'outside events' included a fireworks display, cinema trip and Good Friday Passion Walk -- each of which I attended. Cell groups are weekly meetings in which roughly five to twelve members will meet together. During meeting passages of scripture may be read, other Christian literature and prayer. In attending cell group sessions I could not take notes at this time but noted down anything relevant that had happened soon after. The material that was used at cell group sessions I kept. I did exactly the same when attending Alpha Course sessions in the church.

### ***Coding and Writing Up***

Coding and categorising is an extremely important part of writing up fieldwork ethnography but is often omitted from published ethnographies. Once all data had been collected the final part of the preparation process was to code all of the material collected during fieldwork prior to writing up. Throughout the time in the field the data had been

organised and filed by category as data was collected. By categorising material early on it was possible to keep aware of the amount of material building in each category. The seven main categories which came out of my growing familiarity of the material: Danger and Protection, Unity and Disunity, Group Dynamics and Power, Knowledge, Proof and Transmission of Ideas, Rites of Passage, Culture and Environment, and, Other -- a category for material seemed important but did not directly fit under the other headings. In each of these major groups were sub-categories; for example in Danger and Protection there was 'risk', 'boundaries', 'witchcraft' and so on. This familiarity and organisation of the material aided direction of development about my work such as identifying relevant work by leading anthropologists and theoretical ideas. Knowledge of the content of the material collected was vital in enabling me to produce a coding list. In considering whether to use computer software, such as Nvivo, or whether to code by hand it was noted that there were problems with suitability of software available for the purposes required for this project and also that there would be specific difficulties involved in trying to learn the program. It was decided that the coding would be performed by hand. This also, I believe, provided for a deeper familiarisation with the material.

The bulk of the material was the interviews, sermons and other material transcribed from recordings of the people within the churches. Redland and Castletown produced their own tapes of sermons for members to purchase, Sandysore and Riverside did not but allowed me to bring in my own tapes and the sound desk people would record sermons for me, the quality of which was superb. All oral material used throughout this thesis is represents actual words used; only 'erm', 'ers' and some 'y'knows' have been removed due to such items not aiding the flow or meaning of the conversation. Anything in square brackets, [ ], has been added to the narrative by myself in order to add clarity to the research participant's words or include details like, for example, laughing. Anything in *italics* is either an actual biblical quote or paraphrase.

In coding material, printed copies of transcripts were coded down their margins with the colour of the major heading it was to go under and the bullet point title it was to go under next to it. Then composite Word documents were assembled from the coded material. This method was extremely effective as the main headings were what formed part of chapter one and the basis of chapters three to eight. The other material, namely the hand written notes, material noted during events, *Directions* magazine and other literature produced by the congregations were coded by hand into a list identifying where the

material was to be found. The survey material was entered into an SPSS data file and the digital photographs were sorted and stored by congregation along with event details.

The final stage of analysis involved integrating anthropological literature with the collected data. This involved the production of a series of mind maps and outlines of chapters before the writing up phase commenced. The themes selected related to the main subject matter of boundaries and time which run throughout the thesis -- and indicate, I hope, the complexity of these concepts. The point of this study is to report and analyze what happened in the four Pentecostal Churches through the words and actions of congregants during the period of fieldwork. The challenge I undertook was 'not to *capture* the experience but to *give access* to the experience as meaningful of meaning' (Csordas 2002: 2). The real substance of the thesis is the exposure of members' beliefs as the significant and meaningful aspects of their faith.

### **Analytical Approach**

There are lots of ways I could have approached my fieldwork data, for instance from the perspective of narrative like Hopewell (1988), worship like Stringer (1999), conflict like Becker (1999) and so on and so forth. The data I collected encouraged me to analyse these congregations with particular reference to the work of Barth (2000, 1969, 1966) and Cohen (2000, 1986, 1985) who are the original contributors to the theory of boundaries in relation to social organisation. The themes of risk, congregations as organisations, the body, belonging and the future came through as particularly important to congregants. Both qualitative and quantitative social scientific methods were used in order to collect data, along with feed-back to research participants and the application of anthropological theories were used to create a holistic approach to the study of congregations and specifically to provide an ethnographic account of white, British Pentecostal congregations. Increasingly, in recent years, ethnographers, such as Walsh (2003), Toulis (1997), Stringer (1999) have been concerned with the question of reflexivity. Since the 1970s there has been a growing awareness that an ethnographer should situate themselves in their work. The need for an outline of how this research came about and my academic and religious background is vital in order for the reader to understand my own position and identity within this research project.

## Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a metaphor from grammar indicating a relationship of identity between subject and object, thus meaning the inclusion of the actors (scholar, author, observer) in the act and/or its outcomes. In this sense reflexivity shows all knowledge is subjective. (Hufford 1999: 294)

In researching religion and belief the dimension of my own religious beliefs and identity must be accounted (Hufford 1999) -- a situation which is true even if 'impartiality' towards religion is the chosen methodological stance. The methodological stance I take is as an academic studying religion from within the domain of anthropology. I believed when studying theology and in the early stages of anthropological research that my position towards the study of religion was neutral and objective. Yet after reading Donovan (1990) in which he questions what use it is to know that a researcher has a neutral stance prior to fieldwork, I have come to reassess this position. I now agree with Donovan that it is meaningless to profess neutrality towards religion. Hufford (1990: 288-289) makes an accurate and useful point:

If impartiality in belief studies cannot consist of having no personal beliefs, then impartiality must be a methodological stance in which one acknowledges one's personal beliefs but sets them aside for scholarly purposes. Recognizing that each of us has a personal voice, for research purposes we choose to speak instead with our scholarly voice.

I have chosen from the outset that this research should remain as impartial and neutral as possible even though I recognise this is to some extent a literary device and that such neutrality can only ever be partially possible. Neutrality is in a sense an impossible position since every researcher has bias whether aware of them or not (Donovan 1990). The bias that I bring to the study of religion is produced by external and internal influences - not all bias can be changed; rather, they are just there and must be identified and accounted for. The facts may be clear that I am a white Caucasian female in my mid-twenties. My mother

tongue is English and I have lived in a small village just outside of Preston, Lancashire for most of my life. These are attributes I cannot change, I also have personal characteristics, style of dress and other traits which allow people to form initial opinions about me as a person until these are affirmed or dismissed at a later stage note that different people will interpret these qualities in different ways -- it is a dynamic situation.

Reflexivity is often understood as the process of 'bending back on one's self' -- in other words looking and considering as a researcher how the researched assign an identity or multiple identities to me. As Steier (ed) (1992:1) says:

...the Research process itself must be seen as socially constructing a world or worlds, with the researcher included in, rather than outside, the body of their own research.

Researchers in the social sciences serve as a tool within their research. An appreciation of the identity of the researcher must be included for their work to be fully reflexive and to make clear, as far as possible the social relationship between the researcher and the researched. My identity as a researcher cannot be seen as coming solely from me, since a more holistic approach must be taken to encompass both my own self-understanding and the identity placed upon me by others as identity is always co-constructed and negotiable. Conversations with participants form a large part of reflexivity. Right from the outset of fieldwork I was asked, as part of natural conversation about my religious background and if I was a Christian. I was always truthful that I had come from the Church of England's Anglo-Catholic tradition and was brought up regularly attending church but did not now consider myself a Christian.

During my time with the congregations I was always explicit that I was at university and doing 'research' among Pentecostals. In the initial stages of research it was clear to me when asked what I was studying that a reply of anthropology or social anthropology was not part of the common vernacular. Instead, it was more useful to explain that I was writing a study about Elim Pentecostal congregations in the North East and that their congregation was going to be a part of this study. This allowed congregants to relax, get to know me and generally chat about a whole variety of things. This simple explanation gave me an identity and a place within the congregational setting which allowed my presence to be unobtrusive.



My presence in this research and the subjectivity I am applying in this section is affected not by me but by the presence of others. It is a fact that different candidates in this research, if asked to write about me could describe me very differently. To the elderly I am still young and naïve with a lot to learn probably closest in their minds to their grandchildren and other young people. To the middle-aged, I seem to be more like their now grown child or a young person at university. To young mothers and fathers as someone still single but will be like them one day. To teenagers and children I may well appear old and dowdy or young and vibrant, or simply a collaborator. The multiple identities placed upon me allowed individuals to assimilate in their minds what I was doing and allowed me to become part of their world.

Gergen (1985), a social constructionist, highlights the fact that in the social sciences worlds are seen as constructed, with the researcher being regarded as a participant in the construction of this world. It is the researcher who acts as an eye or transparent mirror and creates the cultural picture (Ruby 1982, Kluckhohn 1949). This cultural interpretation is formed through interaction among the researcher, the researched and other outside influences. I, as the author of this work, necessarily have my findings reflected through myself as an external researcher. This is an inevitability that I have sought to manage through the close interaction I have maintained with subjects throughout this research. Yet I remain an outsider through being a non-Christian, neutral observer but an insider through being British. During my time in the field I also became an insider, a familiar face at services and other events -- people got to know my name and I, to an outsider looking in, was part of the congregation. I was also an insider through being British, having a Christian background and being able to talk about the Bible and religion in general. These were all aids to straddling the boundary between insider and outsider. What I have written, I hope is a neutral re-telling of my time in the field which relies more upon the words, actions and literature of individual congregants than my own.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter outlines the current research undertaken in the field of congregational studies (Guest 2002, Ammerman 2001, Coleman 2000, Stringer 1999, Hopewell 1988, Toulis 1997). I then chart the several techniques I use to collect data: participant observation, photographs, surveys, sermons analysis, journals and interviews. These techniques include the use of both qualitative methods, such as participant observation and interviews. The

pros and cons of each of the techniques are examined and the reasons for choosing these methods outlined. Qualitative ethnography is the primary focus of this thesis and as such the words of research participants and church leaders, as well as their experiences as Pentecostals, are the heart of this thesis. I decided that for the purposes of triangulation I would look at four congregations. This strategy enabled me to compare data from one congregation with that collected from several others. Also, from a practical point of view, it safeguarded against the study becoming unviable if one congregation withdrew -- something which did not occur. In using a variety of methods it allowed for the collection of a whole host of useful data. It also meant that the failure of the journals method did not result in a shortage of suitable data. The final stage when analysing data is to code and write up findings, a process which few ethnographers include in the presentation of their final data. I end the chapter by a reflexive section which outlines my academic, cultural and religious background. This thesis, through using tested social scientific methods, has produced a rich ethnographic account of British Pentecostalism in the twenty-first century.

The following chapter will consider the Elim movement specifically as a faith-based voluntary organisation. I outline the structure of the two types of Elim churches -- Elim Church Incorporated (ECI) churches and Elim Foursquare Gospel Alliance (EFGA) churches.

## Chapter Three

# Elim as an Organisation

### Introduction

...Elim has over 500 congregations throughout towns and cities in the UK as well as churches in forty countries around the world. With a heart to reach up to God in worship and out to the world in service, it has a goal to 'build bigger people' – fully resourced and equipped to bring the full gospel to the whole world. (John Glass, General Superintendent).<sup>35</sup>

This statement, from the Elim website, by John Glass is enlightening in regards to the aims of the Elim Movement; for example, worshipping God, 'building bigger people' and preparing people for mission. All aspects of Elim Pentecostals' lives are influenced by their Christian faith and their expression of this faith and it is this that lies at the heart of this ethnography.<sup>36</sup> The study of Elim as an organisation is needed within this thesis to contextualise where the four congregations presented are located within the structural hierarchy of Elim. How the Elim movement was formed, where it fits alongside other Pentecostal movements, such as Assemblies of God, and the history of Elim is present earlier in the thesis in chapters one and three. Elim congregations in the North East are composed of people who believe they have been transformed and who have joined voluntarily with others who share the same philosophy and values. The voluntary attendance of individual congregational members is a feature of the work of Ammerman (2003:1). I consider Elim (like all churches) to be a voluntary organisation as it has charity status, because the organisation is non-profit making and has a mission to which people with the same values and beliefs are attracted.<sup>37</sup> Elim is specifically attracting like-minded people (born again Christians) who have come together to form a congregation with the

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<sup>35</sup> Taken from [www.elim.org.uk](http://www.elim.org.uk) on the 12<sup>th</sup> September 2006.

<sup>36</sup> See chapter seven for more on embodiment and the work of Csordas (1994a, 2002).

<sup>37</sup> Christian Churches and other religious congregations have been specifically cited as being voluntary organisations by other ethnographers, namely Ammerman (2001).

common aim to spread the gospel message. This chapter deals with the structure of Elim as an organisation and in particular as a voluntary organisation. The study of organisations, which includes the study of voluntary organisations, has become a major interest area in British research.<sup>38</sup> The structure of this chapter is as follows: a congregation as a voluntary organisation is discussed first before proceeding to consider the traditional role of churches as philanthropic organisations in relation to their function today. The national structure of Elim is outlined prior to discussion of the two types of local Elim churches. The final three areas on which this chapter will deliberate are church membership, the role of church leaders and finally the issue of accountability.

### **A Church as a Voluntary Organisation**

A voluntary organisation is not easily definable but for the purpose of this study I define it as a group of people who have voluntarily chosen to attend a specific group with the same interests, values or cause. In the case of a congregation this means that people have decided to become members of Elim and adhere to the same beliefs and values of Elim Church. Ammerman (2001:365) suggests:

Congregations and other voluntary organizations, then, generate the basic social capital of association, along with the civic capital of communication and organizational skills.

Ammerman (2001) proposes that religious groups, just like other voluntary organisations are strengthened by the similarities of its members, and their expression of that similarity. For example, the girl guides specifically attracts girls between the ages of 11-16 who have an interest in learning new skills, team work and service to others within an all female environment. As a voluntary organisation people choose whether they attend an Elim church or not and the degree of association, time or resources (often monetary) they wish to contribute. A number of recent studies have characterised congregations as organisations and often specifically refer to them as 'voluntary organisations' (or 'associations').<sup>39</sup> Cameron (2004), in her study worked with five congregations -- two United Reformed, one

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<sup>38</sup> For authors on organizations see Courtney (2002), Morgan (1997), Billis and Harris (eds) (1996), Hayes (1996), Gann (1996), Smith, Rochester and Hedley (eds) (1995), Drucker (1993), Butler and Wilson (1990).

<sup>39</sup> See Ammerman (2001), Cameron (2004, 2005), Harris (1998), Pattison (1997).

Church of England, one Methodist and one New Testament Church of God and applies her knowledge of organisations. Cameron (2004) uses the work of the sociologist Weber (1974) on bureaucracy and the forms that associations take. Weber constructs an ideal type of what an association is and then looks to see if real life examples match the definition (Albrow 1970). Weber's work, although significant in its focus on bureaucracies, does not relate well to the modern organisational style of Elim as his organisational model does not sufficiently encompass the philanthropic nature of churches. Weber considers bureaucracy as a model for the efficient exercise of authority, something which churches do not need to concern themselves with as the question of the origins of their authority is mandated in Scripture, regardless of the resultant level of efficiency. It is possible that given time this would change as the necessities of keeping the churches running would force an organisational change, but as the organisation is determined by ideology rather than concerns over efficiency it is likely that such a change would take a long time to occur, if it were to occur at all. In order to understand how the Elim church fits into the earlier proposed models of organisations it is necessary to identify the structure of the church itself. In the following section I will consider the national structure of Elim church.

### **National and Local Structure of Elim Church**

This section will consider in detail the structure of Elim churches in the UK. Of the 9000 Elim worldwide, 500 are located in the UK.<sup>40</sup> The organisation of Elim at International, national, regional and local levels were clarified to me by Mathew, a congregant at Castletown:

Well the structure of the church first of all, by being an Elim Pentecostal church there is an overall structure of the denomination that we're part of. And so we are to a degree governed by the overall governance of the Elim Pentecostal Churches in that our church is within the North East Region. And there is a superintendent for the region and there's a headquarters in the UK for the church. So we reside in that governance first of all and then individually in our church, there's the leadership team which comprises of elders and Pastor Benjamin as sort of head elder I support but he's also the Pastor of the church and they work in a...they are essentially looking

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<sup>40</sup> [www.elim.org.uk](http://www.elim.org.uk) accessed 11<sup>th</sup> November 2005.

after the vision and direction of the church, it's becoming more so that. It would have been traditionally and to a degree even now that the leadership team look after everything in church life from the stupidest little detail of shall we buy a new Hoover? And processing all those kind of little administrative things but it's gradually shifting away from that as the church is growing and really their role is to look after strategic decisions, vision of the church and making sure everything is sort of looked after and going in the right direction. They're sort of at the top looking after everything, then, it's not sort of hierarchical but it's just easier to describe it that way. Underneath they are just leaders of different departments...

In this extract, Matthew demonstrates a detailed knowledge of the regional and national governing structures of Elim, commenting on his perceived effectiveness of the leadership. All leadership positions mentioned are currently held entirely by white males. Lack of female leaders is an ongoing issue in many churches and this topic will be discussed later in this chapter. Toulis (1997) in her work with Pentecostal women also noted that the leadership of Afro-Caribbean churches of in Britain was also male-dominated despite these congregations being predominantly female. However, the leadership of women in churches is an issue which came to the fore in a conversation with Charlie, a congregant at Castletown. He calls my attention to the fact that Elim, as an organisation, are now recognising key women as leaders and that his congregation, like the other three, wish to see more women in key positions. Despite the lack of female leaders in comparison to male leaders, the male to female ratio of leaders (including elders) in the four congregations was still visually greater than my experience of women leaders in the Church of England. The organisation of Elim churches, including the difference between Elim Four Square Gospel Alliance (EFGA) and Elim Church Incorporated (ECI) churches, will be provided next.

Elim churches, as religious institutions, have a structure of organisation at grassroots level as individual churches – and as part of the overarching governmental structure which is Elim. The congregations of Castletown, Sandysore and Redland are all EFGA churches.

while Riverside is an ECI church. Jacob, an associate Pastor at Sandysore, spoke to me about the structure of Elim:<sup>41</sup>

... It's actually a peculiar set up Elim and most people don't understand it! It's called the Elim Foursquare Gospel Alliance -- EFGA, that's right. So there are what are called Alliance churches because they're in the Gospel Alliance...Sandysore is an Alliance church, Castletown is an Alliance church, Redland is an Alliance church. The offshoot from Redland, do you know the off shoot from Redland...that, is not an Alliance church...An Alliance church, when it comes down to practical terms -- what it means is that Alliance churches pay ten percent of their income by rule to headquarters. I'm trying to think of the other group of church now that where the Alliance -- let me look at my thing. You'll have to forgive me if I get confused on this because everybody does! Elim Church Incorporated which sounds like a business! We're all ministers somehow or another of the Elim Church Incorporated. The other group of churches are ECI Churches...which means they're affiliated. They keep arguing this at conference regularly whether they should be expected to pay. Most good churches will pay their dues. Leeds which is a big church is an ECI church but it is a huge church with staff...It has been very useful for churches abroad now who wanted to be under a sort of umbrella ship, say African churches and that. They remain under the ECI umbrella so they can have links, they can have oversight, they can have input but it's weird. It would take a two page piece to sort it out! Nobody's sorted it out. People keep asking well what is it? And we still get confused!...The way it runs then from top to bottom -- if that's the right description -- executive council at the top now -- that's their traditional name. They now like to be known as the national leadership team which is now more up-to-date...John Glass is the leader of the whole lot and this is done by vote, they're all voted on, there's no self appointing...everyone who's a card carrying member [Pastors carry small credit card style cards to show they are Elim Pastors] and every church also has a lay representative picked by the church; they have a vote as well...Often if you're not at

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<sup>41</sup> Associate Pastors are fully trained theologically and in all aspects of ministry just as a normal Pastor is but in Jacob's case he was unsalaried. When I asked Jacob about his role as an associate Pastor, he said: 'I am a Pastor. I could have a church of my own but circumstances -- home circumstances forbids a moves because of health reasons and things like that...Samuel's the Pastor of the church and he was appointed from outside. I was also appointed under his direction to work alongside him.'

conference then there are postal votes during the year for things. So it's a very sort of democratic sort of system. So the leadership team comes from that, they have officers that work but John Glass is known as the General Superintendent so that's the guy at the top...

Here, Jacob explains the difference within Elim between EFGA churches and ECI churches. He is keen to emphasise that the current systems of affiliation are confusing to even him, an associate Pastor, and is sorry that the acronyms for the two styles do make Elim sound like a business. He goes on to explain that EFGA churches pay 10% of their income to Elim headquarters which ECI churches do not, and the various benefits each system gives the tithe-paying or non-tithe-paying church. He notes in particular the benefits for African churches with this type of association to Elim. The pitch of the conversation suggests that Jacob was particularly pleased that Elim has worldwide affiliations with a global appeal.<sup>42</sup> Jacob did indicate that the majority of large Elim churches had EFGA membership, although one large church in Leeds is an ECI church which from the tone of the conversation he thinks would be more suited to being an EFGA church. As with many informants, Jacob is keen to emphasize the 'democratic' structure of the Elim.

In the next extract Billy, a congregant at Riverside, explains the decision of his congregation to become an ECI church within Elim. This was a decision made after Pastor Adam moved from Redland church, where he had been Pastor, to form the Riverside congregation:

...we're kind of what they call ECI which means that we're just associated with Elim. I don't understand why we are. Again this was to do with the split. I think [Pastor] Adam and the guy who was administrator at the time wanted to remain Elim. The vast majority of people when they went through the split didn't want anything to do with them at all. Personally I would rather come back fully under the Elim banner. This would mean that we wouldn't have our own charitable trust, we wouldn't need trustees, we wouldn't have to understand all of the legislation -- which we don't -- so therefore we run the risk of doing things that are not right and it's much better to be

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<sup>42</sup> For more on the globalization of Pentecostalism see chapter 1.



part of an organisation that manages all of these things. But whether or not the people in the congregation would be willing to move?

Billy, like Jacob, is also keen to admit that he too did not fully understand the difference between his church (as an ECI church) and that of an EFGA church, suggesting that this attitude of ignorance towards the organisation is pervasive, and congregants like Matthew, with a good understanding of the national and international structure, are rarity. Billy reaffirms Jacob's comments that ECI status is more like an associate membership with Elim than being an EFGA member. Here the level of membership appears to be beneficial to smaller congregations with a smaller income than to larger Churches as tithes are not required. Despite the financial benefits of being an ECI church, Billy is uneasy with understanding all the legislation and legal obligations his church was required to fulfil. All Elim churches, whether, ECI or EFGA, have charity status and as such must follow the rules and regulations for this. The changing character of churches and the traditional background of churches as the main providers of philanthropic activities will be considered next.

### **The Changing Role of Churches**

Cameron (2004:149) remarks that congregations: 'Despite the visibility of their buildings, what goes on in them has largely escaped the attention of policy-makers and academics in the 1980s and 1990s.' Cameron goes on to explain that British policy makers follow the example of politicians in the United States, who suggest that faith-based communities have an important part to play in social welfare. Prior to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century it should be noted that the British government in the 1980s and 1990s did not fund 'faith-based' activities which met the need of community welfare. Many of these 'faith-based' organisations were started in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century through church involvement in charitable philanthropic activities and continued to help the poor and disadvantaged after this time. Barnardos and Save the Children are contemporary examples of philanthropic organisations. The influence of churches as participants in 'social' and 'community work' has appeared in numerous studies, including Hall and Howes (1965) and Allahyari (2000). Hall and Howes' work deals broadly with the philanthropic work of the Church of England and Allahyari focuses on two faith-based projects which provide help for alcoholics -- one by the Salvation Army

and the other by Roman Catholics. The Salvation Army and other faith-based Church projects are often viewed by members of the public as providing a necessary service to society. The words of Bertrand Russell are often cited in relation to this philanthropic role:

...institutions are to be judged by the good or harm they do to individuals. (Bertrand Russell, 1917:13).

In simple terms, Russell suggests that institutions can either have beneficial or negative effects on an individual and society and how an institution is organised and treated relates to how well it functions to either enhance the life of the individual and society or cause damage. Elim churches can be usefully characterised as voluntary organisations, yet they are enterprises which are radically different to, say, a university -- an institution which markets the benefits of higher education, or a hospital which promotes its cares for the sick. Elim churches are aware that they need to market themselves to potential members, a point noted by Ammerman (2001) also. By making their buildings comfortable Charlie, a congregant at Castletown emphasised, in an extract not included, that today Elim churches wish to have comfortable surroundings for members to worship in. This is a point which is taken further by Isobelle who calls attention to the fact that Elim churches have taken steps to be inclusive for the disabled by putting in wheelchair ramps, disabled toilets and loop systems for the hard of hearing (see later in this chapter). Elim's awareness that they need to market their faith to non-believers was a topic raised by Pastor Benjamin at Castletown, but could have equally been said by the other Pastors. Benjamin, in his interview, drew my attention to the work his church was doing to promote their faith and draw potential new members through their community activities (especially for youths), alternative 'nativities' and other seasonal events to name just two.<sup>43</sup> These events, although often not creating direct profit (like a profit-making company would), often do bring new members into the church. The long-term effect of this is visibly fuller and younger congregations than that of Anglican churches.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> See chapter 5 for more on these types of creative outreach activities.

<sup>44</sup> The Church of England's website's (provisional) figures for the attendance of young people (under 16s) in 2005 showed that average weekly church attendance fell by 1% from 2004 and average weekly Sunday church attendance fell by 4%. Interestingly weekly high church attendance for young people rose by 1%, taken from [www.cofe.anglican.org/info/statistics/2005provisionalattendance.pdf](http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/statistics/2005provisionalattendance.pdf) on the 9<sup>th</sup> October 2007.

One of the major changes which religious consumers appear to be demanding in Charismatic circles is a change in the style and use of their physical buildings. These physical spaces are no longer considered 'sacred space' unlike in Roman Catholicism or High Anglicanism where ordinary congregants never enter the sanctuary. The use of physical space in the church building symbolises the relationships between members, and the extent to which the building (or parts of the building) is viewed as sacred or profane (at different times) is important here. Turner (1979), a theologian, suggests that there are two types of space in religion, the *domus dei* (House of God) and the *domus ecclesiae* (House for the People of God). Turner's concept is very useful in terms of dealing with the issue of sacred space and the boundary between the sacred and the profane. The physical buildings which Elim congregations use or own are open to anyone, whatever their beliefs so long as they are respectful of Pentecostal beliefs regarding the physical space of the building. Therefore, you do not need permission to attend an Elim church, unlike a Synagogue or Mosque, or wear special clothing, and services are open to all.

This suggests a more utilitarian attitude within the churches to its space, weakening the sacred/profane boundary mentioned above as other concerns, most notably convenience (such as changing the layout of the building for a particular event) and changes over time are considered to be more important. This suggests a particular perspective within the churches with respect to both the function of the sacred spaces within the church buildings and the outlook of the church on the world in general. The first of these is most likely a consequence of the individualisation noted earlier in this chapter; it is the person's worship itself that matters within Pentecostalism, not the explicit form of that worship. In a sense the sacred space has moved from strict geographical locations into the worshipping individuals. This is reflected in the increasing focus on the body as a moral vessel, concerning lifestyle and the mode of living of the individual (what Csordas terms 'embodiment' (2001)) rather than explicit sacred functions that are distinct from the individuals performing them.

The second of these factors regarding the use of church space, the notion of change over time, shows that there is an explicit concern within Elim churches for the earthly future of the church and the various considerations that must be made to ensure that the church continues to function. Part of this is necessary maintenance and upkeep, but the potential for growth, expansion or other forms of substantial change are also of concern within the churches. This is also utilitarian in the sense that any changes made are to

increase the ease of use of the church building for worship, rather than with any overarching mandates for the use or shape of sacred space. The churches plan to expand their congregations and cope with demographic change within their congregations with these concerns in mind in what they consider to be the near future (as opposed to the relatively 'far' future of Christ's second coming), with a particular focus on a church's evangelism. In the next section I will consider ways in which potential followers are identified and attracted to Elim.

### **Attracting Potential Followers**

Typically, Drucker (1993) assumes that churches are considered to be voluntary organisations which, if they are to succeed, need to know the needs of their potential followers. In this regard, churches follow the same objectives as a business would, in the sense that they need to know their target audience and the local and cultural environment in which they are based. Attracting groups within the community which are not already catered for is imperative to growth and success. If an organisation knows its clientele then activities can be tailored more specifically for its members' needs. This is something which has been done in Elim Churches; for example, their main target audience appears to be families, and because of this they provide multiple family and youth activities. Pastor Benjamin, in an interview, considered his church as a voluntary organisation and specifically used this term. He outlines current social youth and family events at his church and expressed that once his congregations could move into a new building they would be even more 'geared up' for families:

...we would be geared up totally geared up for families -- children and single parent...having a proper baby changing room, running a crèche and that sort of thing -- so someone can actually change their baby etcetera. We run lots of clubs and different things. During the week there is a group that meets for sevens to elevens and that is called Wise Guys it is a fun sort of activity group and it's about understanding the Bible, thoughts from the Bible, that's for Christian young people. Once a month there is a more fun activity called Kidz Connect which runs for seven to elevens and that is open to children from the community. It's geared up more for children from the community but lots of Christian children come along as well and that is fun activities with some sort of biblical teaching. On a Sunday there is worship time and

fun teaching again on a Sunday so during the Sunday morning celebration gathering, the children have their worship time and also the teenagers...RS2 and that is more in keeping with elevens to sixteens with issues which are related to their lives not just reading the bible. This is more about life related issues and once a month during the week the RS2 age group have more fun activities and that sort of thing, so pizza, Xbox nights and karaoke...once a month a fantastic thing which we run called Fun House and that's for fives to elevens where the whole building is taken over and we have about a hundred children from the community and from the surrounding areas where there is a bouncy castle. We call it Fun House because the whole church building is used. There is a bouncy castle in the main auditorium, the chairs are taken out of the way, dance mats, Xbox games consoles, football, nail art, face painting, table top football, scalelectrix, you name it. It's all going on all at the same time and we're looking to really develop that as a community based project, so it's safe play, fun activity. So there's a lot of fun stuff and teaching type stuff all intermingled really.

Benjamin is particularly keen to inform me of the work his church is doing in the Castletown area. In particular, he is eager to describe his church as an institution which is thoroughly equipped for families, youths and children (including having a crèche and numerous young people's activities). Benjamin appeared in high spirits talking about the success of his church at running events for youths -- both for those who belong to the church and those who do not. These events, he went on to tell me, could be put on by the church at a fraction of the cost of a profit-making company. He appears enthusiastic about his church's abilities to keep up with current youth trends. However, Benjamin also wished to draw attention to the biblical teaching and worship provided for youths. Here, it appears that the Castletown church wishes to be the leader in providing key biblical teaching and other 'faith' activities for the next generation (see chapter 5 for more on religious youths). Castletown and Sandyshore emerge as two congregations which took particular care in catering for teenage needs. This is perhaps due to individuals present within these whose churches key strengths lay in youth activities. The willingness of the Redland and Riverside congregations to put on youth activities is apparent but neither are as energetic and organised as at the other two churches.

Drucker (1993:8-9) notes that in order to develop and ultimately grow organisations must have leaders who know their strengths and allow their organisation to develop:

The lesson for the leaders of non-profits is that one has to grow with success. But one also has to ensure that one doesn't become unable to adjust. Sooner or later, growth slows down and the institution plateaus. Then it has to be able to maintain its momentum, its flexibility, its vitality, and its vision...Non-profit organizations have no 'bottom line.' They are prone to consider everything they do to be righteous and moral and to serve a cause, so they are not willing to say, if it doesn't produce results then maybe we should direct our resources elsewhere. Non-profit making organizations need the discipline of organized abandonment perhaps even more than a business does. They need to face up to critical choices...Non-profit institutions need innovation as much as businesses or government...The starting point is to recognize that change is not a threat. It's an opportunity.

In the above quote, Drucker argues that non-profit organisations cannot stay static -- they have to expand in order to sustain their success yet remain flexible to retain their forward thinking momentum. He also suggests that these institutions are morally righteous and will not compromise their values even if their organisation is a failure. It is noted that churches wish to be morally and ethically astute and uncompromising in their stances. Elim, as an organisation, has very clear views on issues such as homosexuality and creationism but also has the potential to adapt and change its focus over time. For example, in its attitude towards unmarried mothers, which has changed from traditionally being intolerant to being an organisation which is understanding, sympathetic and tolerant to this category of society. Elim churches have adapted to their environment to be providers of charismatic Christianity in modern, multicultural Britain. Morgan (1997), one of the leading authors on organisations (who is also cited by Ammerman 2001), writes about organisations in a multitude of ways - as machines, as organisms, as brains, as cultures, as political systems, as psychic prisons, as flux and transformation, and, finally, as instruments of domination. Morgan (1997) proposes that some organisations operate as if they are machines and calls these bureaucracies. One of the problems with the notion that organisations operate like machines is that there is the expectation that they will behave like them -- efficient,

predictable and routine. Organisations, like machines, can be run effectively but, like machines, organisations can fail. Morgan (1997:33) also considers organisations as organisms, as in nature's living organisms, which adapt to their environment:

Just as we find polar bears in the arctic regions, camels in deserts, and alligators in swamps, we notice that certain species of organizations are 'better adapted' to specific environmental conditions than others. We find that bureaucratic organizations tend to work most effectively in environments that are stable or protected in some way and that very different species are found in more competitive and turbulent regions, such as environments of high-tech firms in the aerospace and micro-electronics industries.

Morgan notes how organisations adapt to their environment and some organisations are better adapted to certain environments than others. Elim churches are aware of their environment and their need to adapt to it. One of the areas developed by Castletown has been to develop links with international Christians and, in particular, Nigerian Christians.<sup>45</sup> Castletown, out of all four congregations, is the most ethnically diverse. How this diversity came about is explained to me by Mathew, a congregant in his twenties:

... it just developed...we'd have what we'd call a Nigerian night in the church and it was a Sunday evening usually about once every six months where it was just like a multi-cultural night. So we would all of the people from the OFNC [Overseas Fellowship of Nigerian Christians] whether from our church or not would come over for that and they would all be in their big Nigerian ethnic dress they would be up singing here and stuff and we'd have loads of rice -- spicy rice -- and spicy chicken afterwards. And it was just like a night given over to their culture and their expression of Christianity and they were really successful. They were always extremely long [laughs] because Nigerian just don't have a concept of time, unlike the British...they became a bit of a regular appearance and I think from that it showed that the church was

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<sup>45</sup> An 'international congregant' in this context is member of Elim who does not have British nationality.

supporting and encouraging Nigerian Christians and in that almost saying in that you are the fabric of our church now ...the impressive dynamic form that African Christians can often have compared to our inhibitive British Christianity which can be quite dry and quite reserved. So I think over time that just built...when people came to Castletown from overseas they would usually know somebody here already and they would say oh go to Elim church, they've got, some other Nigerians go there and I think that just became a bit of a network...so that was the basis and that just developed an international flavour to the church and when people started to come maybe just on the off chance -- people from other nations -- who...come to the UK and they're looking for Pentecostal Christianity because it's more prevalent in their home country...there was a Pastor from another church came and he really commented on that.

Mathew, although unsure about how Castletown did develop a reputation for welcoming international people speaks about their first links with Nigerian Christians in the OFNC. Mathew believes that this link helped his church to develop its reputation for welcoming international believers and in particular Nigerian Christians. The inclusive nature of particular 'Nigerian evenings' in welcoming Nigerian Christians give the Castletown congregations a unique 'international flavour' which the other churches do not possess in such great measure. The integration of 'international congregations' is more visibly noticeable at the Castletown church than any of the other churches, although international congregants are present (to a lesser extent) in the other three churches.<sup>46</sup> It should be noted that Castletown area is more racially diverse than the locations of the other churches, although this is slowly changing over time.

Elim churches wish to be competitive with other religious groups, especially those which they class as 'dangerous', for example, Spiritualists, Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses. To be competitive with other religious groups, like Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses, Elim churches, during my time in the field, were visibly demonstrating that they value all people and have made physical adaptations of their buildings to show inclusivity. This will be dealt with in more detail in the next section.

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<sup>46</sup> This is supported by see table 1.7 in Chapter 1 for a breakdown of the ethnic groups in each of the four congregations.



## **Adaptations of Physical Space**

Adaptations, such as wheelchair ramps, toilets for the disabled and loop systems for the partially deaf, were either pre-existing or introduced to the physical buildings of the churches during my fieldwork. The Sandysore church also had both Sunday morning and evening services signed. Unfortunately I did not interview any deaf congregants during my time in the field. However, I believe their voices can be heard, to an extent, through those who worked with the deaf and also the testimony of Laura, a deaf congregant, given one Sunday morning about her time in Romania (see chapter 6). The Sandysore church's work with the deaf set it aside; only one other church in the North East caters for the deaf. Isabelle spoke one Sunday about how she came to be involved with the deaf and why the work with the deaf is so important to her:

Fifteen years ago I went to Leicester with the church I was involved with at that time and that was the first time I'd seen an interpreter in my entire life and I had never met one deaf person at all, amazing so it was. So I went and sat at the front so I could see the interpreter doing her work and I sat next to two men...I didn't know they were deaf because they didn't have hearing aids in and during the whole conference the man who was leading the whole conference said could we just honour these two deaf people in our congregation -- and I could have died because I was sitting next to them y'know -- oh goodness that's them next to me and you just really feel scared because of your lack of ability to communicate. But like Samuel was saying the Holy Spirit just drops it into you at the most unexpected time...God in His wisdom and in His patience just gave me a heart for the deaf community. Now He didn't give me a heart for sign language so those of you who are thinking I could never do that because I can't sign y'know -- love is going to fill in the gap in that communication. It is not about loving sign language it is about loving the people that use sign language...

Isabelle recalls her embarrassment at not acknowledging the possibility of sensory-impaired congregants at a service she once attended. This confession from Isabelle appeared set the congregational members with limited experience of communicating with the deaf at ease in the service without being condemning. This section appeared to fit appropriately with

theme of the service which was encouraging people to become involved in church projects, like sign language or helping in the crèche. Isabelle stressed her trust in God in this area, as well as framing it as part of what she saw as 'God's plan for her life' as she professed that she does not have a natural ability with sign language but that this does not matter as God has provided her with 'a heart' for this work. Isabelle then continued:

The deaf community have their very own language and last year, January 2003 coming into March 2003 within that time British sign language was recognised as an official language which means it's the same as German, it's the same as French, it actually has proper recognition in all the schools now...the deaf have to be included in church life, in church fellowship. If we don't welcome to them they go other places, they go to the Jehovah's Witnesses because they have people who minister to the deaf every week through out the week five days a week, all the time. They go to the Mormon Church, they're going to other churches, they are going to the deaf clubs and who's in the deaf clubs? The Mormons, the Jehovah's Witnesses, there's not any Christians there and that's shameful... it [sign language] is now recognised as a language and we have this official document which is Sign Me In and it's what by law, and this is a government document, what by law we in the hearing churches must provide for deaf people who choose to come to a hearing church. There's some deaf may choose to go to a deaf church but there's only one in Castletown.

The formal recognition of 'sign language' as an official language three years ago is stressed by Isabelle as an important event which should make the church re-evaluate their position on the issue. She is keen to warning Elim members that as a group they needed to become more involved in work with the disabled to prevent the risk of deaf being attracted to Mormonism or the faith of Jehovah's Witnesses because of the lack of signed services at other mainstream churches. The Latter-day Saints and Jehovah's Witnesses are two particular groups which Pentecostals consider offer counterfeit religion. Isabelle continued:

Now this is the time to be involved. We have this document that tells us what we must do in this church because we can't go to other churches and say look at us we've got it right because we haven't quite got it right yet and the reason is we need more people on the team... We need other people to come alongside so we can actually pass on this ministry, its really important y'know its taken fifteen years to get to this point where deaf people are feeling more at home in this church. they're not completely at home, more at home in this church because we've got a lot of work to do.... We need people in this corner this morning to come and sign up. I know I said you didn't need sign language but Norman who has taught sign language in Castletown for a lot of years has offered to teach sign language early on a Sunday morning an in the very near future so please just come and start a new ministry, come and be involved. Thank you.

Isabelle urged people to be involved with the deaf and indicates that the governmental document 'Sign Me In' is available to show congregants what they could (and should) be doing as not all deaf people feel at home there, in spite of many years work being done on the issue. She emphasises later on in the conversation (in an extract not included) that 'The hearing church has got so much to answer for, we said to deaf people not that many years ago -- you can't come to church because you're deaf, you can't take communion because you're deaf, you can't get married in church because you're deaf. We've got all of this to put right.' Isabelle ends by requesting that people come and sign up and start ministering to the deaf. For Isabelle, the church, although making some effort to be inclusive, needs to do much more and is clearly disappointed that more people in the church are not involved in the sign language program. Isabelle, by the tone of her voice, clearly has the hope that things will change and the deaf will become more included in her church.

Even though the Sandyshore church is one of the very few churches which do minister to the deaf it is noted by Isabelle that things are not completely right in the church for the deaf, a sentiment echoed by Chloe:

...the numbers of deaf have gone down. I think because it's a service which is not accessible -- it's too long -- it's not as visual as it could be or ought to be, it needs to be a lot more accessible to everybody -- I always think if you can have deaf people

accessing your services then anybody can access them because it's about clear and good communication. I think there's too much repeating done, so that's off putting. repetition of songs is too much, repetition within sermons when I have to interpret them is too much, sermons could be cut in half with less repetition and people don't know when to finish when they are speaking either or how to finish. I do think public presentation is poorer at times but on the other hand there are some good speakers. They are not using some people, so there's potential out there which is not being used, so there's untapped potential...my only strong experience is with the deaf. I think there is an unwillingness to learn, there is a willingness but there is still an ignorance and I think there will always be. We're doing some research in other churches at the moment which is interesting and from that research we're the only church which does as much as we do for deaf people. We are about the most accessible deaf church in the region but I think we're looking to move on and produce a more deaf church and Samuel isn't alien to that and neither are the elders. So Lewis [her husband] and I are looking at having a deaf House Group to develop a church for deaf people where music isn't the predominant things, where worship can be done in various forms.

At the beginning of this extract the tone of the conversation was one of disappointment but continually lifted, becoming far more positive at the end. Chloe does praise the church as she emphasises that her Pastor and other church leaders are willing to make church services more accessible, and acknowledges that Sandyside is one of the few churches which actually has signed services, something Chloe is clearly disappointed by. This lack of commitment by other churches to the deaf is seen by Chloe as a problem for her church remedy, something to which she is clearly committed. Her own personal contribution to encouraging more deaf congregants (besides signing services) is to start running other deaf worship facilities with her husband, with the aim of attracting more deaf congregants.. Elim churches ability to attract potential new members and also retain current members is paramount for the organisation's continuation.

## Church Membership

During the time I spent with these Elim congregations the question was raised in my mind as to why these churches appeared to be more successful in attracting regular attendees than the majority of non-charismatic churches.<sup>47</sup> So why are they successful? One reason appears to be that the group shares a common ideology and exert, as a group, a pressure to conform and not cross boundaries of unacceptability.

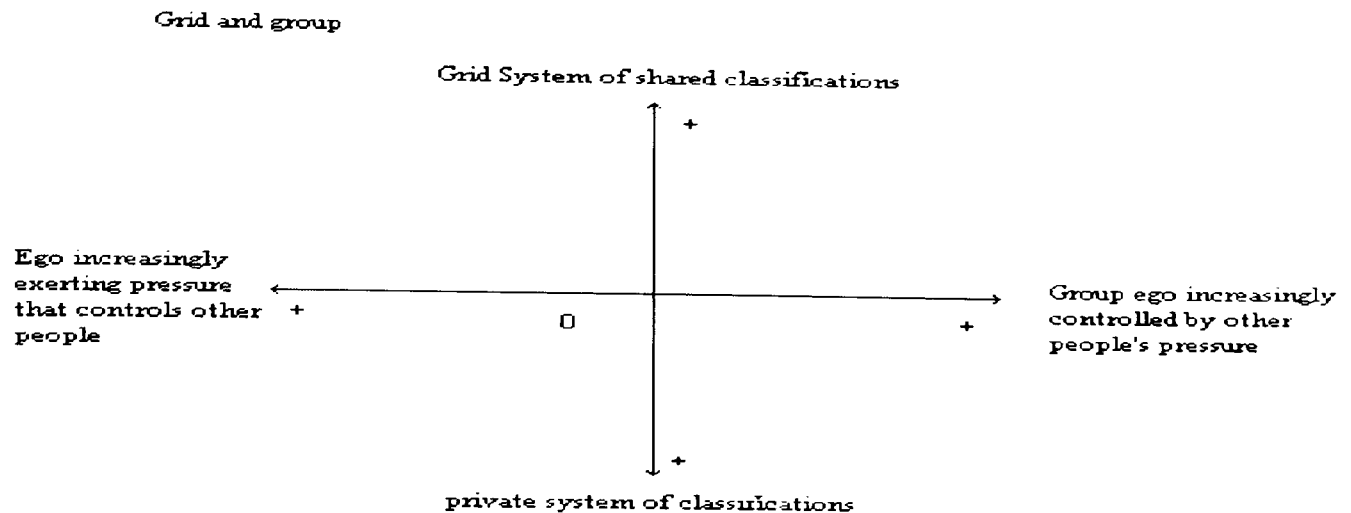
This is something that is registered by Dean Kelly in his research into the growth of doctrinally 'conservative' churches relative to the more liberal in his book 'Why Conservative Churches are Growing' (1986). Kelly claims that the main system for maintaining church numbers and growth is that for fostering meaning among its congregants, where meaning is taken to be something which an adherent's life is *for*, its purpose. Kelly points out that in order for an organisation to remain at a high level of activity and devotion by its members, it must imbue this meaning into their lives, and, Kelly claims, this can only be done if an organisation 'takes itself seriously'. That is, if a religious movement wishes to succeed it must believe in its cause, and think that it and it alone is responsible for the good that it purports to provide people with. Kelly produces a list of 'minimal maxims of seriousness' (1986:121) for an organisation which wishes to be an organisation that is 'serious' about its claims, and thus have a large, stable and possibly growing membership.

Elim Pentecostalism fulfils many of these criteria, giving a strong indication that the faith imbues its members with sufficient meaning to carry on believing in it as the sole provider of meaning in the lives of its adherents. This can be seen by its repeated statements during sermons of the necessity of salvation and the requirement of mission (for which, see chapter 4), the absolute correctness of the Bible as a source of authority, and the relatively rigid standards of behaviour to which its congregants and, particularly, pastors (see the next section) are held.

This can be seen to be the case even more when Mary Douglas' (1973) group-grid model of social control and variance is applied to the churches. Applying Douglas' model suggests that the congregations seem to fit best into the category of a 'strong grid-group organisation', that is they all would belong in the upper right-hand quadrant of Douglas' diagram (shown here).

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<sup>47</sup> See Chambers (2005).



**Figure 3.1 Diagram of Douglas' (1973) Group-Grip Theory. Taken from Douglas (1973:84)**

This is because there is no real room for innovation in the church system, as it is based of doctrines that are not set by the members of the group themselves, but are already decided for them by the publicly-determined ('grid') system of Elim doctrine. Exactly how individual members of Elim are situated on the diagram depends on their position within the hierarchy of the organisation, although this is not always the case. Individual congregants are likely to defer to instruction by (in Douglas' terms, the 'will of') the pastors, who in turn are likely to defer to the instruction of the Elim organisation as a whole, or the Bible. Those who do not are the rogue elements who found splinter groups from the main church and are likely to be to the left of the Elim organisation as a whole. The Riverside congregation, as a splinter group from the other churches, is likely to be to the left of the other churches on the grid, although still above the ego-control axis as all churches use the shared classifications of the Bible as the basis of their organisation. Any movement by Elim churches into the lower half of the diagram would most likely show a transgression from church doctrine and thus a move away from Christianity as a whole.

Exactly why the congregations are willing to follow the rules of the group and remain a unified body of people cannot be simply put down to the persuasiveness of the doctrines themselves, although Kelly points out that their persuasiveness, in concert with the commitment of the existing members, can be a large factor in this. Group success is also down to the charisma of its ministers and leaders. Druker, a prominent philosopher of organisations did research into what profit-making businesses could learn from non-profit

making ones and vice versa. His findings are cited by Cox (1996:234), who stresses the role of the manager:

The most effective manager today must be an educator, constantly empowering – not commanding – those with whom he or she works.

The manager, in the case of the congregations, is their pastor, who must appear to have ‘a knowledge of society’ and of people. They also have the quality of compassion towards others. The idea of the church as a unified unit is often reaffirmed during Sunday services as well as at other times. The use of the word ‘we’ is a very inclusive term and is nearly always used by the pastors to reaffirm their humanness and their place within the group. There were many occasions when the Pastors and other leaders have said during Sunday services that they too are not ultimate authorities on the subjects they talk about, they do not have ‘all the answers’. Pastor Dylan at Redland said one Sunday morning:

I cannot teach you to love like God as I am still learning.

Rather than setting themselves apart as exemplars, the pastors, as leaders, often admit that they have human desires and have times of temptation which have resulted in them not always ‘putting God first’. This is usually followed by the confession that they are constantly striving ‘to do better with God’s help’. These admissions by those in central positions in the church give a sense of hope to the people in the congregation in suggesting that everyone struggles at times.

How Pastors view their role in the congregations was articulated well with the analogy of a funnel. Pastor Samuel at Sandyshore, when speaking about prayer that Sunday morning, highlighted the need for all congregants to pray in order for God’s blessing when poured out to be captured most effectively:

Prayer is a bit like a funnel. It’s not a good picture if the funnel is [in the triangular shape of] Pastor, elders, congregation. Really it’s the other way up; congregation,

elders, Pastor. I get a sense of what this is all like, that we can all pour something in -- we can pray in our spiritual tongues.

The funnel being an analogy for the structure of leadership in the church was the reverse of what is usually considered the norm in many churches and structures of religion. The importance of the individual is making a difference when combined with the rest of the group was established and the significance of the Pastor played down the Pastor's words were 'empowering – not commanding' (ibid:234). The Pastors of Elim churches are the most visible leaders within their churches and, returning to Douglas' (1973) group-grid theory, are the figures with the most influence over the general congregations. The words of Drucker (in Cox 1996) alongside Mary Douglas' (1973) theory suggest that Pastors play an influential role in empowering their congregants while simultaneously ensuring their congregations remain unified with the aims of the Elim movement. The role of Pastors as the most visible leader of their church is considered next.

### **Pastors -- 'a part of' or 'apart from'?**

Organisation at congregational level centres on the pastor. One of the main changes that has occurred in Elim churches is leadership at grass roots level. Today, the role and duties of a Pastor have changed more than in previous generations. In the past Pastors were the focal hierarchical figures within their churches, whereas now, members have a much more active role within their church. This style of leadership is more inclusive -- the church is less hierarchical, more democratic, and has a flatter command structure. Pastor Benjamin spoke about the changing role of the Pastor when I asked him about his role. The conversations went as follows:

Helen: In your role as a Pastor what do you do? What's your job as it were?

Benjamin: Well that is a huge problem because I think that it is a jack of all trades and almost master of none. I mean historically Pastor, Vicar, Priest, Minister, they are interchangeable words. You'll find in Pentecostal type churches we use the word Pastor -- it's just taken from the Greek word meaning shepherd in the New Testament and we tend to use that word for the ministering type of role. I mean really it has evolved to become the full-time person in a voluntary organisation and because



you're the full-time person you end up doing everything. So Pastors can end up open and closing the building, putting out chairs, visiting people, going into hospital visiting the sick, visiting people from house to house, counselling, marriage counselling, individual counselling, teaching, biblical teaching. managing. I mean our church is growing significantly so there is management -- so you have to have the ability to manage and manage change -- training up new leaders, inspiring people, drawing up new vision casting. So there's the leadership dimension, there's an encouraging shepherding dimension, there is a teaching vision dimension. In fact no one person can do that. So what we are doing as a church now is having paid salaried people to do that. So now my role ultimately will become more finally tuned to become more of a leadership and vision casting...what a person sees on a Sunday is just the tip of the iceberg --they just don't know what goes on behind the scenes and it can almost be quite bewildering because in today's day and age expectations of people, the complexity of life, the breakdown of family, people's expectations, people's experiences, it's becoming more complicated. Life used to be much more straightforward, people believed this, this and this and you did this, this and this and that was it. Whereas with everything today everything is relative and there's people's experiences. There are people today far more professional than myself at things in life and in business and we have to utilise those aspects.

Benjamin was keen to provide details about how the role of the Pastor has changed over time. Today, Pastors, according to Benjamin, have a less clear role than for previous generations. Benjamin describes his role as a 'professional one' in which he sees himself as a manager of different departments but one in which paid church workers, elders and congregants have a great role to play. However, he is also eager to stress the pastoral yet all-encompassing nature of his position as Pastor. Benjamin wholeheartedly welcomes the energy with which his church members draw channel their gifts and strengths for the benefit of the church. He stresses how, within his church, other people have skills which he does not possess and which, he believes, should be utilised for the good of the congregation. The role of the Pastor has also changed due to the differing expectations of international congregants. Benjamin told me that international congregants have specific expectations for their Pastor which British congregants do not:

When I visit people it is really interesting, I have to be really adaptable. I visited a family recently -- a Middle Eastern family -- and when I went in I didn't expect to eat but they had prepared food, so I accepted food not wanting to upset anyone. And we sat on the floor on a big mat together and crossed our legs and the food was handed to me in a particular way and I just went with the flow. So I've had to be quite adaptable. When I first came every Nigerian family I visited always prepared food. If I go and visit now they always prepare something and you're waited upon in a particular way and you feel a little bit like you don't want to put people to trouble but it's the culture...I think also in certain cultures the minister is treated in an almost godlike fashion -- what you say goes almost and there is an expectation that the minister will always be there. So some of our folks will have an expectation that what I say goes but also that I should be there morning, noon and night and they're not correct expectations. What I say doesn't go because I'm not God and I can't be here morning, noon and night...But it's quite amazing that we've been able to get on with each other as a church from such a diverse background.

Benjamin explores a common view here, that Pastors are 'special', almost saintly. This understanding has a bearing on the structural position of the pastor that international congregants, unlike 'home' congregants, wish to prepare food for him when he visits. He draws on this experience to suggest that international congregants have placed a 'godlike' persona upon him (as their Pastor) something which he himself discourages, as it is an ideal which filters into all aspects of leadership in the church, which may lead to problems if the Pastor is seen as a cure-all or a figure with absolute authority.

The Pastors in all four of the congregations are naturally charismatic people and have an ability to draw congregants to listen to them. The image of Pastors as charismatic leaders brings to mind the work of Weber's (1964) on the taxonomy of sources of authority: tradition, rationality and charisma. Pastors need their followers and followers need their Pastors. Here both Pastors and followers are mutually dependent from each other. The charisma of leaders is noted most markedly in the work of organisational theorists (for example, Peter Drucker) and is also a prominent feature of cults (Storr 1996). However, the relationship between the Elim Pastor and his congregation is not as extreme or controlling as that of Cult leaders over their members. Perhaps this is because there is a

less psychological extremism and attachment than in 'closed' religious cults. The behaviour of leaders as moral beacons is an issue that will be considered next.

### **Leaders' Behaviour as a Moral Beacon**

A striking example of the behaviour of leaders needing to be beyond reproach came through from interviews during my fieldwork. This occurred when working with the concept of what was acceptable behaviour for those in positions of authority, other than the Pastor. This boundary relating to the specific behaviour of leaders was one raised on a number of occasions in interviews. The issue of a leader's behaviour needing to be beyond reproach was raised by Jacob, a part of the Sandysore leadership team. Several congregants when completing the questionnaire admitted that they smoke. When I mentioned this during the interview Jacob replied,

Helen: I noticed with the questionnaire that one or two people put down that they smoked, is that problematic for the church?

Jacob: That is an interesting one. It became an issue in one case where somebody wanted to be up on the platform leading worship and singing whose immediate action after the service was to go out and light up a cigarette and the leaders felt that wasn't on, it was a bad witness. So yes it can be problematic depending on where the person is. There is obviously no smoking of the premises and never has been, there is no alcoholic wine allowed on the premises so if anybody wants a wedding reception then they cannot have alcoholic wine on the premises -- it's in the deeds -- you'll find that in Methodist churches as well. People if they do smoke, they'll smoke outside and they'll know that they've got a problem and they'll sometimes be prayed with about it and helped to overcome it. People do drink, go for the odd drink and do that. Once or twice people have gotten drunk and they've tended to be young people and that has tended to be dealt with in a Pastoral situation. The Bible does say *do not get drunk*. But it doesn't say do not drink wine! So you just take it as it is. So I wouldn't say it was a temperance church although obviously in communion we use non-alcoholic wine.

For Jacob, indulging in possibly harmful behaviour around the church environment is in his opinion, 'bad witnessing' to other churchgoers and to the general public, although he Quotes the Bible to justify not condemning the practice in themselves, only their possible consequences, which are the harmful things. Jacob appears to emphasise the moderate stance his church has over drinking alcohol, yet is also clear that the drunkenness of members will be dealt with pastorally, a situation which Jacob implies is more common among the young rather than being a widespread problem in the church. The behavioural choices of smoking, drinking alcohol and gambling are, perhaps, areas of greater unease than other forms of behaviour due to Elim churches traditionally promoting temperance and so the pastors are held to a higher standard as far as these indulgences are concerned. Today, Elim churches do not allow alcohol, smoking or gambling (such as selling raffle tickets) on their premises, a decision which they see as being in keeping with the traditional roots of the Elim movement.

The behaviour of the leadership team as a connoting boundary was also raised by Chloe, also a congregant at Sandysore, who previously attended a House Church before joining Elim:

The nature of the leadership here is very male and very dogmatic in certain ways i.e. the behaviour of those on the platform has to be beyond reproach which is quite frightening and everything has to go through the leadership, everything has to go through the system whereas there's more spontaneity and breadth in the House Church Movement. And there's more permission given to be yourself really, who you are and if you sin you're not excluded from something if you sin, depending on the sin. If you commit adultery then there is a reprimand and you can be thrown out of the House Church Movement the same way you can in any church but I don't know, there's more grace.

Chloe describes the leadership in her church having a 'dogma' about them, something which is a major difference from her time in the House Church Movement. She articulates well the fact that even in the House Church Movement, as with Elim, people can be reprimanded and even thrown out depending on the extremity of sin. Still, Chloe thinks that in the House Church Movement there is 'more grace' than in Elim regarding sin. This

suggests that she considers the structure of Elim to be not so democratic for all members, but it is apparent thanks to other members' responses that such opinions depends on one's previous experiences of other organisational styles. What is most interesting about the extracts above is they have contrasting attitudes to acceptable behaviour from those in leadership.

Smoking is an obvious physical act which can be easily identified, both by those who do and those who do not smoke, as a sin. This was a point brought up by Emily from Sandysore:

...I think something like that [smoking] is a more evident sin, y'know what I mean? Like I said before I comfort ate a lot and put on a lot of weight and it was like a sin that anyone can see. Do you know what I mean? I mean I was a size 20 and obviously if you see over indulgence as a sin, gluttony being a sin, so some people have more evident sin than others. I think if you've got a hidden secret sin you can probably judge people with a more open one because you can see it.

Emily clearly identifies smoking with visible sin, and uses it to acknowledge that 'we' all have the potential to sin and recognises that Christians can and do have 'hidden sins'. Gluttony is not classed by the leadership team as a mode of behaviour which will prevent someone from being on the leadership team or leading worship yet for Emily is an obvious sin. Some forms of behaviour and lifestyle choices which are not explicitly considered a sin through Scripture (such as smoking) are often habits carried over from their previous 'unsaved' lifestyle are very obvious and in the church's opinion sends out the wrong signals. The public and private lives of congregants are not separate entities for Elim members as at all times members are on display as representatives of Christ. The above quotes also highlight a tension in the Pastor's role. On the one hand he is 'one of us', a member, albeit a prominent member, of the congregation, but also a 'moral beacon', a bastion of all that is good about the Pentecostal church.

Church dogma on many aspects of religious life moves to a more liberal position over time. One important aspect of Elim Pentecostals is their ability to change -- continually changing and adapting. Not only is the role of the Pastor a flexible one, congregational expectations clearly contribute to that flexibility. Another area which

churches have undergone changes in, just like all other organisations, is in the need for them to be accountable to their members and those outside the church.

### **Accountability**

Organisations, whether profit-making or voluntary, have to deal with the issue of accountability. Rochester (1995), who has worked with voluntary organisations, points out that voluntary agencies, just like any other organisation, have to be accountable:

...voluntary agencies are held to be accountable for their activities in a number of different ways by a variety of constituents or stakeholders – members, beneficiaries, paid and unpaid staff, donors and supporters, government and other funding bodies, the ‘community’ and the taxpayer.

Accountability is an issue in all organisations, including Elim churches, and was certainly an issue in all four congregations involved in this research. All four congregations produced a yearly report on the fellowship, including, finances, departmental activities and the church’s vision for the future. Accountability is a topic aired at length by Mathew at Castletown:

...it’s massively important especially in a church where you hear about ministries and churches abusing finances or abusing their leadership positions and stuff. Integrity and trust are some of the most vital elements to a church because really you’ve got to -- the leadership has got to make the effort to gain that trust to prove that integrity and so...the vision statement and the financial records -- we’ve got to make an effort to say to people they are open for you to read and understand what we’re about -- this is who we are, this is what we do and there has gotta be an openness there and it’s almost in a sense to address a balance of where the public generally are, they’re very suspicious of established organisations and as much as we’re a registered charity we’ve got to take the extra step, we’ve got to go that extra mile to ensure that people can have faith and trust in us. And then within the church setting -- well nobody is gonna follow somebody that they’re not quite sure about -- if you want to follow

somebody's vision, you've got to know what they're about and if you have any sort of doubts, if there's any sort of thing in your mind thinking hmm do they have an ulterior motive or are they in it for themselves or money even?

For Mathew, the accountability of churches is vital, especially, in an age where the media feature stories of church leaders abusing finances. For him, making financial and other records public proves that his church has 'nothing to hide' which in turn makes members of the public less suspicious of the organisation. Accountability within churches is an issue which dominates and does not just relate to finances, but rather all aspects of church life, including, protecting children. This accountability to those outside is something which Mathew welcomes as a member and sees it as a positive 'witness' to those both inside and outside of the church. Another positive area of witness is the increase in the prominence of female leaders in the church, a subject which I will examine next.

### **The Gendered Organisation**

It is natural that most religious congregations (even those which are segregated from the 'world') will change and develop over time. One area which is currently changing is the role of women, particularly as leaders in the church. The role of women in leadership positions was an issue addressed at length by Charlie, a congregant at Castletown. He spoke about Elim as an organisation in relation his perceived need for there to be more female leaders:

...in Elim as an organisation they're just slowly now coming to recognise the likes of Marilyn Harry and others who've been evangelists, really key people and bringing them into some more strategic leadership positions but I think that it's a big question of opening up. Now I think there's a far more relaxed viewpoint but it's something we need to be exploring a bit further. I'm not wanting to make an issue out of it but I think if it's something about opening up opportunities then do we distinguish and have we got the right to?...So it's nothing just something I wanted to bring up as an issue but it is an interesting dimension of development and how things change.

Charlie expresses the view that 'Elim as an organisation' is beginning to recognise the talents of gifted females as leaders. He suggests that the gender divide is becoming less significant over time with the current recognition of female leaders. My fieldwork in the four Elim churches suggests that a growing number of people, regardless of gender and ethnicity, are becoming involved at grassroots level. Given the increasing recognition of female leaders, it is possible that talented individuals from ethnic minority groups will also one day be recognised at regional and national levels. At grassroots levels female elders and leaders are seen in all of the four churches, although, there is still a distinct male dominance in leadership position. Female pastors in Elim are able to perform all the same duties as their male counterpart. This is a marked difference from the Jamaican Pentecostals Toulis studied in which female pastors cannot baptise converts (1997:243).

Roles in Elim, whether intentional or not, do appear to be gendered. The domain of the kitchen as a 'woman's place' is an unspoken boundary beyond which men seldom venture and one which relates predominantly to the usual home situation since it women who are most often the main providers of meals in the home. All the times when I have eaten food with the congregations it has been predominately women who have laid the tables and set out the food. In the kitchen areas of the churches it is the women who sort out the food and often bring good home cooked food to have. Although the issue was not spoken of during my fieldwork preparing and serving food or drink always seems to be the domain of women.

As I sat next to the Pastor's wife one Sunday morning I noted that roughly fifteen minutes before the end of the service she got up and went to the back of the church and through another door. She had gone to make the tea and set out the biscuits -- she would serve refreshments with the help of another female congregant. The serving of tea and coffee after services was initiated into one of the other churches in May 2004 by the cell group I attended and became a regular feature after the service. The matter was discussed in cell groups set up to work through a six week course based on Rick Warren's 'Purpose Driven Life' course.<sup>48</sup> It covered, as a main theme, the topic of serving God in relation to service of others. The cell group saw a need for new comers to the church to get to know other congregants and saw the serving of tea and coffee after services to be a way to

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<sup>48</sup> See Warren (2002) for the book which accompanied the course.



achieve this. Interestingly enough it was a male within the cell group who made the suggestion and was active in following the project through. However, the situation of a man being the main provider of food or drink in the church setting is not the norm. The situation of the kitchen and offering hospitality seems to be one in which the women are able to play a part in the church and is one where they have power and achieve success. Analysis of the questionnaires shows that only women indicated their gift to the church to be hospitality. The change in attitude towards women leaders in the church is one are which Elim is slowly developing. This change in attitude towards women as being 'leaders' rather than 'providers' is a modern attitude which has occurred in general society more generally and is filtering into the church. It is usually 'young women' who appear to be the ones willing to get involved in leadership and willing alongside men to lead the church into its future. Despite there being no specific example to cite from my time in the field of women leaders per se; women did lead worship, give sermons, and assist with the serving of the bread and the wine. The change in attitude to women in leadership positions has taken place in society; for example there has been an increase in female directors in the UK (including the North east). One area where the number of women in management positions in the UK (which includes the North East) has increased in on the FTSE 100 boards, in 1999 36% of FTSE boards had no women on them and today that figure has declined to 24%. Next I will consider Elim as an organisation today.<sup>49</sup>

### **Elim Today**

Despite Pentecostals' strong awareness of future times they are also strongly grounded in the here and now and wish to continue their faith in contemporary Britain. One way in which they manifest this orientation to the present is through their confrontation with pressing, moral and social issues, such as civil partnerships and child poverty. Pentecostals believe that because they are God's representatives here on earth they should be involved in politics and other world issues. The biggest issues facing the church in its present time are what might best be understood as problems of modernity. I will go on to consider one of these in some depth. One of the most fundamental issues for Elim churches in the UK appear to be over homosexuality.

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<sup>49</sup> Taken from [www.ethicsworld.org/corporate\\_governance/ftse\\_2007.pdf](http://www.ethicsworld.org/corporate_governance/ftse_2007.pdf) accessed 13<sup>th</sup> April 2008.

Civil partnerships for same-sex couples became legal on 19<sup>th</sup> December 2005 in Northern Ireland, 20<sup>th</sup> December 2005 in Scotland and 21<sup>st</sup> December 2005 for England and Wales. At present British denominations, such as the Methodist church, Church of England and also the Church of Scotland are deciding if they will bless and even hold same sex partnerships. Currently, Quakers and Metropolitan Churches, who specifically welcome Gay Christians, were until now the only Christians to bless same-sex unions. According to the BBC website on religion and ethics, on the 9<sup>th</sup> March 2006, 'Methodists may become the first big Christian denomination to allow official blessings services in the UK'.<sup>50</sup> The Church of England and also the Church of Scotland are discussing whether to allow civil-partnership ceremonies. The Church of England is also presently debating whether clergy should be allowed to have a same-sex partnership. At present Elim Pentecostal churches do not allow the blessing of same-sex civil partnerships.

Jacob, a congregant at Sandysore in April 2005, prior to the legal introduction of civil partnerships in the UK, spoke about a choice people within his church had to make. Their decision was over whether, if invited, they would attend a 'gay wedding' of a same-sex couple or not. The decision was left to the conscience of the individual. The topic arose when I asked Jacob about homosexuality. The conversation went as follows:

Helen: ...how does the church deal with families who've had a son or a daughter who's come out and said that they're gay?

Jacob: Well I don't think we've had one. We've had somebody who was, well he wasn't part of our young people's group at the time and he still live local and there's a gay church in Castletown apparently.

Helen: Yes.

Jacob: Oh you've heard of it have you! Well I've heard of it but I don't know where it is! [laughs]...He went through a form of marriage -- is that the right word?

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<sup>50</sup> [www.bbc.co.uk/religion/ethics/samesexmarriage/latest.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/ethics/samesexmarriage/latest.shtml). accessed on the 9<sup>th</sup> March 2006.

Whatever, with his partner a few years ago to which actually Samuel was invited and friends -- I don't know whether he went or not but quite a few of the young people went because they were friends as well. So the young people would go and sort of say Oh I'm not going! Whether the older ones would or not, I don't know. I personally wouldn't, friend or not, but they did. It's coming up in this culture but we haven't had a problem with it, it's not been a problem with leadership, with anybody in leadership. It hasn't been a problem with any of the groups that we've known of and we would not promote gay rights. We would promote human rights but the gay rights agenda is a different agenda and we would not promote that kind of thing. The question of divorce and remarriage, everyone's taken as an individual case -- there isn't a hard and fast rule and so each one is looked at. The couple are talked with and in the end if the leaders are happy and the Pastor is happy to do the wedding then that's what goes on that sort of issue.

Homosexuality, for Jacob, was obviously something he did not agree with and, if invited to a Civil Partnership, would not attend. With the introduction of civil partnerships, although they had not been introduced at the time this interview took place, civil partnerships will, over time, become more common. Whether Elim congregants will attend a same-sex union or not is something that is not clear cut and is a contentious issue for believers. One of the things I found most interesting about Jacob's reply was that he included Elim's position over remarriage for a divorced individual. Jacob says '...everyone's taken as an individual case - there isn't a hard and fast rule'. These words are fascinating, since 10 or 15 years ago, I believe the answer would not have been quite as tolerant. It will be interesting to see over time how Elim churches deal with the issue of homosexuality and civil partnerships.

Pentecostal churches, including Elim, have progressed from being considered 'a sect', according to Calley (1965:2), to becoming an established denomination. Other non-conformist groups which have undergone transition from sect to established church may hold clues to Elim's future. Quakerism, a sect which began during the English Civil War is the only religious Civil War group to survive till present day. In the absence of a creed, Dandelion (1996) notes that Quakers themselves find it hard to define what Quakerism is. For example, Quakers are not necessarily Christians but can be Buddhist Quakers or Muslim Quakers (Dandelion 1996:xx). This openness over expression of faith allows a

multitude of people to describe themselves as Quakers. The number of Quakers, according to Chadkirk (2004), is in decline and nowadays most Quakers have converted into Quakerism rather than traditionally being born into it. This is something Quakerism has in common with Elim Pentecostalism. The majority of Quakers are people attracted to the movement through their knowledge that Quakers are pacifists, an ideal which they themselves are attracted to. In a similar way a number of Elim Pentecostals have originally joined Pentecostalism through their knowledge that this is a church that believes in the use of spiritual or charismatic gifts and practises believers' baptism (see chapter 7). In the future what Elim currently endorses or opposes could influence the people who are part of the movement. For example, if Elim continues its stance against homosexuality and professes creationism against evolution people may join Elim because they too feel strongly over these issues. It is not always clear whether they were more concerned with Civil Partnerships or with homosexuality per se.

In this continuing debate around the acceptability of homosexuality, Elim Pentecostals are participating in an important, and more significantly here, contemporary and moral issues, such as pre-marital sex, smoking and gambling are important to Pentecostals. Often when Pentecostal ministers and other leaders are speaking they refer to the 'now' and it is extremely common for them to say the words 'now is the time...' or 'today we must...'. The phrase 'now' and other reference to the present is a common phrase in worship songs also. For example, 'Come, now is the time to worship' is a chorus frequently sung in all four churches.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter discusses Elim as an organisation. I consider the church to be a voluntary organisation which attracts people with the same values, beliefs and aims to itself. In the case of Elim this is 'born again' Christians who have accepted the gospel message. I chart the structure of the Elim movement at international, national and local levels and outline the differences between Elim Church Incorporated (ECI) churches and Elim Foursquare Gospel Alliance (EFGA) churches. I provide examples from my fieldwork in which three of the four churches are EFGA and one is ECI. I also consider the changing role of churches from their traditional roots as philanthropic organisations into the 'social' role they play today. I draw on the literature of organisational theorists, such as Cameron (2004), Morgan (1997) and Drucker (1993) who consider organisations from a variety of

standpoint. In particular I consider how faith-based organisations function within their voluntary/benevolent capacity in comparison to other types of voluntary institutions, such as university. I then outline how Elim churches, just like in organisations in the business world, must know their clientele and pool their resources into enhancing their organisation. For Elim this is done by attracting potential followers through their missionary activities, such as providing youth and community activities, here I include ethnographic data collected during my time in the field.

I review the inclusive nature of Elim through its adaptations to the physical space of their buildings, such as disabled ramps and loop systems. I outline the particular case of deaf congregants and their role within the Sandysore Elim church as important members within the fellowship. I draw upon the words of research participants who outline why they believe Elim church needs to build upon it's inclusively as an institution. I use Kelly's (1986) model of a strong church in concert with Douglas' (1973) group-grid theory in relation to church membership to model the nature of many adherents and explain its relative success. The relatively strong control over members by both doctrine and charismatic leaders which both Kelly's and Douglas' model imply are present appears to be welcomed by members. I then move on to consider the role of Pastors and others in leadership position who have the dual role of being 'part of' yet also 'apart from' the congregations due to them being ambassadors for Elim church and part of the Christian family also. I address the issue of accountability of churches from a congregational view point. This includes Elim's commitment to be accountable both financially by making its records of its expenditures available and open to all. I end by considering the Present by outlining which the current challenges facing the church today are discussed, such as civil partnerships and Elim's stance on these issues.

In the next chapter I will focus on Risk and Salvation. I will discuss the Pentecostals' desire to undertake missionary activities and to educate non-believers of the potential consequences if they do not respond to the gospel message.

## Chapter Four

# Risk and Salvation

### Introduction

Elim Pentecostals are strongly 'future-oriented' as they are constantly looking forward to the time of Christ's return or the time when they will be called to be with God. They plan for two potential futures -- Christ's return and also an earthly future for their congregations. The ever present prospect that Christ may return at any time is continually emphasised in all the churches. On a return visit to the Redland congregation in February 2006 Joshua, a full-time worker for the church, said:

The time Christ will return is not known, the Bible says it could be a day or an hour! The question is: are you ready? Is there anyone there this morning who wants to give their life to Christ?

Joshua, in using these words, was referring implicitly to a passage in Matthew 24:36 which states that the time of Christ's return is not known and cannot be known. Previously, Joshua, during his sermon a few minutes earlier, had spoken about using the gifts that God had provided. He referred indirectly to the parable of the ten talents in Luke 19 in which a man who does not use the talent the king has provided him with has it taken away from him on the king's return, whereas the man who does has his talents added to. The allegory of the king being God and the talents referring to the gifts of the spirit (1 Corinthians 12:8-11) were also reminiscent of the billboard on the outside of the church building which said 'God's gift to you is life and your gift to God is what you do with it'.

The unknown time of when Christ will return clearly links for Pentecostals with a need for mission -- to save those who do not know God so that the unsaved may inherit the Kingdom of God. Pentecostals believe that decisions about the future of the church will be answered by God. Prayer is one of the ways congregants believe they can contact God and wait for an answer. In a prayer, one Sunday morning in February 2004, a congregant

spoke about how they believed God was in control and that they, as Christians, need to listen for God. The prayer went as follows:

I want you to know that God is in control of every situation, He's in control, trust in Him. Position yourself into a place whereby we're hearing from God; in Jesus' name.

The congregant wanted to reassure other believers that God should be in control of their future, and that this should not worry believers; indeed, they should be glad of it..

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Can we know the risks we face, now or in the future? No, we cannot; but yes, we must act as if we do. Some dangers are unknown; others are known, but not by us because no one person can know everything. Most people cannot be aware of most dangers at most times. Hence, no one can calculate precisely the total risk to be faced. How, then, do people decide which risks to take and which to ignore? On a regular basis are certain dangers guarded against and others relegated to secondary status? (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982:1)

In this passage, Douglas and Wildavsky (1982) ask the question: can humans know of the risks they take? Individuals encounter risks everyday and make personal judgements regarding the amount of risk involved in mundane choices, such as crossing the road or driving to work. Yet other types of risks are viewed as dangerous or foolhardy, such as attempting to jump across the Great Wall of China on a skateboard, actions which are physically possible but perceived as extremely dangerous even by experts. In this section I describe how the assessment of risk, for Pentecostals, is a personal evaluation of the potential dangers and other consequences of accepting or not accepting the message of salvation and becoming born again. Many Pentecostals, when speaking about their conversion experiences, explain that even though they cannot prove that God exists they have an 'inner-knowledge' that God is real. In all four Elim churches one of the common features of sermons are the words 'I know'; this is a phrase which leaves no room for self-doubt, unlike the words 'I believe'. The emphasis of the speaker is always on their certainty

that they have an acquired knowledge (of God) which non-believers do not possess. This certainty in God, alongside the speaker's confidence in their own salvation, is usually commended by members. Often in services during the giving of a testimony or sermon congregational members in all four churches can be clearly heard saying 'Amen', 'Hallelujah' or 'Thank you Jesus'.

Notions of risk became a theme that developed in relation to the boundary separating that which is perceived as 'dangerous' and what is perceived as 'safe'. My interest in the theme of risk derives from the congregation's own use of binary oppositions in relation to what they considered 'dangerous' and 'safe' within the lives of congregants and how this changes over time in relation to themselves before and after believing. Furthermore, it is their perception of risk, knowing that they are saved and the need for others to be saved also, justifies the Elim Pentecostals' enthusiasm for mission. Salvation will be considered later on in this chapter. Here, I will begin by considering three theoretical perspectives on risk which I have found especially useful in understanding my fieldwork; Foucault on 'governmentality' in defining risk (Foucault 1979, 1991, 1997), Beck's concept of risk in society (Beck 1992a, Beck 1992b, Beck 1999) and Douglas' cultural theory (Douglas 1985, 1992, Douglas and Wildavsky 1982).

## **Risk and Pentecostalism**

### ***Foucault on Risk***

Although Foucault, the noted French social theorist, did not write specifically on risk, he contributed to the topic through his thorough consideration of knowledge, power, surveillance and resistance. He considered knowledge to be a form of discourse. Foucault suggests that there are relationships between words used in discourse and ideas associated with their meaning -- rules which produce statements must be understood for statements to have meaning. One example of this for Pentecostals in understanding risk is to take their understandings of heaven and hell alongside being born again against being a non-believer. Pentecostals would say that being born again means that they *will* go to heaven whereas to be a non-believer risks going to hell. Knowledge about perceived risks for individuals who are non-believers is a concern not just for individual Elim Pentecostals but for the collective body of believers, and so is monitored and controlled corporately, that is by all believers. This concern for the souls of non-believers appears to justify their continual need for mission. Pentecostals seem to have constructed this particular concept of risk as a mean



of justifying mission. The way in which the body of believers has decided to deal with this risk is through making their perceived risk known to the world at large, emphasising that the time to repent and believe is 'now', as the point when choices about belief and lifestyle cannot be taken back could arrive at any moment. This places the act of mission and the risk of non-believers going to hell in a conceptual eternal present, with the future only carrying the Second Coming and the attendant Judgement by Christ of all humanity.

This is done via preaching the message and providing a 'cure' in the form of the sinner's prayer, a prayer often said directly prior to conversion, in which a sinner admits that he or she has sinned and asks Jesus for forgiveness. These sentiments were expressed to me many times during the course of fieldwork; one example came from Pastor Dylan at Redland when recalling his conversion with me:

...I ended up walking into what was my Dad's church and for the first time hearing the gospel message -- that I was a sinner and that Christ died for me --... I went back the following Sunday night, I had written down some questions that I thought he [the Pastor] probably wouldn't know the answers to... when I said I didn't have any more questions he basically said well you're at the point which we call decision time -- you see what God's offering you in Christ Jesus you either accept him or you refuse him and reject him -- and so he said go away and think about it. So I went home and I said to my wife Eleanor, Eleanor you've got to come with me to this church because they're answering all the questions that we're asking...the following Sunday Eleanor and I went to the church and the Pastor got up and preached a sermon he entitled almost persuaded and at the end of the service he made an appeal and I responded...he came up after a couple of days to the house and he explained again what it really meant to be a Christian -- how you become a Christian -- what happens when you become a Christian -- and after he'd finished he said is that what you still want to do? And I said yes so how do I go about it? And he said well it's just a matter of praying and asking God to forgive you and come into your life. And it was at that point I kept glancing over to my wife and wondering what she was thinking and she said well, before you pray I think you'd better include me as well because everything you've said tonight, everything just fell into place for me. And so that night in June 1978 both Eleanor and I committed our lives to Jesus Christ.

Dylan's testimony highlights four key points. Firstly, the message that he was a sinner and Christ died for him was revealed to him. Here, the risk of not being born again was presented to him. Secondly, all questions he had were satisfactorily answered. Thirdly, it was made clear to Dylan by the Pastor the significance of the decision to become a born again Christian and it is particularly noteworthy that he was told to go away and think about his decision. Fourthly, his conversion was completed via his admitting that he was a sinner (the sinner's prayer) and asking Jesus into his life, which he did together with his wife. It is interesting that, often, the spouse of the newly converted finds the same faith and themselves become converts. For Dylan and his wife, their conversions occurred simultaneously. Others who found faith after their partner's conversion often explain that after the initial shock of their partner finding God, they came to see the changes that occurred in their partner's life and wanted the same to happen to them.

Returning to Foucault's position on knowledge (1991), this example further highlights the implications of using certain terms, such as 'sin' and 'forgiveness', which have very wide implications and are often linked together. Sin is a term which has the simple definition of 'any action against God' yet, for Elim Pentecostals, is tied in with what will happen to a person at death. For Elim Pentecostals this is based on whether a person will go and be with God or not, since forgiveness of sin must be asked of God for them to go to heaven. Power, for Foucault, is something that is an emergent property of any system of knowledge or practice, with the knowledge and those that have it controlling the nature of the power within any given system. For instance, Communist regimes have tended to be repressive in practice, and justified such repression by claiming that they acted as part of the collective will of the people, due to the theory behind Communism claiming that power should be derived from the will of the people. Power is a concept which must be considered in relation to how it works and to its outcomes, rather than purely in terms of its definition. The implications of Foucault's concept of power for Elim Pentecostals can be measured by how much the structure of Elm Pentecostal congregations follows Foucault's understanding of power as an emergent property of a social system.

At first glance, the system of 'risk management' by Pentecostals would appear to go against this notion, as much of the information about the risks of unbelief or bad practices come from the pastors and the Bible, both of which are exogenous to the individual

believers' conduct. However, the risk of hell (and of salvation from it) is considered a personal thing between the believer and Christ, and it is up to the believer to maintain that relationship. And so it becomes a harmful condition for the believer if that relationship becomes damaged by bad practices, and they risk hell if they neglect it. So it becomes something imperative for the believers to manage themselves, rather than have things managed for them by 'authority figures'. This becomes especially apparent when the view of God is as an omniscient presence and thus able to see everything a believer does (an issue addressed further in chapter 6) creates a panopticon situation, where self-regulation by the believer becomes necessary in order to ensure personal salvation.

Taken in this way, evangelism and informing non-believers becomes, in Foucault's terms, an expansion of the church's power system by encouraging everyone to believe themselves to be a sinner and in need of Christ's salvation. The Alpha course, for example, is specifically designed for and targeted towards unbelievers and those new to the church who wish to find out more about Christianity; it was a course endorsed by all four of the congregations. The Alpha manual is a book that is given out free to all Alpha attendees and contains a section entitled 'Why and how should we tell others?' Here, three reasons are placed as foremost to tell others and warn them of the risk. First telling others -- hence the Great Commission (Matthew 26:16-20) which was given by Jesus. Secondly, it is understood by Elim Pentecostals that non-believers need to be saved. The third is to tell them the good news of the gospels in which sin, according to born-again Christians, can be washed away because of Christ's self-sacrificial death on the cross. This 'good news' was also expressed in a sermon one Sunday morning by Pastor Dylan at Redland:

....if you repent of your sin and if you believe that Jesus died on a cross for your sin and say sorry and invite him into your life the Bible says you are saved -- Not because of your goodness -- not because you're a member of a church -- but because of what he did on our behalf. The acceptable sacrifice -- the Lamb of God -- the blood sacrifice that was required for sin and Jesus paid the price. And if you can see that He paid the price for you and you invite Him onto your life -- you're born again -- you're saved.

Dylan's giving of the message contained the characteristic traits of an 'alter call'. These include the need for repentance of sin, Christ's death on the cross, and inviting Jesus into your life so that you can become born-again, one of the saved. The sacrificial death of Christ is always presented as a gift which needs to be reciprocated with a response (of an acknowledgement of being a sinner). *The Alpha Course Manual* (2003), although putting mission at the forefront, also contains the binary opposition 'safety\danger' and makes two points (2003:47). First, that there are two dangers: insensitivity and fear, each of which arises out of ordinary human relationships and which can be overcome through an engagement with the Spirit of God.

The inclusion of these two dangers when undertaking mission suggests that those in power wish to explain why mission does not always succeed. Non-success is rationalised by Pentecostals (and probably by other faith groups) in terms of the 'danger' potential converts might be both afraid and insensitive to the call. It is also understood by Pentecostals that some unbelievers are unwilling to take the 'risk' of admitting the existence of God. Whereas the key to successful mission is that it is 'relationship orientated'; Elim Pentecostals believe that it can never succeed without the intervention of God (the Spirit of God). One of the sources of power for Elim Pentecostals lies with their ability to spread the good news by witnessing and arousing people's interest.<sup>51</sup> For Elim Pentecostals every Christian has the ability to make the good news known and not just missionaries or those with the gift of evangelism. As Pastor Adam of Riverside said:

...[people] will ring sometimes and will say will you come and have a word with and then they will tell me whether it's a friend or a relative and I say what for? And they say because you're the Pastor -- but you are the evangelist -- you are the missionary! I look sometimes at Lisa when she goes off to the ship...But what is she? She is the witness. Now why are we different this morning? Why do I need Martin to come and speak to the young people in the area? Why do I need Olivia to speak to the nurses in the hospital? Because we can communicate with them -- because we're in our Jerusalem and we can send it into our Samaria across the culture -- this is what Pentecost was all about...If we go back to the beginning, the account of the disciples

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<sup>51</sup> By 'witnessing' I mean any means through which the good news is spread such as posters outside church building, handing out material, putting on special events, the Alpha course, youth work and other good works which help others etc rather than solely for the physical speaking of the message to non-believers.

receiving what Jesus received in order to do what Jesus did. Remember how Jesus did it when He was baptised, He was led by the Spirit and then He returned in the Power of the Spirit and He said *today the scripture is being fulfilled, the deaf are going to hear,, the blind are goings to see, the lame are going to walk, the poor are going to have the gospel brought to them* and for the next three years He proceeded to do it. I don't know how long we have got left this morning -- it could be three years -- it could be thirty-three years -- but we have got the power this morning to walk the world in light...if we become obedient this morning to Him and do what He says.

The words of the Pastor to the congregation underlines the importance of each member spreading the word *just as Jesus commanded* and not leaving it to those who they consider to be 'missionaries' or 'evangelists'. For Adam, a Christian cannot avoid the 'risk' of exposing herself as being a Christian. He rationalises his position by assuming that if someone is a Christian then their faith will be a naturally embodied in their life and will therefore be visible to others. Adam explains that in his opinion the Christian message is as relevant today in his town as in Jerusalem two millennia ago. The 'word of God' for Elim Pentecostals is timeless and can metaphorically cross from Jerusalem (believers) across culture to Samaria (unbelievers). The clear message is that Jesus can be made known by believers in the world, wherever they may live, was given by Pastor Benjamin at Castletown:

We all have a world, each one of us...All of us -- every Christian can make God known -- Not every Christian has that particular anointing of evangelist but every Christian by the very nature of being a Christian -- loving God and knowing God in their life has natural ability --...So when you're on the bus, when you're walking to the shop, when you're meeting your neighbour, when you're at work. school, college, when you're going swimming or at the gym whatever -- whatever your world is for you to naturally be a Christian -- just be it. You'll proclaim it through your life and you might even get an opportunity to talk about it as well, great.

The words of Benjamin emphasise the point that, in saving souls, time and place are irrelevant, that wherever Elim Pentecostals find themselves, that place should *naturally* be a mission ground. Elim Pentecostals, simply through experiencing salvation and being born again, should be making God known through their lifestyle, actions and ethos for life. Benjamin goes further to suggest that through living a Christian life and taking responsibility for making God known, then the mission ground will extend to encompass greater areas and God will be made known throughout the earth. The power of mission is said to derive directly from God, and it is to God that congregants will answer. Power and authority which has been given to the leadership in the Elim churches is only there due to the congregants' wish for it to be there. As I argued in chapter 3, churches are voluntary organisations which means that the power and authority held by the leadership can easily be removed by congregants. Attendance at churches is optional and as such churches are only full if people want to attend. Power within a voluntary organisation is something to be earned; hence those in hierarchical positions within the church are elected and remain in their position just as long as they have the support of the collective.

Foucault's third major point relates specifically to surveillance and concern the way in which individuals deal with perceived risks. The decision an individual makes to accept Christ or not is a decision dependent upon free will; hence, it will be up to the individual whether he/she accepts salvation or not. Elim Pentecostals perceive that it is the duty of the body of believers to provide information which they believe will help individuals to make their decision. Thus, Elim Pentecostals actively evangelise, provide material for non-believers and pray for them. Yet salvation for Elim Pentecostals is something that must continually be reaffirmed by individuals because of the risk of backsliding. The danger of crossing the boundary separating believer and non-believer in the wrong direction is held up as ever-present and very real.<sup>52</sup> The risk and peril involved in backsliding was put particularly well by Pastor Adam at Riverside:

I read a few weeks ago in Jeff Lucas' book...one of the first lectures he had in Bible college the lecturer said in ten years time half of you won't be in the ministry or

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<sup>52</sup> Toulis describes 'backsliding' as: 'To backslide' is to sin and be obliged to leave the church' (1997:63). In Elim 'backsliding' is a Christian's move away from God 'back towards their unconverted life', however, it a position which does not obligate the person to leave the church.

walking with God. He says he was horrified but ten years down the road he looked back and he said what he had said was true. Take heed and beware because there is not one of us that can't fall. It's easy to start well but let me tell you this morning it takes tenacity to go on with God, especially, when the going gets tough.

Adam's cites Jeff Lucas' statement, from his Bible college lecture, which states that even Pastors fall away from God. Particular emphasis, at the time, was place on the lecturer's experience -- half of those training as ministers will no longer be ministers in ten years' time. Adam's recollection stunned his congregation into silence (in disbelief). These were powerful words expressing the dangers of backsliding. Adam very successfully highlights the risk of re-crossing the boundary from being part of the saved back to being part of the unsaved. The condition of backsliding is viewed as particularly dangerous for Elim Pentecostals and many warnings are given to members to one another in order to build up their faith so that this does not happen to them. Pastor Dylan put this well one Sunday morning during his sermon:

*Peter says if you do these things, if you possess these qualities in increasing measure not only will it keep you from being ineffective and unproductive but it will help you escape the corruption of the world that will keep you from falling. Friends, in increasing measure -- the longer you remain at one level -- at one level of experience the temptation to have a foot in the world and a foot in God's camp is tremendous. It's a temptation that can carry you into the world. Now I don't believe that you can lose your salvation...when you are walking with God -- when you're adding to your faith -- It doesn't mean you're perfect -- doesn't mean you will never let God down -- but while the desire of your heart is to live to please God...But I do believe that through apathy and through negligence and by trying to have a foot in the world and a foot in the church you can actually arrive at a place where...you can forget that you've been cleansed from your sins to the point where you can see what God is offering [pause] but your reject it.*

Dylan, quoting Peter, proposes that believers, in order to prevent themselves from backsliding, should be continually strengthening their faith and doing God's will rather than the world's. Pastor Dylan is clear that what he is suggesting does not rule out the possibility of failure but this is less likely if someone is dedicated to God rather than trying to be both part of the world and church simultaneously.

Foucault's (1997) final contribution to the topic of risk is in the area of resistance. Resistance relates directly to power and is suggestive of the repudiation of social control or convention. Resistance for Foucault is about social relationships. Someone resisting something is effectively demonstrating that they do not adhere to the beliefs of those in power and is reacting against the social system and the power inherent within that structure. Social relationships for Elim Pentecostals are central since these relationships are the glue that holds together the collective body. At times Elim Pentecostals view themselves as being the ones resisting the ways of the world. In an interview, Billy from Riverside spoke about the people he works with and the world in which they live:

I work with people who are non-Christians and we do some events outside of work which their value systems...I used to think when I first became a Christian that you can't have a drink...My friends' view of a good night out is to get absolutely lashed...I'm not condemning that because that's what they do, that's what culture teaches them that is...people use that as a form of escape, life's difficult. Well I escape because I'm a Christian -- I believe that's the right way to escape -- ...Virtually every conversation that we have [at work] I have a view which is opposed to most other people in the conversations. Popular culture is not pro-life and is tolerant with all members of society even if the Bible says that these things should not be done. And so they're anti-fundamentalist Christians -- even though that is what I am -- and they don't see me as being that fundamental.

Billy, although he is not retreating from the world, clearly does not want to partake in what he perceives to be the more or less socially accepted culture of drinking. Billy is perfectly aware of the temptation but comments that he is lucky to have a way of escape from life's worries through God rather than needing a potentially damaging form of escape.



An alternative view of Foucault's (1997) concept of 'resistance' arises during these times when the status quo is tested. The leadership of the four congregations, although generally tolerant regarding the more mundane matters of style of dress, length of hair and so on, have standards of acceptable behaviour to maintain in other more contentious areas, such as swearing in church and smoking or drinking alcohol on the premises. It appears that in all four churches, members are aware of the dangers of backsliding and so to prevent this there is a 'mutual surveillance' of each other among members. Serious matters of discontent or 'inappropriate behaviour' are dealt with by the leadership (See chapter 3 in which Jacob speaks on the problem of young people getting drunk).

Elim Pentecostals, as members of twenty-first century British society, are very aware of the ambient fears of Society. For example, in order to work with children all their workers must have a criminal records check and the churches are a part of the Pentecostal Child Care Association and so on. The need for such checks is perhaps not so much a sign of the times but recognition that there have in the past been problems in this area and Elim Pentecostals must support this heightened level of scrutiny - or surveillance, in Foucault's terms. Over recent years there have been many headline stories in national newspapers and on the news warning parents of the dangers of child abuse. One such story was run on the BBC news website on the 27<sup>th</sup> October 2005. The story had the headline 'Abuse claims against 26 priests'. Headlines like this have made the perceived risk of child abuse within religious communities of central importance to many parents who fear for their child's safety. Returning to Foucault's understanding of resistance and relating this again briefly to Elim Pentecostals, when a problem or issue arises which threatens the holistic wellbeing of the body of believers then the leadership does take action to provide a solution. Furthermore, the leadership of the churches enforce the codes of conduct established within their organization. Here the leadership has a clear responsibility to the collective on issues such as child safety and measures, included well-publicised codes of practice, are put in place to prevent risk to the wellbeing of the group.

In linking my ethnography to the work on risk by Foucault (1991, 1979), four important issues emerged. Firstly, in relation to knowledge words often relate to each other and have wider implications when used in certain contexts. Within the Pentecostal vernacular I give the example of 'sin' in relation to 'forgiveness'. For Elim Pentecostals, they would at death go and be with God and enter heaven or be separated from God in hell, inextricably linking the two concepts within the Elim vernacular, as distinct from a more

mainstream understanding where sin is often applied to something that is considered 'naughty but nice', with no necessary connection to forgiveness as a necessary remedy or even as a remedy at all. Secondly, power, for Foucault, is fundamentally about relationships and the power created by the system arising from particular relationships, rather than about power as a thing in itself. For Elim Pentecostals it is important to note that those in leadership roles are elected to those positions and are regulated by the collective body of believers, since it is a voluntary organisation. If people are not satisfied with the leadership they are free to voice their concerns and always have the option of leaving the church, ensuring that it is the doctrinal structure of the church that defines the relations and thus has the power, rather than any particular individual holding the power and dictating the doctrinal structure to maintain their power base. Thirdly, for Foucault, surveillance is about how individuals themselves deal with perceived risk, forming a self-regulating system. For Elim Pentecostals, for an individual to accept salvation he/she must make the decision to come to Christ since no-one can do this on behalf of another. Missionary activity, which provides information for an individual to make a decision to come to Christ or not, is generally viewed as constituting an acceptable influence on others, and is understood to be the duty of believers. However, the ultimate decision to be 'born again in Christ' lies entirely with the individual. Fourthly, resistance functions as a positive response to hierarchical manifestation of power. This is understood by Elim Pentecostals as both following Foucault's idea of resistance to any given system and in a way distinct from Foucault's system. In a sense they understand it on the same level when regarding non-believers, as any act of resistance by unbelievers will be seen as originating from non-compliance within the unbeliever themselves, and also as a consequence of the system of belief (although Pentecostals would not see it as such). However, here the understanding between Foucault and Pentecostals on resistance parts company, as resistance to other systems is inherent in the beliefs of Elim Pentecostals. Such acts of resistance may sometimes be taken against the world and the culture in which they are situated, as on many areas of popular culture Elim Pentecostals refuse to follow social norms and become part of a particular section of society. However, if we return to the subject of unbelievers and possibly even those members of the church who are considered to be 'backsliders', Elim Pentecostals are themselves in the position of being resisted due to their unwillingness to self-regulate according to Elim's established social standards.

### ***Beck on Risk***

Beck (1999, 1992a, 1992b), a German sociologist, examines the concept of risk in relation to certain aspects of modern society. For example, our understanding of something such as the causes of illness which was once a mystery can now be largely 'explained' by science. What this means is that developed societies have a wider body of knowledge in which to evaluate possible risks. Put in another way, the public's assessment of risk in most situations is increasingly rational. Elim Pentecostals in the twenty-first century are living in a predominantly secular society which is saturated with scientific knowledge. Today, medical information is transmitted and readily available for the general population to understand. The causes of common diseases are known and parents are advised to vaccinate their children. Elim Pentecostals in the North East are living in a society in which they too make decisions concerning risks to health, such as smoking or diet. Many Elim Pentecostals are themselves medically trained doctors or nurses. The role of professional medical advisors and the seeking out of medical advice is something which is strongly supported and highly regarded by the leadership of all four congregations. This is something that was demonstrated many times during the course of fieldwork, during healing events and at other times when the health of a person may be put at risk by, for example, fasting. Pastor Benjamin of Castletown spoke of congregants undertaking a partial fast for the 40 days of Lent:

So there's this idea of going on a partial fast, still taking liquid, juice or mineral water or whatever, some sort of minerals...I would say this -- a disclaimer now -- we're talking about forty days here of prayer and fasting, as a church...I would say take medical advice on the length and time that you decide to fast and I would say forty days would be particularly dangerous...if you've not fasted before or you're not accustomed to fasting then...I would encourage you to fast for say perhaps a particular meal -- either a tea or a dinner -- and so during that day to get my body into this ...Educate your body to build up to it, so eat a little less -- don't have the biggest meals -- breakfast, dinner and tea --... gradually build up to it -- it's all common sense stuff -- so phase into it.

Benjamin suggests that Pentecostals should heed medical advice when fasting. Pastor Benjamin demonstrates commonsense medical knowledge although not a health care professional (like the majority of the population) he still knows that fasting could be risky if not carried out correctly; that is, with a view to maintaining one's health. Benjamin appears, like the other pastors, to place as much value on the medical profession's advice as he does with the Bible on matters relating to the health and well-being of members.

Returning to Beck, he argues that society is nowadays more reflexive in that people are better equipped to make decisions about perceived risks and further that this decision making has become part of everyday life. Beck's understanding of risk is considered in relation to harm since society has developed to a stage where people are more aware of what is harmful and what can potentially be catastrophic, nuclear war for instance. This is knowledge that in Beck's opinion can be used to put coping mechanisms into place by society (1992, 1992a). These coping mechanisms are vital if society is to function. Beck considers that risk is a matter for modern society only and takes exception to the cultural theorists Douglas and Wildavsky (1982). Beck (1999:22-23) states:

Dangers, it would seem, do not exist 'in themselves', independently of our perceptions. They become a political issue only when people are generally aware of them; they are social constructs which are strategically defined, covered up or dramatized in the public sphere with the help of scientific material supplied for the purpose....Douglas and co-author [Wildavsky] argue there (as an affront to the risking ecological consciousness) that there is not substantive difference between dangers posed in early history and in developed civilization – except in the mode of cultural perception and the way in which it is organized in world society. True and important though the view may be, it is still not satisfactory. First, it highlights the (mistakes of the) 'nothing but society' sociology which ignores 'and' characteristic of risk's immateriality (social definition) *and* materiality (production of action). Second, we know that people in the Stone Age did not have the capacity for nuclear and ecological inhalation, and the dangers posed by lurking daemons did not have the same political dynamic as man-made hazards of ecological self-destruction.

Beck (1999) criticises Douglas and Wildavsky (1982) for what he sees as their simplistic view that risk is one which is concerned primarily with how society categorises phenomena into socially perceived events which can be categorised into binary opposition such as 'safe' and 'dangerous'. He argues that the notion of risk cannot be one that is essentially timeless, as Douglas and Wildavsky claim, as technological and societal differences have forced us to consider different things risky or dangerous. This doesn't ring entirely true when applied to the idea of risk held by Elim Pentecostals; for them the largest risk possible is that they will not be saved, something which held as much danger among Christians in ancient Rome as it does among Pentecostals today. It can be argued that there are more secular things to take believers away from their faith in today's world than in another time (like Ancient Rome), but this does not enhance Beck's criticism; he does not claim that the risks that society is aware of have changed in magnitude but in kind, and there have been concerns about the nonreligious world within Christianity from the time of its genesis. For example, in the Parable of the Sower, people fall away from the word because of 'the worries of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth' (Matthew 13:22), 'the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things' (Mark 4:19) and 'life's worries, riches and pleasures' (Luke 8:14). Such passages, often quoted during Pentecostal worship, claim that those things that thinkers like van Genne (1960) would label 'profane', things of the world outside of the belief structure, can be a risk to the faith of a believer. This suggests that in the case of Elim Pentecostals we have at least some basis for Douglas and Wildavsky's claim that the risks perceived by Elim Pentecostals have not changed since they were first established at the beginning of Christianity. This is because the factors which influence them are concerns about spiritual wellbeing and the perception of what affects that wellbeing (as determined by Scripture) are essentially timeless. While there can be an element of modernisation and reinterpretation to that perception, this does not alter the characteristics of the risk of not being saved and thus going to hell, leaving the fundamental risk as perceived by Elim Pentecostals unchanged by temporal societal developments.

### ***Douglas and Wildavsky on Risk***

For Douglas and Wildavsky (1982), risk is something that is timeless and universal. Beck (1999) is concerned with modern society and his main criticism of Douglas and Wildavsky is that they take no consideration of how modern people choose to live with modern risks.

Thus, I believe the aims of the cultural theorists (Douglas 1985, 1992, and Douglas and Wildavsky 1982) is to consider how a society defines the boundaries of risk whereas for Beck (Beck 1992a, 1999) his interpretation of risk relates mainly to modern scientific discoveries and society's methods of dealing with the advanced knowledge that developed societies now have in assessing risk. Elim Pentecostals live in the secular world and will evaluate modern, everyday risks such as deciding to immunise their children, but the notion of risk is also used by them in a pre-modern way by attributing misfortune to Satan. The way I wish risk to be understood in this section is from the point of view of Elim Pentecostals, what they perceive as risks and their evaluation of potential dangers. The theories of cultural theorists: Douglas (1985), Douglas (1992), Douglas and Wildavsky (1982, 1985, 1992) are described in the ethnographic material I collected.

Douglas, a British structuralist anthropologist, has written interestingly about socially constructed notions of risk, purity and danger, binary oppositions and various other topics.<sup>53</sup> Douglas (1992:xi) says of cultural theory:

...cultural theory is a way of thinking about culture that draws the social environment systematically into the picture of individual choices.

Knowledge of society and how it works, according to Douglas, is vital to gain an understanding of how people make decisions. For Elim Pentecostals the environment of the North East is predominantly secular yet they participate in this society as practising Christians. Pastor Benjamin of Castletown explains:

We can't exorcise humanism from our lives completely in the here and now but I tell you what -- we can embrace a biblical worldview -- and if we can embrace a biblical worldview and we begin to run into the arms of God -- we can begin to flow in a way He wants us to -- to flow and begin to relate and develop our relationship with God -- whereby the balance can be addressed -- instead of it being weighted heavily towards materialistic humanism it can be weighted heavily towards a biblical relationship with our Father in heaven.

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<sup>53</sup> See chapter 3 for Douglas' (1973) Group-grid theory.

Benjamin declares that Christians must hold with a biblical view of the world and put their faith in God to guide them and in doing so will deepen their relationship with God. Understanding a social environment is vital since Douglas (1992) argues that all types of risk are related to what individual categories of people perceive as risks. The social category of people I am considering is Elim Pentecostals, who have all had a conversion experience, all believe in God and believe that they are saved and as such will enter heaven. In contrast they consider those outside the group to be non-believers who have not had conversion experiences, do not believe in God and are in danger of going to hell. Douglas and Wildavsky (1982) suggest that the risks which a group of people present as dangerous reflect what are perceived as the most undesirable outcomes. Douglas and Wildavsky (1982) also suggest that specific groups provide indicators of the type of society that they desire. When this is applied to Elim Pentecostals their clear desire is for everyone to be saved since they perceive God's wish is for all of humanity to hear and respond to the gospel message. This was stated clearly by Amy, from the Riverside:

...before Jesus left He gave the Great Commission which is to go and tell people about Him. So mission full stop. Mission where you live, your neighbours, your friends, mission in your world, everyone who you meet in your world and so that's vitally important...

Amy considers mission to be vitally important since Jesus gave the Great Commission to go into the world and tell people the good news, regardless of any possible risks to personal safety or damage to social standing. Douglas and Wildavsky (1982:4-5) argue strongly that 'risk' is multifaceted, they say:

...there is no single correct conception of risk, there is no way to get everyone else to accept 'it.' No person can know more than a fraction of the dangers that abound. To believe otherwise is to believe that we know (or can know) everything.

Furthermore, perceived knowledge of the future is directly related to risk. Since no person knows everything then it is an impossibility for someone to know accurately the outcome of any risk-taking. Yet Pentecostal Christians believe in a higher source of knowledge -- God, an omniscient and omnipresent being who is described as the Godhead of the Trinity, professed by Pentecostals as God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ) and God the Holy Spirit. Knowledge is passed from God to humanity via the Bible and through the Holy Spirit. Elim Pentecostals believe that they possess a greater knowledge than those who do not have this personal relationship with the Divine. Elim Pentecostals believe they know the future in this regard, by knowing that they are going to heaven rather than hell when they die.

Douglas and Wildavsky (1982:5) go on to argue that:

Risk should be seen as a joint product of *knowledge* about the future and *consent* about the most desired prospects. This enables us to put the problem into perspective.

Elim Pentecostals believe that they have knowledge about the future that the unsaved do not possess.<sup>54</sup> This they believe enables them to 'put the problem into perspective' which in the case of Elim Pentecostals is mission to those who have not heard or responded to the message of salvation. This is a topic which will be considered further later on in this chapter.

## Salvation

Phenomenologically speaking, the concept of salvation, as with evil, is grounded within the human experience of life (Davies 1984:31). Out of these experiences of life Pentecostals believe that they have experienced God, a divine being, who has given them 'forgiveness', 'peace' and 'wellbeing'. This is the new-found life into which Pentecostals wish to lead others -- not only through the gospel message but through testimonies of their own transformations from 'sinners' to 'saints'. Pentecostals' views on salvation appear to be that non-believers are in denial and are being deceived by Satan and the unsaved can often reason that humanity does not need God (cf Nietzsche's idea that 'God is dead'.<sup>55</sup>).

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<sup>54</sup> See chapter 8 on the future and in particular chapter 8 on prophecy.

<sup>55</sup> See Kaufmann (1974).



Pentecostals believe that the unsaved can die at any time and are risking going to hell by rejecting God. The only way Pentecostals can prevent this is through making the gospel message known and showing non-believers the path of salvation.<sup>56</sup>

Davies' (1984) contribution is thoroughly interdisciplinary. He applies his anthropological and sociological knowledge to the domain of religion and grapples with the sociological basis and consequences of theological concepts such as salvation. He begins with the question: 'How does the human drive for meaning come to express itself as a need of salvation?' (Davies 1984:1). This question is vital for my research since it is a doctrine of Pentecostalism that to be 'saved' then the individual must be 'born again'. This means that at the moment of conversion a person's old 'sinful' life must come to an end and the individual is given a new 'sinless' life (hence the term 'born again'). This new life should be used to glorify God, in the certainty of salvation. Bloch's theory of rebounding violence is relevant here in that the 'old body' must die for the new life to be transformed by the transcendent power of God (Bloch 1992).

Davies continues (1984:2): 'So the question "what must I do to be saved?" lies at the heart of so-called "world religions"'. I agree that this question lies at the heart of Christianity, and believe that it is confirmed by the born-again lives that Pentecostals live. Members invest something of themselves and their identity in their faith; this can be seen through their practical investment of time and money, prayer and witness, teaching and learning and finally in what seems like an overwhelming desire to save others. This personal investment means that in practical as well as theological terms it is a greater risk to leave the church than to stay within the safe environment it offers.

Davies' interest in death fits well with the model of salvation. Bloch (1992:18) notes the reality that: 'the natural facts of life which cannot be disputed are that people are born, grow old and die.' Here, van Gennep's (1960) tripartite model of ritual process is useful. Van Gennep noticed that many ritual and particularly 'stages of life' rituals have a similar pattern. He believed that such rituals were journeys which pass through three stages which he called 'separation rites' marking end of the individual's current social status, 'rites of threshold' (or of the 'margin' or 'limen') -- a time during which change of social status is enacted, and 'rites of aggregation', the process during which the individual is welcomed

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<sup>56</sup> Salvation is a topic written about by authors, such as Gorringer (2000), Davies (2000), Ford (1999), Covington (1996), Harriot (1994), Davies (1984).

back into society, but with a new status, often incorporating new rights and responsibilities. These were referred to by Bloch (1992) and Turner (1969) as pre-liminal, liminal and post-liminal stages. We can modify van Gennep slightly, and treat the passage of a person through life as one long liminal stage – between the stage of pre-birth and post-death. The two main transitionary points in a person's life then become birth and death. In this model, life on earth is the liminal stage and death becomes the portal to the after-life. Death, in Bloch's opinion, is viewed by society as an inherently bad thing; however, Christians view death as a transitional stage where they make a return to God and the sanctity of heaven. Heaven is considered by Elim Pentecostals as a place that people desire to go, even if they do not readily admit it. It is a place which they consider to be perfect and desire for everyone to reach. Amelia from Sandyshore, a woman who worked with the young, in a sermon she preached one Sunday said:

It is part of our very nature to want to go to heaven. You ask any teenager -- what do you want to happen to you when you die? -- and apart from some of them saying -- I'll get chunked in a box and put in the ground or something -- they're going to say I hope there's something else -- I hope there's something more --...I hope that there's a heaven or something, because God has placed eternity in our hearts...We have a natural desire to look to heaven and our purpose will be fulfilled more when our sights are on heaven -- when our sights are on what comes beyond this life -- because otherwise this life does become meaningless...when we know the future hopes -- for which we're called -- that is heaven -- then our purpose falls into place.

Amelia spoke at first as if a teenager; she expresses the desire to go to Heaven as something deeply hidden during adolescence yet something which is a desire that will provide a purpose for one's life. The consequence of not achieving salvation is clearly and repeatedly preached in all of the four congregations. The message of salvation was preached alongside concern that there is a risk that death may happen at any time, by Pastor Dylan of Redland:

If you're not saved this morning this might be your last opportunity to receive that wonderful grace. My daughter went to a funeral on Friday -- the funeral of a work

colleague -- a fireman, a rugby player yet right out of the blue God took his life. Nobody expected it -- he hadn't been ill -- and right out of the blue God took his life. The Bible says *Today if you hear His voice harden not your heart*. Heaven and hell are realities. Jesus preached more about hell than He did about heaven! Why? Because He didn't want anyone to go there.

Pastor Dylan speaks here of a seemingly healthy man, a rugby player, who died 'right out of the blue'. The emphasis of this part of the sermon was on the fact that no-one knows when he or she will die; and for Pastor Dylan, heaven and hell are realities. A similar message was preached by Pastor Adam at Riverside:

Adam: ...the Bible says *It's appointed unto man when he's to die*. It's appointed to all of us. And then it says *After this the judgement*. And I just feel this morning to ask the question -- do you know where you're going? -- You see whatever life's circumstances hold for you right now it is only for a brief time. James says *What is your life but a vapour that appears for a moment?* How many people had a cup of tea or coffee this morning?

Most of the congregation raises their hands.

Adam: Most of you. Alright. How many of you boiled the kettle?

Most of the congregation raises their hands.

Adam: And did you watch as the steam came up? Where did it go? It evaporates, you see it and then it's gone. And James says your life is like the boiling kettle, *what is your life but a vapour that appears for a moment?*

The two points made by the two pastors here are virtually identical, and made in very similar ways: they both stress that death could happen at any moment, but the main problem about death is not that it brings an end to life in itself, but that it may happen without the person having achieved salvation before death. Both use scripture to back this position up, and highlight the importance of action 'now' to ensure salvation. Salvation, for Elim Pentecostals is being assured that one will go to be with God in heaven after the transitionary point of death, an assurance that they believe all people should share. To accept salvation is an individual choice and one which cannot be made on someone else's behalf or acquired through any other means such as coming from a Christian family or attending church. As Pastor Dylan said on one Sunday evening:

Friends, I said it two weeks ago -- I said it last week -- and I am going to say again tonight. Salvation is a personal thing -- just because you are married to a Christian -- just because you have been brought up in the church -- just because you know the way of salvation doesn't mean you are saved -- it is a personal thing. God calls you personally by name and he expects a personal response from each individual. Jesus in Luke 13 He says, *unless you repent you will perish*. Notice that -- it says nothing about been brought up in a Christian home -- whether you go to church -- whether you have the biggest Bible ever on the shelf -- unless you repent personally -- you personally will perish... God loves you and He is personally waiting for you to respond to his gift of love not wanting you to perish. Jesus Himself said *For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son so that whosoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life*. Friends, there are so many people that hear it -- so many people that have heard it -- yet there are so few that respond to it and reach out to him...salvation can be found nowhere else other than through faith in the crucified Christ that God gave as a gift so that you and I would not need to perish and though that we might have eternal life.

The way to gain salvation is clearly articulated by Dylan, his message is clear to the unsaved; he believes that unless people personally accepts that Jesus died for their sins then they will not have eternal life. It is noticeable that Dylan cites scriptural quotations to confirm the source of his knowledge of the outcome of rejecting or accepting salvation.

Pentecostals continually express their belief that the acceptance of Christ is the most significant thing that can happen to a person as it will give him/her everlasting life, and this is backed up by scriptural references in formal settings such as sermons and in informal discussions of the matter with congregants at other times and in other places. Pentecostals profess that rules are needed and boundaries set to protect believers from backsliding and losing their salvation as at any time Christ may return. One of the most fundamental theological beliefs which Elim emphasises is the second coming of Christ and the eschatological events which surround this event.

**Eschatology**

Eschatology concerns the theology of the ‘end time’, predominantly relating, for Christians, to the Second Coming of Christ and the final judgement. The questionnaire results (on the following page) for all four congregations it is known that on average a third of all congregants believed that Jesus would return in their lifetime.

**Do you believe that Jesus will return in your lifetime?**

Response/ Congregation	Yes	No	Don't Know	Other	Not Answered
Riverside	36.4%	0.0%	48.4%	15.2%	0.0%
Redland	41.4%	0.0%	41.4%	10.3%	6.9%
Sandyshore	21.5%	1.3%	63.3%	7.6%	6.3%
Castletown	37.8%	12.7%	37.8%	7.4%	4.1%
All	34.3%	3.5%	47.7%	10.1%	4.3%

Totals rounded up or down to one decimal place.

**Table 4.1 Congregant Belief in the ‘Second Coming’**

The most common answer from congregants was that they did not know when Jesus would return (47.7%). Interestingly only 3.5% of all responses believed that Jesus would not return in their lifetime, whereas 34.3% of all respondents believe that Jesus would return in their lifetime. In the category of Other (10.1%), the most common reply on the questionnaire, was that the return of Jesus was not known by anyone except God, often this was accompanied with their personal hope of Jesus' return in their lifetime.

The concept that Elim Pentecostals are living in the 'end times' and Jesus may return at any given moment is commonly affirmed at the end of church services.<sup>57</sup> Pastor Adam at Riverside concluded one Sunday morning service with the words:

Be with us now Lord until we meet again or until Jesus comes, whichever is the sooner. Amen.

These words of prayer are typical and serve to remind congregants that Jesus may return at any time. Similar expressions were given by Pastor Dylan during sermons at Redland with 'end time' sentiments clearly expressed. Here are representative extracts from three of his sermons:

Extract one: There's a date in God's diary with our name next to it, it may be tomorrow, it maybe next year, it maybe until the Lord comes...

Extract two: There is a day coming when you and I and the world will stand before God. But praise God those who are in Christ, the judgement on our lives have already been taken. We know that we're sinners; praise God, the blood of Calvary cleanses us from all sin. Hallelujah. But there is a judgement day coming when the great and the small will stand before God and be judged.

Extract three: Friends, in the light of the end times signs that we have talked about; with all the floods and wars and disasters there is an urgency for you and I to share

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<sup>57</sup> For further discussion of eschatology see Polkinghorne (2002), Buckley and Jones (eds) (2001), Fergusson and Sarot (eds) (2000).

our faith. And if you are here this morning you need to respond, you need to respond to the invitation to commit your life to Christ.

Pastor Dylan reminds congregants that with the Second Coming of Christ they will stand before Christ and be judged. In the final extract he speaks of natural disasters 'floods and wars' as signs of the 'end times', and ends by asking the unsaved to make a decision to accept Jesus into their lives and become part of the saved. The Pentecostalist notion that we are living in the end times emphasises the pressing need for mission and the need to be sure that a person is saved so they are protected from entering hell.

### **Boundaries of Protection**

Remaining on the side of a boundary which is perceived as 'safe' is an ideology which Elim Pentecostals embrace. The term 'boundary' is frequently used by Pentecostals and one of the ways this concept is professed by them was put extremely well one Sunday morning by a visiting Pastor, Michael at Castletown. Pastor Michael, in explaining the meaning of boundaries referred to the time when his son touched an electric fence:

.... we went to a little Christian farm in Norfolk and we pitched our tent there. And on the farm there were some animals in a field...Running around the perimeter of the field was a fence and on top of the fence was an electric wire. And my little six year old went to see the animals and put his hand...on the electric wire and he said Daddy my hand feels funny...That fence was not there to keep my son out -- although it did keep him out -- he didn't go near that fence again...It was there to serve as a demarcation of the boundary that those animals were allowed to exist in...And whether we realise it or not we all live within boundaries. And these boundaries -- who they are set by and where they are set is very important -- boundaries can be set by other people -- we can set boundaries ourselves -- God can set our boundaries and in some cases we allow the enemy of our soul [Satan] to set our boundaries...One of the things I'm very grateful for is that my parents made sure my sister and I knew the boundaries which we had to live by and naturally like most children and particularly when I got into my teenage years I wanted to push against those boundaries and I wanted to push them as far as I could...I now see history repeating itself with my

own boys...Sometimes when we read the word of God and we see the boundaries God has put in place we can be tempted to think God you seem a bit of a killjoy...but I want to tell you friends the boundary line which God has set is for our safety and for our wellbeing...I believe these are days when the boundary lines are being changed. I believe this is a day for you and it's a day for me -- it a season for this house [the church] when God is changing the boundary lines -- I believe old boundary lines are being broken down and God is setting new boundary lines in place...and I believe that God wants to set our boundary lines in good places so that we will have a delightful inheritance...one of the purposes for God setting these new boundary lines is because he wants to enlarge our territory.

Metaphor and simile are commonly used in Pentecostal sermons to convey points of doctrine or suggestions for consequences of wrong actions, and many were used during my time in the field. In this case, Michael's point is that these animals (which were kept in by the electric fence) knew their boundaries -- boundaries which had been set by the farmer. Michael's analogy is paralleled by him to the notion that Christians, too, have boundaries (social, moral and behavioural boundaries) which can be either set by God for their own wellbeing or by another source, such as Satan. The notion of God setting boundaries which should not be crossed is reaffirmed by relating the idea of boundaries put in place by parents. He highlights the fact that when he was 'growing up' he was constantly trying to push against the boundary lines which his parents had set. Now, he says, he knows the boundaries were there for his protection. Michael also notes that as he grew older he understood that the boundaries which his parents set were movable as time passed.

Pentecostals, in their walk with God, often spoke in interviews and at other times of how, as they have matured in their Christian faith, they have become more relaxed over certain issues, such as gambling. What is most interesting about the quote from Michael is that in his final words he suggests that God sets Christians boundaries so that the 'church' will grow and mature. Michael says a lot in his unpacking of the term boundary and uses the term very positively -- boundaries are there for protection rather than purely to limit and if boundaries are obeyed then the church 'boundary lines will fall in good places.' These good places are considered to be under God's protection and arise when believers listen to God. In listening to God Pentecostals profess that the saved will grow spiritually and be



assured of attaining their end goal of reaching heaven and eternal life. Hell is reserved for those who fail to listen to God.

### **The Place of Heaven and of Hell**

The notions of heaven and hell relate directly and powerfully to risk since Pentecostals believe the unsaved risk being judged in the afterlife -- going to hell rather than heaven. Heaven and hell are clear boundary oppositions, heaven is considered by Elim Pentecostals to be a paradise state, a place of safety where God is. Hell is considered to be the reverse, an uncomfortable place where Satan, the considered provider of misfortune resides. Pastor Dylan described what he believes heaven and hell will be like:

The Bible says that those who die in Christ go to this place called heaven. In the last book -- Revelation chapter 21 we see a brief description -- it's brief yet it's enough to cause us to think and reflect and desire that place that Jesus is preparing for us. It describes it as a place where there are no more tears -- a place where there is no more death -- a place where there is no more mourning -- a place where there is no more crying -- no more pain...And the scriptures say *There they will be with their God for eternity*. For the unbelievers -- the ones who reject the good news -- send themselves to hell. I'm sure like me you hear it over and over again -- well if God's a God of love He won't send anyone to hell -- Friends, God doesn't send anyone to hell -- we send ourselves by rejecting His gift of grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. That place described also in the last book of Revelation is described like this -- it's a fiery lake of burning sulphur reserved for the devil and his angels and those who reject Christ in this life -- Jesus described it as a place of darkness -- a place where there is great weeping and wailing -- a place where there is gnashing of teeth. Who in their right mind would want to go there?...I'm sure that you've heard of General Booth -- the founder of the Salvation Army -- Every year they would have a passing out -- they would have a graduation day from their Bible college -- and there they would pray over what they referred to as soldiers -- a good expression -- those that were going out into the world. And General Booth said on one occasion -- In spite of all the good biblical teaching that you have what would have a greater impact on your life was if I could take each soldier and dangle them over the mouth of hell for thirty seconds. For that would

change you, that would change your ministry, that would put a fervency within your hearts knowing that Christ is the answer, Christ is the way out of a lost eternity -- Friends, we share our faith because there is no second chance beyond the grave.

Dylan uses pictures of heaven and hell, including scriptural images of both, as counterpoints to the common argument against Christianity that if God loved humanity then no-one would be sent to hell, instead suggesting that non-believers send themselves to hell. It is clearly stated within all four of the congregations that it is their mission to spread the gospel in the wider community. Mission is an obligation, a duty, for those who are saved. Using the words of one of the congregation's statement of beliefs, they say: 'We believe that the Gospel embraces the needs of the whole man and that the Church is therefore commissioned to preach the gospel to the world and fulfil a ministry of healing and deliverance to the spiritual and physical needs of mankind.' How this commission is taken up by each of the congregations will be charted next.

To return, briefly, to Mary Douglas, she points out that:

...in all places at all times the universe is moralized and politicized. Disasters that befoul the air and soil and poison water are generally turned to political account: someone already unpopular is going to get blamed for it...The Question starts with how people explain misfortune. For example, a woman dies; the mourners ask, why did she die? After observing a number of instances, the anthropologist notices that for any misfortune there is a fixed repertoire of possible causes among which a plausible explanation is chosen. Communities tend to be organized on one or another dominant form of explanation (Douglas 1992:5).

The world is moralized and politicized according to Douglas (1992) and different societies choose different explanations of why misfortune happens and it is the task of the anthropologist to analyse explanations for misfortune within the relevant cultural context. Evans-Pritchard's (1937) work with the Azande featured explanations of misfortune which usually involved accusations of witchcraft. Elim Pentecostals similarly have explanations for why misfortune happens and the agent to which it is most commonly attributed is Satan,

although witchcraft and demonic elements which are under Satan's control are also considered to play their part also. For those who have made the choice to follow God, the path which leads to God is not an easy path as there are many temptations along the way. These temptations include, in the eyes of Pentecostals, the false lure of evil, such as Satan tempting people away from God, witchcraft, and related traditions such as Halloween.

### **Witchcraft**

Today, in modern Britain, the causes of illness, accidents and so forth are 'ideally' understood in rational terms. We turn, primarily, to science, medicine and reason in explaining ill health and misfortune. Yet, in many parts of the world, and during earlier times in Western culture, illness and misfortune more generally have often thought to be caused by a person, usually a witch.<sup>58</sup> The risk of misfortune due to a personalised malevolent force was explained to me by Hannah, a congregant who was originally from Africa:

...my family, they practised tradition which is you summon spirits -- the spirits of dead people -- of members of your family -- they are called in this country they call them mediums -- and they're supposed to look after your family...if you don't accept them to come in to possess you...you might have accidents -- anything bad might befall you -- because you're not accepting them...in September '99...my eldest brother died from a car accident and... And I remember during that time I had actually written a letter to Bella...she is a clairvoyant, a medium...So I sent a letter and a photo...when I came back [after the funeral] I found a letter saying --I'm sorry we can't help you -- Bella couldn't help you with anything...that was actually when I thought -- no -- I'm just going to go back to church...

For Hannah's extended family, witchcraft and speaking to the dead via a medium was part of her traditional African heritage. Even in Britain, prior to her brother's death, she wrote to a magazine clairvoyant to try and find answers for his death. Hannah went on to tell me, in

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<sup>58</sup> For an early and brilliant account see Evan-Pritchard (1937). See also Marwick (1986), and Favret-Saada (1980) for an account of contemporary witchcraft in Western Europe.

the following extract, about how in Africa her family members, like many in Africa, believe that witchdoctors can protect them from misfortune:

...in July 2002, my sister who is younger than me died in Zimbabwe in a car accident...this time when I went home instead of running around and following the beliefs of my family -- my extended family -- I heard about them going to witchdoctors to...be given things that would protect the family which I'd never really wanted to deal with or to get involved with -- but every time the pressure is so much cultural than anything else really -- that you have to do what your parents or your elders are saying...They always go to witchdoctors when somebody dies -- in African culture -- in my culture they would go and find out why they have died -- what has happened to them or who has killed them -- and things like that...I was told, then, that I was the only one that wasn't protected -- everyone else is protected -- you are the only one --you have to come -- this witchdoctor has told us that if you're going to rely on church then you're not going to be protected. But I just stayed with God anyway...

Hannah suffered another death, of a sibling, within three years. She speaks of how her extended family pressured her during this time, as they did after the death of her brother, to see a witchdoctor so that she could be protected from misfortune. Hannah made the decision not to, even though told by her uncle, a Pagan, choosing instead to rely on God's protection. What is most interesting about this case is that Hannah, after writing to Bella, came to believe that God could protect her from misfortune better than a witchdoctor who, Pentecostals teach, draws upon a counterfeit source of power. This counterfeit power is considered to be intended to deceive and mislead. This counterfeit power is the binary opposition to the pure power source which is from God.

### **Satan**

Satan is perceived to use a counterfeit source of power to tempt people away from God. He is viewed by Pentecostals as an evil tempter, a causer of misfortune and a corrupting force in the world. There is a strong boundary, for members, between what is perceived as being 'good' and from God and what is 'bad' and from Satan. One Sunday evening at Redland a

young American woman who looked to be in her early twenties spoke about Satan making her ill. She had come to lead the service with other volunteers from the organisation 'Mercy Ships'. This was before they set sail the next day to deliver vital medical supplies to the people of Sierra Leone, who are otherwise too poor to get health care. Her job on the Mercy Ship was working in the galley providing food for the some 400 people on the ship. Her main tasks were to set up the eating area and mop the floor three times a day. During the previous trip she spoke of how there had been a clash of personalities between her and one of her co-workers, which she put down to Satan testing her before she eventually got sick:

I lost my voice, getting sick after 3 months [of being on the ship] and I slept for a week. In the second week after being ill I got sent back to bed and felt defeated. I was crying and sad. What does the Lord want me to say? Bring it on Satan because the one in me is greater than you. At the time I felt ready for whatever Satan was going to throw at me as the one in me is greater than you.

The young woman was clearly happy to be telling this story publicly. The congregation interjected the dialogue with 'Amen's' in obvious approval. What her testimony serves to do is reaffirm the Christian belief that God is greater than Satan. Satan, the devil, is considered to be the sole cause of misfortune and an agent who must be commanded out of God's people's lives. This was spoken of one Sunday morning by a visiting Pastor at Castletown:

...be humble to people but do not be polite to the devil...the devil needs to hear that you are commanding him out of your life. When sickness or problems of life come your way, tell him to get out of your life. Stamp your feet and be stubborn as the word can be and say -- I am a child of God -- the word has been sewn into my life -- and I am going to keep on holding onto it till the day I am going home to be with the Lord -- So, you get out of my life you ugly one...

The devil, for this visiting Pastor, is a being to whom God's people should not be polite but should cast out of their life because they are children of God. Once again, Pentecostals assert that believers will go to be with their Lord one day and that the

power of the word (the Bible) is more powerful than Satan. They must be aware of the risk that Satan poses -- he is always trying to deceive believers, sometimes in very subtle ways. Pentecostalists believe they must protect themselves from this deceit and, in doing so, put into place clear and firm boundaries of restriction.

One time of the year which is perceived as particularly dangerous for this group is at Halloween. This for Pentecostalists is an occasion which glorifies witchcraft and the occult is glorified in mainstream culture and viewed as profane by Pentecostalists.

### **The Sacred and the Profane**

In order to protect something that is sacred, an individual will often adhere to certain rules or refrain from transgressing boundaries imposed either by society or by a group to which they belong. Mary Douglas' work on pollution and taboo clearly relates to van Gennepe's work on rites of passage since societies usually mark the passage of one stage in life to another by a ritual. During life cycle rituals, certain practices, people and substances are deemed potentially polluting and therefore 'rules out of bounds'. As van Gennepe (1960:1) says:

The only clearly marked social division remaining in modern society is that which distinguishes between the secular and the religious worlds – between the profane and the sacred...So great is the incompatibility between the profane and the sacred worlds than man cannot pass from one form of occupation to another.

Boundaries in this sense are viewed as dangerous areas since they are at the transitional point of one state and another; in this situation the sacred cannot come into contact with the profane. To protect the sacred from the profane rules are put in place which are usually called taboos. Douglas (1966) considers taboo to be as a form of control over society, in this case it functions as a form of control over the church community. To protect the boundaries of the community a set of purity rules and restrictions are set in place creating a form of social control. This control is more visible when social phenomena are perceived as being 'dangerous'. For instance at the services of Riverside and Sandyside that I attended prior to Halloween, people were urged not to take part in the celebration of Halloween, the justification being that the celebration has a connection with the work of Satan. Pastor

Adam asked, during the Sunday morning proceeding Halloween, for members of the congregation to 'pray against the forces of darkness which will be exalted on that night.' An alternative was being offered for the young to the traditional Halloween festivities in the form a children's film to be shown at the church instead of the youngsters going 'trick or treating'. The message of the unsuitability of celebrating Halloween was a central theme at the Sunday evening youth service at Sandysore. Halloween was depicted as being part of the occult world, a 'dangerous world'. As the youth worker put it, 'Halloween is coming up and we should cover some stuff. We should not be ignorant of Satan's scheme of things.' Prior to the talk on the occult Ryan, a young man had been asked to speak about his aunt's involvement with a spiritualist church. After the death of her 16 year old son from a brain haemorrhage the woman had found comfort in this group. Yet this group was perceived as 'dangerous' and 'counterfeit' by playing on the emotions of a woman with internal pain, as the young man said of the 'spiritualists':

I think it's really sad that these people made her believe that she was really talking to her dead son -- I want to press on you tonight that the only truth is the Bible -- and that you should know what you believe.

As he left the front there was silence before the youth worker took the stage. The need to protect younger members of the church from the corruptions of Satan and the occult is visible within the literature of Elim Pentecostalism. In *Directions* magazine, a monthly magazine published for Elim Pentecostals, in the October 2003 issue, an article by G.P. Taylor (an Anglican minister) and author of *Shadowmancer* (2003) was published. It is clear from the article that the reporter wishes to highlight that Taylor is well educated about the occult and that there has been a growing interest by young people in things perceived as 'harmful' and 'dangerous'. Andrew Holloway (*Directions* magazine, October 2003:13) says of Taylor:

(He) has lectured on the occult and related subjects in his work as a vicar. He is concerned about the way that the media has sidelined Christianity and turned its interests to demons, wicca and paganism – popularised among young people not just

by Potter books and movies but by hit TV series like 'Buffy the Vampire Slayer' and 'Angel'. So I felt it was right to write a Christian alternative to the Potter books.

Witchcraft, dabbling with the occult or getting involved with anything of a negative 'spiritual' nature is perceived as wrong and outside of the safety of Christianity, something which the church feels obliged to show and explain in both their preaching and their lives. The church still holds to the belief that the world is not 'pure' and that there is 'evil' power in the world.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I consider risk and its close association with salvation and discuss the desire of Pentecostals to undertake missionary activities and to alert non-believers of the possible consequences if they do not respond to the gospel message. I introduce the work of prominent writers on 'risk' and specifically that of Foucault (1979, 1991, 1997), Beck (1992a, 1992b, 1999), Douglas (1985, 1992), and Douglas' work with Wildavsky (1982) before discussing the topic of salvation. This chapter is grounded in what I identify as the Pentecostal perspective which includes their use of boundaries of protection to prevent them risking falling into sin and 'backsliding' to their pre-Christian days. I link the concept of risk with the justification for mission and need to save 'others' as soon as possible as the day of judgement is unknown, creating a conceptually constant present where the future holds only judgement. I discuss how heaven and hell are considered to be physical places by Pentecostals with knowledge of these domains being literally understood to be like those described in the book of Revelation, that is a place of suffering, fire and separation from God.

I draw largely on my own fieldwork among Pentecostals in identifying and delineating the central importance of 'risk' (and related issues such as 'risk avoidance' and 'risk-taking'). I found that Pentecostals repeatedly communicate the idea of risk among themselves, to others and in relation to what they believe are negative sources of power, such as witchcraft and Satan, reinforcing their system of belief and boundaries contained therein. Binary opposition features heavily in this chapter -- as it does, I argue, in Pentecostal thinking as a whole. The most prominent associations characterising Pentecostal discourse include *heaven/hell, good/evil and God/Satan*.



**heaven/hell:** I outline how heaven and hell are perceived to be physical places by Pentecostals, and how they rely on Scripture for this picture. Their use as symbols and motivations for mission and modes of right behaviour are also considered.

**good/evil:** I consider how the influence of witchcraft, especially in African culture is understood as a force opposing Christian values, both from the Christian and non-Christian perspectives. The need for Pentecostals to be aware of the repercussion of superstitions is clearly an important issue for them.

**God/Satan:** In this respect, the Pentecostal cosmology is relatively simple: Satan is all bad and is the binary opposite of God who is all good: Satan is to God as hell is to heaven. The figure of Satan is deemed by Pentecostals to be ‘dangerous’ and ‘false’ and an entity which they are urged not to listen or give time to.

I end the chapter by discussing the concept of the profane in relation to the work of Douglas (1975) and van Gennep (1960). Anything which is not ‘sacred’, that is, a distinct and identifiable part of the religious life, is part of the profane or secular world, and the distinction holds implications for how Elim Pentecostals see and react to different entities in their lives. This section includes discussion of Halloween, a time of the year when traditionally, in British culture, fun events and parties are organised to celebrate a calendar event closely associated with witchcraft, the occult and related phenomena which Pentecostals consider ‘dangerous’. I further consider an article in *Directions* magazine in which the concern is raised that witchcraft should not be in any way promoted among or celebrated by young people. This same issue arose once again in relation to a Youth Service at Whitley Bay in October, when concerns about the ‘occult’ aspect of Halloween were discussed.

In the next chapter I consider ‘denominational culture and belonging’ in which I consider how social boundaries are, for Pentecostals, flexible and negotiable and can aid their sense of belonging both to their church and to the Christian community as a whole.

## Chapter Five

# Denominational Culture and Belonging

### Introduction

The main aim of this ethnography is to represent accurately the social interactions of Elim Pentecostals. I intend to show how an emphasis on the importance of ‘belonging’ influences congregational structures and the boundaries they create influence their current and future structure.<sup>59</sup> To belong (or feel a sense of belonging) it is (generally) the case that an individual is happy and comfortable in a social situation, in this case Elim churches. A sense of belonging, within a group, is the opposite of being a displaced or misplaced outsider. Returning to the findings of chapter two it is known that most Pentecostals converted into the faith from other denominations.<sup>60</sup> This sense of displacement in other religious groups led them to join Elim (see also later in this chapter on why Pastor Benjamin joined a Pentecostal church). Some Pentecostals are born into the faith and choose to become ‘born again Christians’ as adults within the Elim movement.

In this chapter I consider boundaries of community and the how they are negotiated in these congregations. I outline ‘Believing and Belonging’ and stories which create a sense of belonging for Elim Pentecostals, this includes their experience of the Holy Spirit and prophecy. I note the importance of the past for Pentecostals and the stories which they believe have a historical basis such as biblical events and other times when the Holy Spirit are placed by them to a specific historical date. I consider the issues of conflict and toleration between congregational members and outline the influence of religion in society today. I also note the adaptations the four featured congregations are making to social and cultural conditions. I consider the influence of Elim’s stance, which is held by most members, on the topics of politics and sex and also science and creationism. Finally, I end the chapter with a discussion of the role of joking behaviour within the four congregations

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<sup>59</sup> For literature on belonging see: Mitchell (2006), Harris (ed) (2006), Meinhof and Galasinski (2005), Croucher (2004), DeBernardi (2003), Lovell (ed) (1998), Davie (1994), Cohen (ed) (1982).

<sup>60</sup> The questionnaire data collected from all four congregations shows that 77.5% of all respondents had attended other churches as an adult and that 55.4% had been converted in a Pentecostal church. See tables 2.1 and table 2.2 for full breakdown of data for the four individual congregations.

and throughout this chapter, within these topics; I argue that belonging is crucial for Pentecostals.

One of the most important things that must be considered with regard to the social interactions of the churches is their interaction with the secular world around them. As they have different ways of understanding quotidian phenomena, common ground must be found and particular methods engaged in order to bring about interaction. This interaction with the secular world is termed 'cultural dialogue' by Guest (2002:121-122) who suggests:

The effectiveness of cultural dialogue is measured by the degree to which it attracts the unchurched, rather than to the degree to which it offers meaning to those already within the faith, or indeed, those at the margins.

Guest (2002) suggests that generally churches measure the success of cultural dialogue in terms of the degree in which it attracts the unchurched (non-believers) rather than considering its meaningfulness to those already within the framework of the belief, to whatever extent. The term 'cultural dialogue', as used by Guest, refers to faith and practice within congregations and is a phrase, I have found, without a clear history.

Returning to belonging Burrage suggests that someone's socialisation within a group relates directly to identity: 'To become it is first necessary to belong; and belonging makes it possible to define just who or what one is' (1969:46). On the idea of selfhood Cohen (1981:150) says:

Selfhood is achieved in the course of pursuing primary interaction with significant other human beings, and developing a body of symbolic beliefs and practices forming a world view. In all societies, men engage in primary moral relationships of parenthood, kinship, marriage and affinity, friendship, brotherhood, ritual kinship, and cousinhood.

The idea of identity or 'who one is' relates directly to symbolism and boundaries, in terms of what makes an individual a specific individual, and implying the question of where does the self stop and another begin? It also relates to my earlier questions: what makes

Pentecostal Christians different from atheists? What have members of each congregation got in common? What do the members of different congregations have in common? Drawing on Cohen's earlier work (1982, 1985), Phillips (1986), in his discussion of the Muker community in North Yorkshire, analysed the symbolic differences people developed in order to 'belong as a native' and distinguish themselves from those outside their immediate 'social group' or 'community'. Phillips (1986:141) found his participants distinguished between someone who was 'born-and-bred' in Muker and someone who was not, an 'incomer'. He says '...the boundary is flexible; and this is so because the markers whereby local identity is symbolised are several, and their significance varies in and through time depending on the context of social interaction' (Phillips 1986:41). (For more on belonging see chapter 6)

The relationships and dialogue which Pentecostals have, among themselves and with other groups, such as Catholics, Baptists or even political parties are indicators of social relationships and their boundaries. The edges of boundaries are what is most interesting in identifying areas of social contention between either sides of the boundary line. The consideration of boundaries and their social and symbolic construction is one method of analysing belonging and will be discussed next.

## **Boundaries**

I will consider the contribution of two authors writing on boundaries: Barth (2000, 1969, 1966) and Cohen (2000, 1987, 1986, 1985, 1982). Barth's main premise regarding boundaries is in relation to ethnic groups, their social impact and why these groups persist. Barth believes that how members identify themselves, interact and ascribe different social categories is informative when attempting to gain an understanding of the structure of a group or community (1969). For Cohen (1985) boundaries are 'symbolic constructions' -- hence, the title of his 1985 book, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. In this work Cohen (1985) proposes that boundaries are fluid; they can be manoeuvred by people, change over time, be modified by circumstance and also be figurative. Cohen (1986:1) views boundaries as:

...ways in which people mark out their immediate and intimate social identities, those boundaries of their social lives which demarcate most powerfully and meaningfully their sense of similarity and difference from other people.

Cohen (1986) describes boundaries as a mode of creating an identity in relation to other people. Group boundaries establish and mark out similarities and differences from others. I realise, as Cohen does, that in some situations certain individuals have not had the option of making a decision to join a group. For example, an individual may have been born into a social situation such as children of Elim Pentecostals. For this category they have not chosen (as a convert would) to become an Elim Pentecostal but are pre-placed within the social setting of a Pentecostal community. Cohen describes the concept of community and the forms and uses of boundary perpetuated by community members. The term 'community' is a fluid concept which is not easily defined -- it means different things to different people at different times and in different places -- i.e. it is relativistic rather than universalistic -- and so can only be understood in its own terms; if a particular community sees itself as such for particular reasons, then it is those reasons and not any superimposed idea of 'community' which dictates what binds that group together.

### **Negotiating Boundaries**

Ethnography relies on trying to comprehend and understand complex social relationships at play. Ethnic and social groups, according to Barth (1969), are continually engaged in negotiating their boundaries which produce their individual culture and identity. Guest, (2002:117) who undertook research with a charismatic London congregation, suggests:

...evangelicals are compelled to be not only tolerant of others' beliefs, but are also tolerable to others. 'Anything that hints at moral or religious absolutism and intolerance is underplayed' (Hunter 1987:183). In this sense, the open affirmation of firm boundaries of belief is implicitly discouraged.

Guest suggests that evangelicals wish to show themselves to be tolerant to the beliefs of others. His findings here are particularly interesting since I found the opposite to be true for Elim Pentecostals. Their opinions on certain topics were evident in what was said within

the church setting, in interviews, in their use of resources such as Alpha and within *Directions* magazine.<sup>61</sup> During interviews, congregants were very open about their beliefs and opinions on most matters. One of the people I interviewed, Oliver, a congregant at Riverside, disagreed with homosexuality:

...homosexuality -- I must say is something which I don't like -- I don't like, it's an unnatural way. People say they are born that way but I say no you became that way -- there is a difference -- I must say when I was in the theatre a lot of people said you are one of us -- as in a homosexual -- and I said well you know something better than I do because I don't think so. But they are manipulative, they manipulate things and it's amazing when a person starts all of a sudden, especially in a man, all of a sudden when they're speaking they become asexual and start on the tut, tut, tut -- they change their voice -- it's deliberate and they think it's clever. I must say I feel saddened by it but I must say with my sister she's a wonderful woman...my sister was on her own with my niece and then a friend Natasha -- the two of them together and are perfect y'know -- they look like sisters. But I must say them being lesbians doesn't interfere with my relationship with my sister. I love my Elizabeth and I love my Natasha and I think they're really lovely people but the thing is that doesn't get them into heaven and this is the difference.

Oliver, in this extract, clearly dislikes and disapproves of homosexuality, suggesting that 'it's an unnatural way' and people 'are not born that way', stressing that he considers the changes in their behaviour to not be natural. However, Oliver loves both his sister and her partner despite their relationship, although he does not accept them as Christians because of their lifestyle. Oliver's stance on homosexuality is firm; he does not believe that it is acceptable behaviour. For Oliver, this is a firm boundary which should not be crossed, particularly not by a Christian. His belief is shared by others in the congregation and at other hierarchical levels in the church. These shared values contribute to Oliver's sense of belonging within Elim Pentecostal Church.

The results of the questionnaire over the issue of homosexuality:

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<sup>61</sup> *Directions* magazine is a monthly professionally published full colour glossy magazine which was available free in each of the four congregations. The magazine is produced by Elim Pentecostal Publishing House specifically for Elim Pentecostals.

**Do you believe that someone can be a Christian and a Homosexual?**

<b>Response/ Congregation</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don't Know</b>	<b>Depends</b>	<b>Not Answered</b>
<b>Riverside</b>	15.2%	36.4%	12.1%	30.3%	6.0%
<b>Redland</b>	44.8%	48.4%	3.4%	3.4%	0.0%
<b>Sandyshore</b>	36.7%	29.1%	8.9%	24.9%	0.4%
<b>Castletown</b>	15.1%	65.2%	2.3%	15.1%	2.3%
<b>All</b>	28.0%	44.8%	6.7%	18.4%	2.2%

Totals rounded up or down to one decimal place.

**Table 5.1 Congregant views on whether someone can be a Christian and a Homosexual**

Despite a range of responses the majority of replies, irrespective of the response, stipulated that a person could not be a Christian and a ‘practising homosexual’, or one who does homosexual acts. In the section I left at the end of the questionnaire for providing more information many congregants stipulated the reason for their answer, regardless of whether it was a yes or no, to be that someone could be a Christian so long as they were not taking part in homosexual acts. I cannot be certain why the results from Redland and Castletown are so different, although one feasible explanation is that I did not stipulate in the phrasing of the question whether a person could be a Christian and a practising homosexual. Throughout my time in the field it was clear from talking to members that the general consensus was that someone could be a homosexual and a member of the congregation so long as they refrained from homosexual acts.

### **‘Believing and Belonging’**

The phrase ‘believing and belonging’ was a philosophy embodied by the Castletown congregation and is possibly adapted from the subtitle of Davies’ (1994) work ‘Religion in Britain since 1945: Believing without Belonging’. These words were used as the title for a short course designed for those new to the fellowship. It is a course which was devised by Pastor Benjamin and an advert for the course appeared in the Church ‘Journal’ on the 9<sup>th</sup> November 2003, entitled ‘Believing and Belonging’:



# believing & belonging

Are you new to the fellowship  
within the last year?



Hosted by Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ this short course, "Believing & Belonging", will cover such areas as:

The vision and values of our Church  
& the part that you can play

This is a moment not to be missed! If you'd like to be  
considered for the free course, contact Pastor \_\_\_\_\_

Why not make  
your attendance at Elm  
really count?

This free, four part course will be running soon. Fill out the  
form below and give it to Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ to register your  
interest.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

believing  
&  
belonging

I would like to take part in the four  
part Believing & Belonging course.

Figure 5.2 Journal advert for a course entitled 'Believing and Belonging'

This curious advert notably shows a picture of two ‘international’ women and perhaps subtly suggests this church’s commitment to valuing all people. The flipside to belonging is knowledge of where you do not belong -- this is created through having a specific identity, in the case of Elim Pentecostals, as charismatic Christian believers. Pentecostals assume that they share many of the same beliefs, ideologies and interests as others members of the group. For example, I found that they believe that everyone possesses a spiritual gift which has been specifically chosen by God. Mary, a teenage girl at Sandysore who had received a vision one Sunday morning who said:

Just before when Angela was speaking I got a picture. I did not come up before as I’m shy. I feel that God will pour out his spirit. I got a cup -- but if we turn the cup over then we will not get filled. If we turn the cup upside down then we will not get filled even though God will be pouring.

The teenager interpreted her vision thus: God says that everyone in the church needs to use their spiritual gifts. She made the point that everyone, no matter what their gift, has a duty to use their gift for the benefit of the entire church community. The idea that everyone has a gift helps generate a sense of belonging because it implies that all participants have something to share with other members of the group, something which they often relate to when discussing their journey to the church, and subsequent place within it.

### **Stories of Belonging**

The stories told by current Pentecostals about their journey to Elim are many and varied and may be indicative of how the movement will develop both demographically and socially in the future. This is because the pre- and post-conversion makeup of believers displayed in the testimonies reveals the preferences of current believers, which will appeal to specific sections of wider society, attracting future congregants who feel a connection to the present members and the beliefs of the church as an organisation. Pastor Benjamin, for example, came to Elim because of his knowledge that they endorsed and encouraged the use of the gifts of the Spirit, an aspect which Benjamin was particularly looking for in a church. This occurred directly after a period when Benjamin had experienced the Holy

Spirit and after his conversion in a non-Pentecostal church, a time just prior to Benjamin going to Elim's Bible college:

Before studying I had quite a profound experience -- this is how I came into the Pentecostal church --...I was growing as a Christian and I did an early morning study with...one particular Elder...and in this study we studied the Holy Spirit through church history and was the Holy Spirit relevant today?...I discovered from the book of Luke in the New Testament and in Acts that the person of the Holy Spirit could be encountered in a real dynamic, powerful and personal way. Something which we didn't experience in this church and they didn't teach this, they actually taught against this. But actually looking through the Bible it became obvious that this was still relevant today...So I began to pray according to the theology...it culminated in quite a profound experience one day. The room that I was in...I felt a real sense of God's presence like I'd never felt before. It can only be described as if the room was full -- there was no-one in the room -- just me but it felt as if something or someone greater than me was in the room and in my life, a sense of peace and a sense of joy, a sense of purpose and fulfilment all at one moment, all coming out from almost nowhere...I do class it as an ecstatic experience and encounter. So much so that I felt a sense of presence but it was very welcoming, warm loving caring...I began to speak in a language...a spiritual language. I didn't practice it -- no-one taught me it -- it happened, which is inline with what happened in the book of Acts and in the teachings of the New Testament. Basically for me it was my experience of the empowering of the Holy Spirit just like in Acts chapter 2...the church I was in didn't practice nor believe that could happen but it happened to me and therefore it was a little bit spooky and a bit dangerous. But I found in Pentecostal churches that this was the norm and I therefore joined a Pentecostal church...I joined this Pentecostal church...

Benjamin's conversion took place in a non-Pentecostal church, a church which did not appreciate the use of the gifts of the Spirit and became a place where he felt he did not belong. It was in this church that Benjamin experienced what he defines as the New Testament experiences of the Holy Spirit. It was during this time that he spoke to an elder

at the church, whom he regularly read the Bible with, about the whole experience. What is most fascinating is that Benjamin wished for his experiences of the Holy Spirit to continue in spite of the teachings at his church, speaking of this time as one where he felt a great sense of joy and peace. Benjamin subsequently joined the Pentecostal movement through knowing that Pentecostal movement used the gifts of the spirit, something he wanted to continue experiencing in his Christian faith. The need to belong and experience the gifts of the spirit was a something which Samuel and his wife Bethany wanted to continue to experience in their faith also. They also wished to have a larger impact on the lives of non-believers:

...we were already Christian believers -- we were involved in a small Christian Brethren at the time. We had a deep sense of unrest where we were because we had already experienced and were experiencing the move of the Holy Spirit in a way such as described earlier and we felt the need as Christian people to have a bigger impact, to be involved in, in reaching out to people who didn't know the Lord...

Samuel's words echoed those of Benjamin's as both men wanted, as it seems do all congregants at Elim, to develop and deepen their experience of the Holy Spirit, on which Pentecostals place a high value.<sup>62</sup> Because of this importance they form their own lexicon of phrases and expressions about these experiences which are inexpressible in secular vernacular. Within these two examples we have the basis of a common lexicon, with terms like the 'move of the Holy Spirit' or the 'empowering of the Holy Spirit' used to talk about terms which otherwise they have problems expressing in meaningful language. This is something which Stringer (1999) noted in his time with the Independent Christian Fellowship, that this common vocabulary allowed an almost formulaic recitation and assurance of the things the whole group believes, which are 'known before they are stated' (Stringer 1999:157), forming a closer bond of community based around common

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<sup>62</sup> From the questionnaire responses I discovered that 68.3% of congregants 'speak with tongues' (table 7.2), 65.2% of congregants received words from God (see table 7.3), 44.1% received visions (table 7.4), and 38.3% received prophecies (table 7.5). These high proportions of congregants who experience these charismatic 'gifts', I believe, serve to indicate their importance for believers. Recipients of these gifts often define themselves to be from the charismatic side of Christianity and often refer to themselves as 'born-again' Christians and once converted wish indicate their changed status from sinner to part of the elect through baptism.

experiences. This is the functional limit of any form of institutionalised language, and only the stock phrases used in such discussions about the Spirit form part of any 'language as... ..social practice' (Fairclough 1989:20), and as stated above this is more about sharing common experiences than conveying any particular power relation through such language, beyond marking users of such language as a particular social group. Other common experiences which create a sense of belonging between Pentecostals are experiences of the Holy Spirit, prophecy and their interpretation of prophecy.

Experiences of the Spirit, prophecy and the interpretation of prophecy was part of early Christianity and have continued into Pentecostalism today. Calley (1965:5) found that Pentecostals try to re-live the days of the early church and see themselves as an extension of these early Christians. This was something that Hopewell (1988) found to be common in Christian congregations also. Hopewell (1988:113) notes that congregations compare themselves to 'the Children of Israel, or the parish with a parable'. These comparisons of congregations to biblical time and events I found to be very much true for Elim Pentecostals who not only make frequent references to the early church but also relate Old Testament people of God to modern day Christians. For example, Pastor Adam at Riverside when speaking about the Old Testament prophet Elijah said:

*...What kind of a man was it who came to meet you and told you these words? They answered him, a hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist Does that remind you of someone? Not me!*

Congregation: Laughs. John the Baptist.

Pastor: John the Baptist. God's got some strange characters but they are powerful characters. Y'know don't look at strange people and think that they are weird and way out just remember that they might be the man of God that you need right now

Pastor Adam speaking about Elijah expounded a passage which immediately brought to mind for most congregants an image of the New Testament prophet John the Baptist. Pastor Adam then brings the whole passage into the modern day by suggesting that some modern

Christians who have an alternative style or quirky attributes may be the person of God that is needed. It is unsurprising that Pentecostals interpret prophetic events and their place in history as a continuation of the people of Israel. They believe that God's works in the same ways today as he did then. Douglas (1973:13) alludes to this idea of connecting events:

Sets of rules are metaphorically connected with one another, allow meaning to leak from one context to another along the formal similarities that they show. The barriers between finite provinces of meaning are always sapped either by the violent flooding through of social concerns or by the subtle economy which uses the same rule structure in each province. Since this is so, separate conversations will not go on for long without returning inevitably to their shared origins.

Douglas notes how rules are connected and allow 'meaning' to be transferred from one situation to another. For Pentecostals this in relation to prophecy implies that knowledge from the bible is paramount and God is just as able to intervene now as in past history. For me, identifying how both present and past prophecy, and time itself is viewed by Elim Pentecostals is vital to any understanding of how they function as a group and transmit knowledge from one situation to another. Just as Pentecostals look to the future and the 'end times' they also look backwards to the past times and events in history which are particularly relevant to their modern faith.<sup>63</sup>

### **The Past**

The past is not always a smooth retelling of history today. Even when an event has occurred which has been witnessed by hundreds of people, details of the event can be

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<sup>63</sup> For a broad (anthropological) overview of 'time' see Gell (1992) and a selection of essays in James and Mills (eds) 2005 *The Qualities of Times* in which various aspects of time are considered. This latter text includes essays on objects and places as times of the past, mythical times, modern times, cosmology and persons in and out of time. One of the most vital sources on all aspects of time is the journal 'Time and Society'. Three of the most interesting articles for this journal are 'Sunday: Marker of time, setting for memory' by Alexis McCrossen (2005), 'Time out and drop out: On the Relations between Linear Time and Individualism' by Yian Hogne (2004) and 'A sense of Time: temporality and historicity in sociological enquiry' by Barry H. Bash (2000). These articles provided a range of different ways to understand time, but are not relevant in the present context. Most relevant to my own work on Pentecostal time, is Julia Brannen's (2005) article on 'Time and the Negotiation of Work-Family Boundaries: Autonomy or illusion?', which highlighted the delicate balance in modern society between work and family time, particularly, focusing on how hours of work are no longer specifically set with some people choosing to work from home or be self-employed.

different according to who is recalling it: the past always has to be *interpreted*. The past is less a chronology and more a story (Hopewell 1988) and shared stories within congregations often create a sense of belonging to a shared history. The past can be idealised and considered as a ‘Golden Age’ by those in the present and this can often be truer for those of whom a past event is a memory. For Pentecostals, the past can be prophetic and can be a time of learning and inspiration. Evidence from the past can also be used as a way to promote their belief that they have a direct line of faith back to David, Ezra and Jesus. Pastor Benjamin of Castletown, one Sunday morning at the beginning of Lent in 2004, considered how God answered the prayers of Ezra, then, a group of Minnesota farmers in the 1870s and, finally, Wayman Rogers’ experience at the Christian life centre in Louisville, Kentucky in the late 1980s. These are times which are considered to be ‘Golden Ages’ for believers since God is perceived to have intervened in these events. For example, Pastor Benjamin says:

...looking at Ezra chapter 8...verse 23 from the New King James reads...*So we fasted and entreated our God for this, and He answered our prayer.* As they fasted and entreated their God for His protection, they had His deliverance and guidance. It says: *He answered our prayer.* In other words He gave them protection, deliverance and guidance in the face of all adversity and everything. He answered their prayer [God intervened], they entreated God with prayer and fasting and it is a powerful spiritual principle --the power of prayer and fasting...

Pastor Benjamin spoke of Ezra’s time of prayer and fasting as a ‘powerful principle’ and one which God subsequently answered with results. The Bible is a source often utilised by Christians to portray a history they wish to hold on to and a past they want to be part of in the present, and continuation of similar narratives is a feature of much of the churches’ preaching, and something which Pastor Benjamin then went on to speak about in this particular sermon. Pastor Benjamin said:

Locust plagues were well known to Minnesota farmers, their crops had been destroyed by the voraciously hungry insects. In the summer of 1876, now in the

spring of 1877, they waited to see if such pestilence would strike again. If it did the farming future of thousands of families would be wiped away, permanently. Acutely aware of the impending disaster, Governor J.S. Pillsbury, proclaimed that April the 26<sup>th</sup> would be a day of prayer and fasting to plead with God to save them from calamity. The governor urged that every single person should unite and participate towards this end. Across the state people responded to their governor's call. Gatherings large and small, Minnesotans assembled to fast and pray. The very next day as the sun soared in a cloudless sky with temperatures rising, people noticed to their dismay that the dreaded insects started to stir in the warmed soil. For three days, the uninterrupted seasonal heat caused a vast army of locust to hatch. It was of such plague proportions as to threaten the entire North-West farm sector. Then as the sun departed at the end of the fourth day, with the locust all hatched and ready to move, a sudden climatic change flicked a blanket of frost across the entire area where the locust waited for the dawn to take off; most were killed right where they crouched. Come summer instead of scorched, stubbled dirt, as far as the eye could see the wheat crop waved in golden glory. In the history of Minnesota, April the 26<sup>th</sup> 1877 is recorded as the day when God wonderfully responded to the prayers and fasting of his people.

The past contains many lessons and can be directly linked to responding to God. Pastor Benjamin speaks about a time in the 19th century (about which he had read), in which he believes God was at work. What is most significant about this story is that it would not be out of place beside biblical stories such as Moses and the burning bush, Noah's Ark or Joseph in Egypt. What is common to all of these events is that God intervened and has a plan for those who are faithful to Him. These are all stories which are filled with hope for the believer in their present time. Finally, Pastor Benjamin concluded the trilogy of events with a story taken, like one the above, from a book entitled 'Praying the price' by Robinson (1994). These three stories are linked together through all the prayers of these people being answered by God. The last story went as follows:

A bit more up to date in the United States of America once church in the late 80's decided to pray and fast...When Wayman Rogers, Pastor of the Christian life centre in Louisville, Kentucky led his people in round the clock praying. He saw their



church grow from 200 to 2,000 but when 200 people in the congregation began to fast every Thursday, the supernatural really broke through. These were his reports. A woman with cancer was healed, God delivered people from demon procession, and many people were healed by the miraculous power of God. For four and a half months we had a revival where 10,000 people came every week to our church. Can you imagine that?...People were saved and healed and 4,600 people gave their hearts to God in that time. This was after the church had fasted and prayed for 2 years. Now that's commitment for you, these things don't come cheap do they! This was after they prayed and fasted for 2 years -- the only problems they had were the traffic jams!

The past is inspiring. This story is the most up-to-date out of the three presented and again concerns God's intervention and power in situations where the faithful pray and fast. This final story was to provide particular inspiration to the Castletown fellowship at a time when they were praying for new people to come into the church and for an expansion of either their current building or a move to a larger building. The three extracts are all past events which have a historical component and provide the modern day believer with hope for the present and also the future. The retelling of these events was used as a tool to encourage believers to pray and fast.

Two of the most important periods of time for North East Elim Pentecostals appear to be biblical times -- including the time of the Early Church -- and the time when the Spirit fell at the beginning of the twentieth century in Riverside. These are historical times and events which are constantly talked about by Pentecostals and are events which, to outsiders, symbolise their sense of belonging. Modern day events and happenings around the world are often paralleled to these times -- there is a folding of the (biblical) past into the present and projected into the future. Although a huge period of history has elapsed between the time of the early church and the beginning of the twentieth century the era in-between appears to be less significant to Pentecostals. The fact that certain periods of time are more important than others for Pentecostals is common in other religious groups also. For example, Quakers are most interested in the seventeenth century and the beginnings of Quakerism. The most well-known doctrine of Quakers is pacifism and the time of George Fox and other Quakers who were radical pacifists during and following the English Civil

War is very important for today's Quakers for whom it appears also to be a 'golden age'.<sup>64</sup> Methodists also have a key period of time which is relevant to all Methodists and this is the time of John Wesley in the eighteenth century.<sup>65</sup> It is hardly surprising then that the most important dates for North East Pentecostals are when the Holy Spirit fell in Riverside in 1907, biblical times and the time of the early church. Until now I have been considering boundary markers which establish a measure of agreement between members of the group. However, I do not wish to imply that congregants agree on everything. Even in congregations where all members are understood as belonging to the group there are, nevertheless, internal conflicts.

### **Conflict and Toleration**

The issue of conflict within churches was a matter I was aware could be an underlying issue in congregations after reading Becker (1999), in which members of the same congregation had internal disagreements. Becker focuses upon American congregations and their internal and external ways of forming individual identities and creating boundaries between their congregation and other congregations. These boundaries between them and others help create a sense of individuality for each congregation and a sense of belonging between members within each congregation. Becker's opening chapter is headed: 'Who are we', and 'how we do things here': local understanding of mission and identity' (1999:1). Becker found that individual congregational traits exist and have a positive effect on particular congregations. One example provided is about the United Church of Christ (Becker 1999:9-10):

UCC (United Church of Christ) had a strong idioculture... They made and sold donuts at the local farmers market – everyone spoke of it as 'our donut program'.

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<sup>64</sup> See Collins (2004) and Dandelion (1996). Collins (2005:101) says 'Quaker written texts, including the best known – for example – *Quaker Faith and Practice* and George Fox's *Journal* – are replete with stories. Moreover, these stories are commonly retold and embroidered by Quakers throughout the United Kingdom, and are in that sense canonical.' Dandelion (1996:6) '...it is Fox, above all, amongst the early leaders, whose words are given most status by Present-day British Friends.'

<sup>65</sup> See Turner (2002) who refers to the influence of John Wesley to those inside and outside the Methodist Movement to be like '...an eighteenth century Billy Graham' (Turner 2002:vii).

The selling of donuts united the congregation and gave them a sense of identity, of their 'Who are we' (Becker 1999:1). Becker investigated 23 congregations, mainly Christian but including two synagogues. Her main aim was to investigate the concepts of 'within-frame conflict' and 'between-frame conflict' (Becker 1999:4). The issue of conflict between members of the same church is a central theme examined by Becker and one which I bore in mind during my own fieldwork. Conflict between members over how things are done in the church was something that arose in an interview I carried out with Callum, an ex-congregant of the Castletown. He described a conflict between him and the worship team after he had made suggestions regarding possible improvements to the organisation of worship. What is most interesting in this case was that, following this disagreement, Callum returned to the congregation:

...I saw one of the elders actually at Morrisons. I saw them on the Saturday and explained to her what had happened and she said: oh just come back and then one of the elders rang that Sunday morning. Came back and then the Pastor ripped me apart on that Sunday. He just laid into me really verbally condemning me, he just turned against me, nasty -- that was Sunday the 28<sup>th</sup>. I went through the worship, I went through the meeting and I went to the back, thanked the Pastor -- I can't hold anything back and then I just left...

Callum spoke of meeting an elder in a supermarket and then being phoned by an elder. Both of whom urged him to go back to the church the following Sunday, this he did. It was the Pastor who, Callum felt, had 'laid into him' on the Sunday. Although Callum said that he left with no hard feelings, I perceived that there was some disappointment that things had turned out the way they had. By the end of my fieldwork, Callum had left the congregation and prefers to worship at home. This example did not appear to be the norm and was the only serious conflict that I heard about during my fieldwork. Instead, messages of tolerance and defusing internal conflicts between themselves were usually treated with humour with the clear reminder that all members are 'brothers and sisters in Christ'. In Callum's case, it appears that in criticising the mode of worship, he had overstepped the mark and reconciliation proved impossible. This outcome points to the likely importance of worship in maintaining the congregational boundary.

Tolerance of other Christians, especially those from other cultures is something I have heard spoken about on numerous occasions in the churches. Although Elim Pentecostals might differentiate themselves from other Christians they wish to remain unified as a group and be a community of believers where everyone who holds their fundamental beliefs belong. This is supported by the pastors, elders and other leaders in the church. Elim supports certain key campaigns corporately, as it were, in the North East, such as those against racism and in support of ecumenical relations. Calley (1965:58) discusses the issue of conflict:

Disputes cause individual members, whether or not they are directly involved, to think about their religious values. If a split occurs they must decide which faction they are to follow and to be able to justify their decision to themselves and other Pentecostals.

Calley notes that, in disputes, individual members must make up their own minds about their values and follow the splinter group which they feel most affinity to. Calley's words concerning splits are particularly relevant since the Riverside Congregation, who were once predominantly members of the Redland Congregation but eventually established their own congregation. At the time of the setting up of the Riverside congregation individual congregants at Redland made their decision either to stay in their current church or move with their Pastor to another church. Today, contact between the two congregations is good due to their close proximity but the split is remembered by some members, although relations appear to be amicable between the churches. Both congregations view each other as doing God's will and contact between the two congregations is good. Furthermore, in relation to conflict, Calley (1965:59) says:

I do not think that in the analysis of native English Pentecostal churches (Elim, for example) conflict would prove nearly so important as it is among the West Indian sects I am discussing.

Calley believes that West Indian Pentecostals are more likely to be involved in intra-congregational conflict than native English Pentecostals. He also notes that in the 1960s the majority West Indian churches do not invite native British Pentecostals to become members and vice versa. This is an area which I believe has changed in Elim. All of the congregations are to varying extents multicultural and have contact not only with each other but various other Pentecostal congregations and other denominations such as Baptists. I discovered, during fieldwork, that the Castletown congregation, which is the most ethnically diverse of the congregations, had built up specific links with immigrant Nigerian Pentecostals. Tolerance of others within the church was an issue which was spoken about by Michael, a visiting pastor to the Castletown congregation in March 2004:

...the Bible says that Christians in the end times shall easily be offended. Offence is a major problem in church life. Well, the Pastor did not say hello to me, so I don't think I will go to that church any more or the church elders have not said hello, so I think I will hold back the church tithes and offerings for four weeks just to punish them. Oh, you're a big thrill, hmm. If you are holding back tithes and offerings do you know who you're punishing?

Congregant: God.

Pastor: Correct -- good preaching -- hmm...I mean, if you are a person that is easily offended you take authority over it right now because I can promise you we will have big chances to be offended. But I don't think it's right for Christians to be offended.

Church unity was obviously important for Michael and it was presented in this sermon in order to make congregants think about unresolved issues and specifically conflicts, including how they might be resolved. In relation to the withholding of tithes by members, the charge was that the person was not punishing the church but punishing God. Prior to these words being said Michael had spoke about race on several occasions -- how Black, White, Asian or any other ethnic (Christian) group were all equal and should be considered as individuals in relation to what they can bring to God's work in Castletown. It was

interesting that in speaking about conflict Michael, a European Pastor, spoke about how the positives in people should be considered rather than any negatives and that every believer was a 'brother' or 'sister' in Christ -- apparently, a blurring of the boundaries between Christians and aiding belonging.

In Pentecostalism, as in all religious groups, members who do not adhere to the laws or teaching of the religion are not always accepted by the rest of the group. One example of this for Elim Pentecostals is that someone cannot be a member if they are a Freemason, as Jacob a leader in the Sandysore congregation said:

You can't be a member of the Elim church and be a Freemason -- okay. The evangelical church as I understand it does have problems with Freemasonry. The Christian church as a whole doesn't because as I understand it there have been vicars and people -- leaders in the Church of England -- who have been Freemasons and see no conflict between the two but I don't know. In the Evangelical church at large it is seen as a conflict area with one's commitment to Christ -- because in becoming a Freemason -- it is a secret society and the church is not a secret society -- one takes oaths of allegiance to the other masons which as I understand it supersede their oaths of allegiance to other Christians and possibly to Christ. Therefore it is seen as a no go area. Basically on those issues...those who are Christian and are masons would argue that it is not so in fact but I cannot comment on that. But in theory there is certainly a conflict of interest.

Jacob, in this extract, states that a person cannot become a member (although they can be an attendee) of Elim Pentecostal church if they are a Freemason. He explains that the reasoning for the church taking this position is due to the Society of Freemasons being a secret society where members take oaths of allegiance which supersede those to other Christians and possibly to Christ. Elim Pentecostals view Freemasons as possibly having a conflict of interest with their faith -- something which Elim Pentecostals place above all other aspects of life since this is their key to salvation and eternity with God. Elim Pentecostals have a desire to be united with other individuals who share the same salvation and so attend Elim churches, places where believers who have the same core beliefs as the organisation of Elim belong. Elim, as with all religious groups do have from time to time

internal conflicts and barriers although as a denomination they wish to avoid serious intra-congregational conflict. It is clear that Elim congregations wish to remain a unified force and prevent conflict; they also want to be a place where potential converts are welcome. Elim as a movement is one where mission is vital (see chapter 4) and as a result the influence of religion in society and the common questions asked by non-believers are used by Pentecostals to start conversations with those who are possible converts, forcing the churches to consider their role and interaction with wider society.

### **Adaptation to Social and Cultural Conditions**

Chambers (2005), a sociologist, has written about four Welsh congregations in Swansea – an Anglican congregation, a Roman Catholic congregation and two free churches. Chambers has a specific interest in social change in Wales. He identifies that from the 1970s onwards religion in Wales was in decline ‘and continues to be, higher than anywhere else in the United Kingdom’ (Chambers 2005:7). The largest decline has been for chapels and as Chambers says, ‘it is now fairly obvious to all but the most optimistic observer that, in general, the Welsh are no longer “a religion shaped people.”’ Chambers had three aims in the production of this work. He says (Chambers 2005:9):

...first, to address critically the debate concerning secularization in modern societies; second, to describe and account for the general religious situation in south-west Wales and to examine these issues in rather more depth through the medium of four case studies of Christian congregations operating in the city of Swansea; thirdly, to demonstrate how empirical data can aid our understanding of religious decline or growth by identifying those factors which most likely inhibit or promote congregational growth.

Chambers (2005) conducted a survey in 1995 of 219 congregations and interviewed twenty-eight religious professionals and church leaders in Swansea. These findings are reported throughout his book. In relation to my work with Elim Pentecostals, he discovered that (Chambers 2005:50):

While Pentecostals, taken together, only constitute 6 per cent of the religious population of Swansea, in the years 1985-95 they saw some growth, both in terms of membership (13 per cent) and in church attendance (7 per cent).

Chambers writes that, in Swansea, Pentecostals (which includes Elim) experienced growth in numbers in church membership and attendance. Unfortunately figures for the North East of England on Pentecostal church attendance were not available; however, Chambers findings are supported in the UK by Census data.<sup>66</sup> The changes in church membership, ministers and churches for many major UK denominations are presented next.

Percentage rate of change per year

	of members of members		Of ministers of ministers		of churches Of churches	
	1975-1985	1985-1995	1975-1985	1985-1995	1975-1985	1985-1995
Anglican	-2.6	-3.1	-2.4	-1.3	-0.9	-0.8
Baptist	+0.6	-0.9	+1.8	+2.4	-1.4	+1.8
Independent	+4.1	+3.0	+5.1	+7.6	+3.3	+2.3
Methodist	-3.4	-2.6	-0.8	0.0	-2.6	-2.0
Orthodox	+2.6	+5.1	+8.2	+7.8	+5.8	+5.3
Other	-3.9	+0.6	+0.4	+4.3	0.0	+2.0
Pentecostal	+5.7	+5.9	+10.0	+7.9	+4.3	+2.0
Presbyterian	-3.3	-2.9	-2.0	-3.1	-1.8	-1.2
Roman Catholic	-2.6	-2.4	-1.1	-1.9	+0.6	+0.5
Total	-2.2	-1.9	-0.5	+0.4	-0.6	-0.1

Taken from [www.vexen.co.uk/UK/religion.html#change](http://www.vexen.co.uk/UK/religion.html#change)

**Table 5.3 Changes in Membership and Ministers in UK Churches/Congregations**

This data suggests that Elim churches are most likely to be adapting to social trends, as there has been no observed change in secular culture to bring religion closer to the surface of their lifestyles. This means that the change must have been affected on the part of the churches.

<sup>66</sup> See [www.vexen.co.uk/UK/religion.html#change](http://www.vexen.co.uk/UK/religion.html#change) taken from the website on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2008.



Elim Pentecostals are indeed aware that society (both secular and religious) has changed rapidly during the past 50 years. Pastor Benjamin of Castletown related his experience of pastoring different generations. He believes the stresses, pressures and needs of people's lives have changed over time:

I think today there are more things to do. I think say fifty years ago, I'm not that old but say fifty years ago the church would be at the centre of the community, there wasn't the internet there wasn't all the entertainment there is today, there wasn't TV. They had the dance hall and things like that but churches put on a skittles night and that would have been the highlight of the week and y'know that's just gone. Today with the internet and the media and the thrill of life and the experiences and choices of life, there's just so much more today and that's seems to be opening up more and more to younger people and they're getting younger and younger. I've got a daughter coming up to eleven and she wants to do things that I may have been doing at say fifteen or sixteen. And even with certain companies like Tesco's a certain line of clothing there was an outcry on certain underwear and stuff that's may be for sort of sixteen years olds is being marketed at eleven year olds and that's not being prudish. I'm just saying it's as if there are greater choices in life that the goalposts are being moved continually. So I'm sort of edging toward that possibly, possibly there's a lot of different pressures out there. Are there more? Perhaps. I wasn't around fifty years ago, I'm going on other views but I would say perhaps there's a multiplicity of choices and things vying for my time and challenging long held values and beliefs. I would say that's fair comment and that has repercussions on young people.

Benjamin thinks that society has got more complex in recent decades -- especially for young people. He believes that, today, young people have a greater range of temptations than previous generations. Benjamin notes that young people want to do things at a younger age than did his generation and that there is a lot more pressure on the young today. The different pressures of life for all generations have changed over time and, if they are to remain relevant, churches must adapt to these changes. In effect, churches must offer a form of Christianity or Christian lifestyle which people are able to identify with and people can belong within. Two issues of general social concern (raised during the Alpha course)

are science and politics. Elim's stance on these issues and other sensitive issues is considered next.

## **Politics and Morality**

Charismatic Christianity is flourishing in the contemporary world. It is a fluid culture that is seeping onto numerous social contexts and even permeating supposedly secular practices such as economic consumption and the development of technology. Charismatics often view such development of technology in both defensive and triumphalist ways: they regard themselves as reclaiming territory lost to the devil and at the same time they are spreading the Good News of the Gospels to all nations. (Coleman 2000:49)

Coleman notes how Charismatic Christians, including Pentecostals, are becoming influential in the modern world. Religion and Politics in Britain have traditionally been separate entities until recently.<sup>67</sup> Pentecostals can impart their Christian influence through their involvement in politics, whether at local or national levels. This involvement, they believe, will raise the profile of their charismatic Christianity and provide a clear indication of where the Elim movement stands on political issues and potentially provide a place of belonging for those with a similar political, moral, ethical and religious stance. Pastor Benjamin of Castletown certainly believes Elim Pentecostals should be involved in politics:

...I do think that Christians should play a part in all aspects of life and should live and influence every aspect of life, politics included. We shouldn't shrink back as Christians and say well this is religion and that's politics and that's the state and we keep the faith within the four walls of this little building. You should get on with your life and we should get on with ours! I think that there is a great message in the Christian faith for life and dignity and peace and mutual understanding. I think that is a great message also for life and family and a fantastic message that can have bearing in political life. And one of the things that we're inspired by is early education and

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<sup>67</sup> For other literature on religion and politics see Mitchell (2006), Puniyani (ed) (2005), Davis, Milbank and Zizek (eds) (2005), Norris and Inglehart (2004), Kengor (2004), Pettman (2004), Bruce (2003).

early politics have their roots in faith, particularly Methodism, the Labour Party has aspects of it. So we would say that we need to rediscover that aspect and encourage our folks to vote -- to definitely vote and to play a part in politics and vote with their conscience not just according to a party line and to encourage them to make our MPs accountable to that. There are many pressure groups out there and I think that Christianity needs to get back into speaking from our faith and the good message that there is in life and how that can be played out in the political realm.

Benjamin claims that the Pentecostal faith is relevant in all situations in life, even in politics, and feels that Christians should not separate themselves from state affairs. He believes that MPs should be accountable and notes how the Labour Party has its roots in Methodism. Today, Charismatic and Pentecostal Christians appear to be trying to reclaim previously lost ground in the political arena in areas, such as family issues, parental fears and politically and morally sensitive issues, such as legalising brothels. In the words of Pastor Adam one Sunday morning:

We as Christians are in the world but not part of it.

At the time, I believed that the Pastor was imposing on followers his belief that it was acceptable to use new technology (especially as a new projector had been installed) but was advising against worldly activities, such as getting drunk or having pre-marital sex. However, on further consideration, I now believe his words went much deeper. Two articles in the September 2004 issue of *Directions* magazine caught my attention; one was a three page article about abortion and the other was a short one page article entitled: 'Labour's sex education policy breeds promiscuity'.<sup>68</sup>

An article on Labour's sex education policy in *Directions* magazine is against sex education in schools (especially among younger children) and easy access to family planning advice in support of promoting sexual abstinence. The article cites the 'Family Education Trust' as its source and provides an address parents can write to for more information. Riches whose work is endorsed by the 'Family Education Trust' recently produced a book entitled 'Sex Education or Indoctrination?' Riches says:

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<sup>68</sup> *Directions*, September 2004, p13

...in most areas targeted by the Teenage Pregnancy Unit, teenage pregnancies have not decreased but increased – by up to 34%...the government sex education policy is dictated by ideology, not facts: “Until our sexual educators overcome their phobia about abstinence they are unlikely to make any positive progress.”<sup>69</sup>

The article goes on to propose that the government should introduce an American style campaign to promote sexual abstinence among adolescents. The promotion of abstinence of sex outside of marriage (and for homosexuals) and monogamy within marriage is justified biblically. Perhaps this stance is also influenced by the statistic that HIV is on the increase in the UK in all sections of the population with the result that ‘In 2005, 7,450 new HIV cases were diagnosed. This was nearly double the number diagnosed in 2000.’ and that ‘MSM remain the behavioural group at greatest risk of acquiring HIV within the UK’ (Office of National Statistics).<sup>70</sup> The correlation between Elim promoting monogamy within marriage being influenced by HIV statistic is difficult to judge but church sermons often contrasted what those in authority perceived to be the breakdown of morality in society against the benefits of monogamy in marriage.

The other article, mentioned earlier in relation to sex education in school, is on the apparent ease of teenage abortion and is written by a professional journalist (and mother of two) who is an Elim member. It has an unusual main title and subheading ‘Teen abortion may just be the tip of an iceberg: Minding your own business and not your children. Will this be the law?’<sup>71</sup> The article also has a pre-heading to set the article in context:

A sexual health professional working in a British school has arranged for a young teenager to have an abortion – without her parents’ knowledge. The child’s rights eclipsed the rights and responsibilities of her parents.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> *Directions*, September 2004, p13

<sup>70</sup> ‘The term MSM refers to men who have sex with men’ (Office of National Statistics), taken from [www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=654](http://www.statistics.gov.uk/cci/nugget.asp?id=654) on the 9<sup>th</sup> October 2007.

<sup>71</sup> *Directions*, September 2004, p6

<sup>72</sup> *Directions*, September 2004, p 6

The article is clearly aimed at mothers as the article opens with citation from a message on an online British tabloid message board:

If your 14-year-old daughter is going on a school trip then you have to give permission. If your 14-year-old daughter skips school constantly you can be sent to prison. BUT if your 14-year-old daughter wants an abortion, the school can sort it out for her, and you the mother know nothing. What a crazy world!!!

The article then proceeds to inform the reader that it was not actually a school that helped a teenager have an abortion but: ‘a young health “outreach” worker based at the school site.’<sup>73</sup> The tone of the article is one of discontentment, as Savjani says:

How can a 14-year-old be deemed ‘incompetent’ in the eyes of the law to be ready to bear the emotional and physical consequences of sexual intercourse (sex under 16 is still illegal) – yet the same 14-year-old can be deemed ‘competent’ to cope with the emotional and physical consequences of abortion? Has the government lost the plot on parenting, childhood and sexuality in particular?

The Elim member writing in *Directions* magazine appears to be discontent with the current laws in Britain. Parents are responsible (under British law) for ensuring their child attends school, yet their child is viewed as an individual when gaining advice on contraception (to allow youths to gain information and prevent ignorance). The article leads up to the conclusion, quoting Smith, head of public policy at CARE (Christian Action Research Education), on what parents can do to take back responsibility for their children:

Until parents first realise, and second take responsibility, then it will carry on, and it will carry on at a younger and younger age – we know that some ten and eleven-year-olds are already sexually active...parents should start by investigating the arrangements at their local school. Ask the school what arrangements they make for sex education and for providing sexual health advice and information, speak to the

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<sup>73</sup> *Directions*, September 2004, p 6

parent governors who, together with the other governors, set the school's sex education policies. Decide if the school is doing what you want. If not, then take it onwards and upwards – to the local authority, to your MP and so on...The idea that any parent should be able to tell their child what it should be, or do, is now under threat. The whole idea that I can't commend my worldview to anyone – that it's all relative – the logical working of that is the breakdown of every kind of family unit, and any kind of responsibility, in order to be free of every other person. It's a whole framework we are dismantling, and what we are putting in its place will be disastrous for both children and adults.<sup>74</sup>

Fear appears to be an emotion played on in this article, in particular the fear of a parent who does not have the right to know what sexual advice has been given to their child. Advice that parents fear will lead to pregnancy or even abortion. The tone of the abortion article, in *Directions* magazine, coupled with the other article on Labour's sex education policy appears to want the government to give parents control over their children in all matters (including sexual advice). The article on abortion and parental responsibilities is presented as a concern for all parents and not just for Christians and clearly wishes to create a feeling that all parents belong to a category of society which should be concerned with these issues. This leads to the question: are moral and ethical concerns (especially of faith groups) becoming political levers in Britain? Moral and ethical choices generate debate and one of the biggest debates within the religious community in Britain is that over homosexual Christians and gay clergy, particularly with the introduction of civil partnerships in Britain in 2005 (see earlier in this chapter and chapter 3 for more on homosexuality and civil partnerships). Ammerman (2001:4) notes that:

Few issues have so divided U.S. society in recent years as homosexuality.

Politically sensitive issues, especially relating to morality or ethical choices, have become topics on which Christians and, in particular church leaders, are voicing their opinions and clearly demonstrate where their denomination politically belong on key issues. A British

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<sup>74</sup> *Directions*, September 2004, p 8

headline in March 2005 reads: 'Abortion: The facts' with the subheading: 'Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, leader of six million Catholics, says it ought to be an election issue. Tony Blair Disagrees. So should it be?'<sup>75</sup> Political manipulation of key ethical and moral concerns is what British political parties are now hoping will win voters. The headline is bold and simple and perhaps would have been until recent times more at home in an American newspaper. Across the Atlantic sensitive and often opposing political issues are backed by candidates in order to win the vote. The winning tactics of Bush, particularly his fundamental stance on religious values, backed by various religious groups (including some fundamentalist Muslims), may become more prominent in the British political arena, especially if the heads of major religious groups become involved and link political issues to personal faith:

Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor, seized on Mr Howard's stance as "something we can commend on something for the full abandonment of abortion". He added for good measure that whereas in the past, Catholics were perceived to have been more at home in the Labour Party, that might not be so true today. He created the impression that a good Catholic might now think twice about voting Labour.<sup>76</sup>

The final sentence of the above quotation is a good example of the kind of manipulative lever I am describing, in this case applied by the Catholic Church (as a major contender of the current pro-choice abortion laws in Britain).<sup>77</sup> The position of the Catholic Church is using abortion as a political lever naturally leads to the question: are ethical, moral and cultural values going to become a political vehicle and filter through into other religious institutions backing key political groups? At present, patronage of political parties by religious institutions does not seem to be welcomed as a good thing:

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<sup>75</sup> *The Independent*, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2005, p1

<sup>76</sup> *The Independent*, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2005, p28

<sup>77</sup> Although I have used *The Independent* to cite Cardinal Cormac Murphy-O'Connor's viewpoint on abortions in relation to politics I could have equally cited other new sources, for example the bbc news 24 website had the headline from 21<sup>st</sup> June: 'Cardinal urges abortion rethink: The head of the Catholic Church in England and Wales has reopened the abortion debate by urging the government to change the law' taken from [news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/5099362.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/health/5099362.stm) on 9<sup>th</sup> October 2007. Similarly the *Times* on the 15<sup>th</sup> March 2005 had the headline 'Cardinal tells Catholics to reject Labour over abortion' taken from [www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/politics/election2005/article428080.ecc](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/politics/election2005/article428080.ecc) accessed on 9th October 2007.

The personal had suddenly become political. The dreaded prospect loomed of an American-style campaign that turned on 'values', co-opted the churches and made a candidate's attitude on abortion the measure of everything else he or she represented. It is hard to imagine a more malign development in British electoral campaigning.<sup>78</sup>

The consequences of religious institutions creating debate on sensitive moral and ethical values is unclear. If the United States is taken as an example, then the consequences for religious institutions prompting followers to vote according to their religious convictions is a move away from neo-liberalism. Britain is arguably neo-liberalist (Gellner 1998). The consequence of this neo-liberalism is that faith, agnosticism and atheism are personal stances rather than one of these positions being enforced on the collective. The upshot is that religion (including moral and ethical issues), science (including evolution) and citizenship (including politics) are all taught in British State schools. Choice, however, is still offered to British parents of whether to have their child educated in a non-denominational or church school. Parents in Britain with strong religious convictions can also choose to send their child to a public school; these schools are not regulated by the state and have independence from it (including not being legally obliged to teach the national curriculum). In the UK not all independent schools teach creationism and a key Pentecostal stance against evolution is a means through which Pentecostals and other creationist Christians can show their united front. It is a means of creating a sense of belonging between those who hold the same beliefs and also allows discussion to be opened with those with differing beliefs regarding creation. Perhaps most importantly for the expansion of the church, it allows them to present their justification for their creationist stance to the wider population. The key topics for Pentecostals on science and creationism will be considered next.

### **Science and Creationism**

One leading school in the North East, Emmanuel College in Gateshead, was established by a prominent Christian car salesman, Sir Peter Vardy (of the Vardy Foundation). The ethos of the school is Christian and is notable in the region of the North East as the only school to

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<sup>78</sup> The *Independent*, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2005, p28



teach creationism as opposed to evolutionary theory.<sup>79</sup> This seemed unremarkable at first sight, until I came across an article published in *Directions* magazine in October 2004 entitled 'Darwinism is Materialist Mythology, Not Science'.<sup>80</sup> This, coupled with the news that in the autumn of 2004, 'A groundbreaking Elim-sponsored initiative, designed to show that Creation is the only credible explanation of how our world began' seemed significant.<sup>81</sup> The title is unremarkable -- it is a natural assumption that at least some Christians would hold a creationist stance that God created the world. The leaders of the 'creationism tour' are Professor Phillip Johnson (creation Geologist) and Dr Andrew Snelling (trained in law). Until reading the October 2004 article in *Directions* magazine by Prof Johnson and Dr Snelling, I had assumed that no official stance was taken by the Elim movement (apart from God being creator) on the issue of creationism and evolution. The misunderstanding I had experienced was due also in part to the fact that Elim, as a movement (along with the mainstream churches), endorsed the Alpha course.

During my research I saw many different ways in which the Christian message was made relevant to the modern world in all four churches. One example I particularly remember was the Castletown congregation's modern take on the traditional nativity story performed in 2004. The play featured a modern day pregnant Mary and Joseph as a couple as 'chavs' and the 'three kings of bling' -- a 'black' rapping trio. The production also featured children as angels, shepherds and kings. This church was attempting, with considerable energy, to span the gap between holding on to tradition and delivering the nativity message in a modern way. This event certainly filled the church and for outsiders, I believe, aided their ability to relate to the gospel message and aid their feeling of belonging within the Christian setting.

Human contact for Elim Pentecostals seems to be very important; however, it is always carried out appropriately. All of the congregations have a greeter or greeters at the door as the first point of contact as people enter the church; they always shake your hand or give a hug and ask how you are. This contact is a vital part of welcoming newcomers and regulars alike. Pastor Benjamin regularly says during Sunday morning services: 'there's nothing worse than walking into a church and walking out again at the end of the service

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<sup>79</sup> For further literature on the debate between science and religion (Evolution versus Intelligent Design) see Ruse (2005), Coleman and Carlin (2004), Shanks (2004), Forrest and Gross (2004), Dembski and Ruse (eds) (2004), Moore (2003), Frost and Wilkinson (1996), Numbers (1993).

<sup>80</sup> *Directions*, October 2004.

<sup>81</sup> [www.darwinreconsidered.org](http://www.darwinreconsidered.org) taken from the website 16<sup>th</sup> March 2005.

without anyone having spoken to you.’ The words always accompanying the suggestion that during the ‘giving of the peace’ people should feel free to move around and talk to people they have not met before. This is something which really gets the church ‘buzzing’ before the sermon. Language used in all of the congregations was inclusive and the kinship terms of ‘brother’ and ‘sister’ were constantly used. Leaders nearly always used the term ‘fellowship’ when referring to the whole congregation and Pastors use the phrase ‘we’ rather than ‘I’ when speaking. On numerous occasions it was made explicit that their messages (such as sermons of encouragement in living the Christian Life) related to the pastor himself as much as to congregants. The use of inclusive terms for Elim congregations is seen as vital if the organisation itself is to be seen as inclusive of new comers. These are some examples of how Elim churches are inclusive. I will go on to describe other events held in Elim churches which unite the congregation.

Other events empathize how each ‘church’ is flexible and adapts itself to modern congregants living in a twenty-first century world. Events held by all the ‘church’, for example, 60s and 70s nights, fireworks events on bonfire night and Oscars ceremonies in which awards were presented to the winners -- just like in Hollywood. These ‘Oscars’ are in effect tributes to those who give their time to the church e.g. Cell Group leaders, youth workers and so on, and are events which would also not be out of place outside of the church setting. These are events which allow people to ‘dress up’, share food and non-alcoholic drink and have a relaxed but entertaining evening with members themselves providing entertainment. The 70s night saw the church fully decorated and the room arranged into small grouped areas where the front ‘stage’ was clearly visible. Everyone was dressed in 70s costumes with flares, psychedelic colours and other iconic clothing from that period. The disco lights and 70s soundtrack set the mood before entertainment from that era was provided -- a ‘Generation Game’ featuring ‘real’ families and a conveyor belt with prizes, a quiz and also singing tributes from members impersonating the likes of Abba, Diana Ross and the Supremes -- and even the Pastor and his wife being ‘Sonny and Cher’. The evening also allowed a ‘short’ special message to be given by Pastor Benjamin saying why the 70s was such an important time for him -- this was when he came to know God and become a Pastor. What these social occasions do, is create an informal and fun setting for people to have enjoyment, catch up on gossip and get to know each other. On all these occasions much laughing, joking and teasing occurred. In this way a sense of community and belonging is generated among members. The use of jokes is not limited to these events

but is part of the social atmosphere in services (when appropriate) and is a feature of how Elim churches are adapting.

### **Joking Behaviour**

Informality, inclusion and adaptability to modern culture can also be seen through the use of language and one of the ways this has been done is through joking behaviour.<sup>82</sup> Leach notes (1976:9), 'Human communication is achieved by means of expressive actions which operate as *signals, signs* and *symbols*.'<sup>83</sup> One form of communication is 'joking' and telling funny stories. They are forms of discourse that are part of British culture. The genre of 'jokes' and funny stories often forms part of the Sunday services. The funny story has a structure: a beginning, middle and end which culminate with a punch line. Douglas (1975:97) says:

The social dimension enters all levels into the perception of a joke. Even the typical patterning depends on a social valuation of the elements.

In the telling of a 'joke' everyone is involved and the physical body is used as a smile or laugh is often produced and the atmosphere is relaxed by the telling of the joke. Joking behaviour and teasing between members is a visible sign that people belong. Douglas (1975:107) notes that the teller of the joke is usually in a privileged position and has the power to lighten the atmosphere:

He (the joker) merely expresses consensus safe within the permitted range of attack, he lightens for everyone the oppressiveness of social reality, demonstrates its arbitrariness by making light of formality in general, and expresses the creative possibilities of the situation.

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<sup>82</sup> For authors on joking behaviour see Stevens, (1978), Freedman (1997), Launay (1997), Leach (1976), Douglas (1975), Handelman and Kapferer (1972).

<sup>83</sup> Signals in language follow naturally the sense of the topic; signals have a relationship in language between what is being indicated by what has previously proceeded; and symbols when there is no real common links between what is being professed to what has come before.

Often a joke is made at the beginning or end of a sermon or after someone's testimony if the testimony has not been an emotional one. Amy, a young woman spoke one Sunday about losing her bag with all her money, credit cards and her passport in, at a festival in Vienna. Saying she had prayed 'as if her life depended on it, like Pastor Benjamin had spoken about a few weeks earlier' and the bag 'miraculously' (as she put it) had been returned to the exact metro station she had gone to (but not the nearest one to the festival). As Amy left the front the pastor made a joke to lighten the atmosphere: 'Did you hear? -- it had all my credit cards in -- how many is that then?' Amy and the audience both laughed and the sharing of the joke clearly points to a shared sense of belonging. The 'joke' created a lighter atmosphere and allowed people's attention to move from her story to the next part of the service. Jokes and other informalities are an indication of social ease, confidence. These social idioms are a type of language which communicates relaxed social relationships and a sense of belonging.

The telling of a joke or the use of teasing during church services is usually done by the Pastor or other 'well-known' leaders within the church. Their teasing comments to others or their telling of jokes are always given and received with 'good humour'. This joking behaviour may sometimes be directed towards someone who also holds a position of power. What then occurs is often the return of more teasing or further joking behaviour directed towards the sender and usually culminates with the church audience laughing.

Jokes are also often used to make services livelier or 'more entertaining', especially for those who are unused to attending church services. One example of a joke, which I could never have imagined being told in an Anglican Church, was given one Sunday morning by Michael, a visiting Pastor at Castletown, in March 2004. The lengthy joke certainly made the congregation laugh and went as follows:

Pastor: ...this has nothing to do with the message but I read this letter that a lady sent to her sister and it goes like this: the other day I went to our local Christian Bookshop and I saw a sign -- Honk if you love Jesus. I bought the bumper sticker and I put it on the back of my car and am I glad I did because what an uplifting experience followed. I was stopped at a red light at a busy junction, I was just lost in thought about the Lord and how good He is and I didn't notice that the lights had changed.

Congregation: Laughs.

Pastor: It's a good thing that someone else loves Jesus because if he hadn't had honked his horn I'd have never had noticed the light.

Congregation: Laughs.

Pastor: In fact I found out that there were lots of people who love Jesus on the road that day because while I was waiting there the guy behind him started honking his horn like crazy and then leaned out of the window and said: for the Love of God go, go!

Congregation: Laughing and clapping.

Pastor: What an exuberant cheerleader for Jesus he was.

Congregation: Laughing.

Pastor: In fact everybody started honking.

Congregation: Laughing.

Pastor: I just leaned out of my window and started waving and smiling at all those loving people.

Congregation: Laughing.

Pastor: I even honked my horn to share in the love.

Congregation: Laughing.

Pastor: There must have been a man from Florida out there because I heard him yelling something about a sunny beach.

Congregation: Laughing.

Pastor: Think about that one!

Congregation: Laughing.

Pastor: I saw another guy, he was waving in a funny way, he had only his middle finger stuck up in the air.

Congregation: Laughing.

Pastor: I asked my teenage grandson in the backseat what that meant and he said it was probably a Hawaiian good luck sign or something.

Congregation: Laughing.

Pastor: Well, I've never met anybody from Hawaii so I leaned out of the window and I gave him the good luck sign back.

Congregation: Laughing.

Pastor: My grandson burst out laughing -- why even he was enjoying the religious experience.

Congregation: Laughing.

Pastor: A couple of people were so caught up in the joy of the moment that they got out of their car and they walked towards me, I'm sure they wanted to pray with me or ask me which church I attended. But this is when I noticed that the lights had changed so I waved at all my brothers and sisters -- grinning at them and I drove on through the junction. As I looked in my mirror I noticed that I was the only car which got through the junction before the lights changed again.

Congregation: Laughing.

Pastor: I felt kind of sad that I had to leave them after all the love we'd shared. So I slowed the car down, I leaned out of the window and gave them all the Hawaiian good luck sign one last time as I drove away.

Congregation: Laughing.

Pastor: If you don't get anything out of the sermon at least we've had a laugh!

This joke provided a means by which congregants could laugh at themselves without the joke being too personal or about any specific individual. The use of the terms 'brother' and 'sister' in the extract seemed poignant at the time as the 'giving of the peace' in which congregants greet each other with the kinship terms of 'brother' or 'sister' had just occurred. One of the most significant things that struck me at the time as the pastor told his funny story was that it would not have been out of place to tell it among non-Christians outside of the church setting. This joke was heard by a non-Christian friend of mine who attended the service with me and two years later he often recalls the telling of what he calls 'the Hawaiian wave for Jesus joke'. The message of the sermon he cannot recall but the joke he certainly can.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I consider both the negotiation and construction of social boundaries and the concomitant sense of belonging experienced by Pentecostals during social interaction. I discuss, in particular, the work of Barth (2000, 1969, 1966) and Cohen (2000, 1987, 1986, 1985, 1982). I contemplate the influence of 'belonging' for Pentecostals within Elim. I outline how Pentecostals negotiate their boundaries through complex social relations with others outside of Pentecostalism. I refer to the particular case of homosexuality, a practice which is disapproved of by members. I consider a phrase coined by the Newcastle congregation: 'believing and belonging' through which Elim Pentecostals wish to highlight their commitment to valuing all born-again believers who share their values. I consider how

past history is spoken of mainly theological in relation to the people of Israel and Pentecostals today being an extension of these people. I discuss how I discover that two periods of past history are principally important to Elim Pentecostals: biblical times, including the time of the Early Church and the early twentieth century.

I consider how Elim deals with inter-congregation conflict and cite the particular case of Callum who left Elim after he felt he no longer belonged there. I also contemplate how Elim leaders preach a message of tolerance, in their sermons, to members to prevent internal conflicts. In this chapter I also look at Church attendance figures (Brierley 2000) and discuss Chamber's (2005) results for Welsh congregations, in which he discovers Pentecostal churches are experiencing expansion. I consider the adaptation of churches to the social needs of twenty-first century Christians and the changing needs of congregants. Here, I use my ethnographic data to expand on the changes which are occurring. I examine the role of science and politics as areas which Elim Pentecostals are encouraged to get involved in and I include direct reference to an article in *Directions* magazine on sex education in schools. I outline the debate surrounding Intelligent Design (Creationism) versus Evolution, a modern debate which the Elim movement is currently involved with. Finally, I end the chapter with my consideration of with by considering joking behaviour. I cite the work of Douglas (1975) on 'jokes' and include analysis of the social situations in which they occur. Specific extracts from services are provided to show how the role of joking behaviour and teasing function in church services.

In the next chapter I consider issues relating to the body understood as a moral vessel. I will outline Pentecostal perception of the 'body'; this is a theology which is taken directly from the writings of St Paul. Paul divides the human vessel into two aspects -- the 'body' (soma) and the 'flesh' (sarx).



## Chapter Six

### The Body: Creating Moral Vessels

#### Introduction

So God created man in his own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. (Genesis 1:27, New King James Version).

Christians believe that God created the first ‘man’ out of ‘earth’, in His image.<sup>84</sup> The human body is believed to be a mortal vessel that will eventually return to the earth from which it came. This chapter deals with the choices which Pentecostals make in relation to their earthly vessels, and includes a discussion on the socialisation and guidance given to children and teenagers.<sup>85</sup> For these Christians their interpretation of Genesis means that the human body is a vessel placed in their care by God and which can contain spiritual elements and in particular, the Holy Spirit. This earthly vessel is a gift from God that can be used for His glory until the believer is called to be with God in heaven. Whether this resurrection is in both body and soul, or whether the body is purely a vessel that contains a ‘soul’ and is destroyed upon the delivery of the soul to heaven is unclear. However the fact that cremation is an option at Pentecostal funerals would indicate that if there is an understanding of a true bodily resurrection then the status of the earthly body is insignificant, with the emphasis being placed on the status of the soul. The ‘soul’, or ‘spirit’, is an aspect of the body which is considered to be non-corporeal and is characterised by the human ability to have, for example, thoughts, feelings, emotions and consciousness. This separates the physical and spiritual aspects by defining the two elements of the body. While the physical (the body) includes those functions which keep it alive, like breathing or eating; the spiritual (the ‘soul’) is associated with the ‘philosophical’ and ‘emotional’ side of humans such as free-will and happiness. The ‘soul’, or rather the mind, which is an aspect of the ‘soul’, is the facet of the body which controls physical

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<sup>84</sup> In Hebrew Adam means ‘man’, as in humanity.

<sup>85</sup> For literature on the body see Petersen (2006), Thomas (2005), Thomas and Ahmed (eds) (2003), Csordas (2002), Featherstone, Hepworth and Turner (eds) (1996), Turner (1996), Turner (1992).

actions. Recognition of the boundary between the physical body and the soul is important in Pentecostal thinking; both are commonly referred to as a whole, with direct references to the 'soul' being rare. The distinction between these aspects is, for Christians, taken directly from the writings of St Paul. Paul distinguishes between the 'body' (soma) and the 'flesh' (sarx).<sup>86</sup> For Paul the boundary between the 'soma' and the 'sarx' cannot be separated during 'our' earthly life, yet the body controls the flesh. The flesh is considered negative whereas the body is neutral, yet these two facets overlap.

### **Pauline Theology of the Body**

According Pentecostals Paul sees the 'sarx' is weak but 'we' have the capacity to choose not to sin.<sup>87</sup> This understanding of the 'soma' is vital in Pentecostal philosophy since the body of the converted becomes a vessel which contains God's Holy Spirit and as such is God's treasure. Megan, a congregant giving the sermon one Sunday morning at Riverside said:

...2 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 7 says "*But we have in earthen vessel that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.*" God has chosen us to put His treasures in and putting His treasure in us, He is going to protect us. He is going to be there to secure His treasure...He used dust to make man and in man He put His spirit, He put His treasure and that treasure is us. If we look in verse 6 it says "*For it is the God who commanded the light to shine out of the darkness, who have shone in our hearts to give light to the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*" That is the treasure that God has put in us, the knowledge of God through Jesus Christ and God has placed that in us so that we can show forth the attributes of God. There is nothing good in us as human beings; it's only God's spirit in us that makes us who we are.

Megan highlight, here, the way in which Pentecostals draw explicitly on Scripture in representing themselves as vessels which contain God's Holy Spirit. This, she believes.

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<sup>86</sup> For more information on the Pauline theology of the body see Dunn (1998).

<sup>87</sup> Original Sin is caused by Adam and Eve's eating of the forbidden fruit in Genesis 3:6 and symbolises humanity's separation from God.

is treasure from God which He will protect. Due to the Holy Spirit being within believers it is understood that they embody a spirituality and Godly goodness which non-believers do not embrace. This is something which Pentecostals believe should be reflected in their lives and through their actions. In this way they aim to achieve a life without sin to resemble that of Christ's sinless life.<sup>88</sup>

Thomas Csordas (1994a, 2002), an anthropologist and phenomenologist has an interest in 'the religious body'. Although his main interest is in Catholic Charismatic Christianity his work is helpful in considering the notion of 'embodiment' within Christian faith traditions, broadly taken to mean 'a paradigm or methodological orientation [which] requires that the derstood as the existential ground of culture' (Csordas 2002:241)

### **'Embodiment' Throughout Life**

Csordas (1994a, 2002) uses the term embodiment to show how the body's physical form is a means through which aspects of the non-physical body can be expressed and understood, for example, through spiritual experiences. Csordas (1994a:143) says:

If embodiment is an existential condition in which the body is the subjective source or the intersubjective ground of experience, then studies under the rubric of embodiment are not 'about' the body per se. Instead they are about culture and experience insofar as these can be understood from the standpoint of bodily being-in-the-world.

Csordas (1994a) considers the consequences of an embodiment perspective on anthropology to be a shift of the paradigm of understanding about cultural experiences and their consequent significance. This shift moves from understanding the body as an object to which things happen, but also an experiential place in which experiences happen whilst determining the background against which these experiences happen. This alters the quality

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<sup>88</sup> Sin (as defined in chapter 4) is 'any action against God' and is associated, for Christians, with death. Christians consider, that prior to the Original Sin of Adam and Eve's eating the apple in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:6) that this Original sin was the catalyst for earthly death (Davies 1997:18-19).

of the experiences themselves depending on the mode of embodiment under which they are understood, resulting in what is effectively an entirely subjective habitus.

Csordas (2002) advocates that we, as human beings, are not merely objects which exist in the world but 'bodies' which interact with one another and our environment, creating an experiential synthesis between body and stimulus that creates the characteristics inherent in any given experience. This requires us to consider all senses and perceptions which we have, leaving us not as detached objective observers in our world, but as active and often unwitting participants in it. As humans we are aware of our 'gut feelings', these feelings are often indicative of how we feel in a situation or with an individual without recourse to observation or anything which would normally register under an 'objective' study. Often a 'gut feeling' is a negative one, something about the situation is not right or as it should be or we are not at ease with certain individuals.<sup>89</sup> The relationships people have with one another, their words and actions, often communicate aspects of themselves in to relation to others. Other knowledge is subjective and gained via experience; for example, we know that fire is hot without touching it from our past experience and this knowledge is utilised in everyday life.

For Pentecostals their lives cannot be detached from Christian values, as though they were something to pick up and take off as the mood suits them; these values must become part of what shapes that mood, part of their existential grounding. If Christianity is embodied in the day to day life of the individual then this will automatically come through in their daily lives. According to Pastor Dylan, God is directly implicated in this embodied Christianity:

As some of you have heard me say before -- You never see an apple tree standing in a garden saying: I must produce fruit, I must bear apples. It simply draws on the nourishment of the earth, taking it up through the stem of the apple tree and into the branches and it produces fruit, no effort. And friends when you are swimming in deep water you'll produce fruit; we'll produce fruit [ref. to Ezekiel 47:12].

In this extract, members are advised to draw upon God's nourishment just like a tree draws water from the ground, then this will then enable them to automatically 'bear fruit'. This

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<sup>89</sup> See Bourdieu (1977) also.

makes those who do so more attractive to others since they embody Godly qualities/godliness automatically, as a subsumed part of their mode of existence rather than something distinct from it.

If Pentecostals follow God's spirit on such a level as embodiment implies then they are directly responsible for the actions of their body; every action has a bearing on their spiritual lives and their spiritual lives should have a bearing on every action they perform, which does indeed seem to be the case. What is considered by secular society as 'normal' may come under observation and scrutiny for its rightness by Pentecostals, and much that secular society considers to be something external to a 'person' (such as religious codes of conduct) is taken to be part of an unquestioned, assumed grounding of being for Pentecostals.

Decisions Christians make, according to Pentecostals, should be as God would wish. God's will is considered to be known through a number of sources, for example, the Holy Spirit or prophetic signs, but the most reliable source is identified as the Bible. Most Elim Pentecostals view the Bible as being literally correct -- this is revealed through Elim's stance on Creationism as 'literal truth' and their attitude towards homosexual acts being 'unchristian' (see chapter 5). Both of these have a biblical base and have become part of Pentecostal doctrine. These doctrines divulge key beliefs within Pentecostalism and highlight the distinction, between 'sin' -- a free-will choice, and God's choices on 'our' behalf (often referred to in secular society as coincidences).<sup>90</sup>

Today, Government policies of 'positive discrimination' in the workplace and legislation for disabled access into public buildings have brought disability issues to the public's attention.<sup>91</sup> This has raised awareness among Elim Pentecostals that they too have a duty to welcome diversity and to cater for the disabled. For Pentecostals the only requirement for any Christian to serve God is for them to be morally whole, doing God's will irrespective of gender, ethnicity, disability and any other human factors.

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<sup>90</sup> Pentecostals profess they have the scriptures at the heart of their knowledge of God's will and, as such, follow the teachings of St Paul on sin. Paul in his writings on sin describes it as a negative force which he considers to be caused by the influence of evil. The force that leads to sin is something which can be both an internal influence within a person and also an external that influences a person and leads to negative thoughts or actions. For Pentecostals sin has the dual capacity of being either an action of the body that offends God such as smoking or the mental action of wrongful thoughts.

<sup>91</sup> See

[www.direct.gov.uk/DisabledPeople/Employment/YourEmploymentRights/EmploymentRightsArticles/fs/en?CONTENT\\_ID=4001071&chk=oO4BRH](http://www.direct.gov.uk/DisabledPeople/Employment/YourEmploymentRights/EmploymentRightsArticles/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4001071&chk=oO4BRH) and [www.direct.gov.uk/DisabledPeople/LeisureAndRecreation/LeisureArticles/fs/en?CONTENT\\_ID=4018353&chk=UkkMCJ](http://www.direct.gov.uk/DisabledPeople/LeisureAndRecreation/LeisureArticles/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4018353&chk=UkkMCJ) both accessed on the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2006.

### **Disabled in Body but not in Spirit**

The disabled body became a national image in September 2005 when a 12ft marble statue of Amy Lapper, a disabled pregnant woman, sculpted by Marc Quinn was unveiled in Trafalgar Square, London. The statue, placed in such a prominent location, produced mixed reactions as it showed the disabled body as a vehicle of art. Disability is defined by the government in the Disability Discrimination Act:

The Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) defines a disabled person as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse affect on his or her ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.<sup>92</sup>

Many people do not consider themselves disabled even though they might find themselves within this category; this is true for some Elim Pentecostals. Oliver, who was involved in a mining accident and has a physical disability said:

...people say oh you're disabled and I say no I'm not disabled, things are just different! ...My life has taken on a different way. I would love for everyone to have what I have inside of me, that's what I would love people to have...I broke my back and people say you're disabled, you've had a hard time and I say I see more now, I live more now than I've ever lived before in my life because my understanding is different...it's like the optimist and the pessimist, for the optimist things are always half full...I am responsible for what God blesses me with, I've got to take up every opportunity to represent my God because I'm His representative on this earth because He wants me to be heaven on earth.

Oliver does not consider himself disabled even though others think he is. He views himself and his actions as a means through which he can represent God and work with what he's been given. He views his disability as an integral part of who he is. He also stressed as the conversation went on that it was not until after his accident that he came to know God. The

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<sup>92</sup>[www.direct.gov.uk/DisabledPeople/RightsAndObligations>YourRights>YourRights:ArticlesIs/en?CONTENT\\_ID=4001069&CHK=Bjab3%2B](http://www.direct.gov.uk/DisabledPeople/RightsAndObligations>YourRights>YourRights:ArticlesIs/en?CONTENT_ID=4001069&CHK=Bjab3%2B) on the 9<sup>th</sup> January 2006.

boundary between the 'spiritual' and the 'physical' struck me as a unique way of thinking about disability -- in effect for Oliver it appeared that prior to his accident he had a whole body but did not know God (so was spiritually dead). Now his body is not 'whole' in the material sense but he is spiritually 'alive'. The conversation highlighted the fact that for Pentecostals being spiritually whole is more important than being physically whole.

Some disabilities are not obvious when first meeting a person. During the course of my fieldwork on numerous occasions people with both seen and unseen disabilities spoke about how God was 'using them'. Grace, a congregant at Riverside, spoke about this and highlighted how God was 'providing for her needs'. Grace was someone who I had regularly heard sing as part of the worship team and her story was simple yet very effective:

I've just gone to Uni -- the Lord called me to do His work and for this I needed to go back to college. I am a mature student and I've been struggling with all the assignments and things. I have epilepsy and with all the work with the computer it has been a struggle. I can't work at it [the computer] all the time. I had been really struggling and I had been praying over this and God has provided -- the college has given me a laptop to do my work on which really helps as I can have more breaks.

What Grace's story provided was a realisation that from her standpoint God could and would provide for every situation and every person's needs.

Another congregant, Laura, also gave her testimony, having just returned from Romania. Laura, a lively middle aged woman was deaf, yet her story was animated as she signed and Chloe (an interpreter) spoke her words. This story about the difficulties of buying food in Romania was enlightening. Not only was Laura in a foreign country but she was also deaf. It struck me that throughout the telling of her story she was constantly smiling and never phased by what had happened to her. Her testimony contained many other aspects including how the deaf were being blessed in Romania and the fact that she had been to a fully deaf church there. Laura had been able to work as part of a team, providing clothing and physical and spiritual food for people there. It seemed to me that it had never crossed Laura's mind not to go because she was disabled -- in fact the opposite seemed true; because of her disability she was needed more. Laura's testimony highlighted that from a Pentecostal viewpoint -- people could empathise more effectively with other

disabled people and serve God in this way, God could use them where he could not send others.

The belief that God does not make mistakes and places an individual where He wants them was repeated on numerous occasions. Holly, a Cell Group leader at Riverside, restated this belief directly during ‘prayer time’ one Sunday morning:

God has given each of us gifts, not mistakes. He has given us everything we need and He just asks us to use it -- for some it may be preaching and teaching, for others babysitting and they [the gifts] are to be used not just here [in the church] but also for those outside.

Similar sentiments to Holly’s were echoed by a British man in his thirties who was leaving to work among those being persecuted for their Christian belief in the churches of Singapore. He said:

God has a way of putting people where he wants them at particular time in their life.

The man was prayed over and ‘committed to the Lord’ through the laying on of hands. He was also presented with money to aid the growth of churches in Singapore. Although the two people I have quoted were not disabled they expressed sentiments that essentially provided the true essence of the equality of all believers to do the work of God, regardless of personal situations. Although as a movement Pentecostals profess inclusiveness they have a specific target audience (see chapter 3). One of the ways for participants to preserve the aims of the Elim Movement is to attend to what we might call ‘boundary maintenance’. The binary oppositions of freedom and/or constraint will be discussed next.

### **Freedom and/or Constraints**

Pentecostals often profess that they are free from the constraints of this ‘world’ yet to an ‘outsider’, Pentecostals appear to conform publicly and fairly rigidly to the norms of the group. This tension between freedom and constraint is, I would argue, a key characteristic of Pentecostal faith and practice. The oppositions of ‘freedom’ and ‘constraint’ are polar



opposites which are used by Pentecostals in relation to themselves (the 'free') and to non-believers (the 'constrained'). Pentecostals, although they profess freedom, appear to willingly choose constraint in their day to day lives. For example, later in this section Natalie speaks of how she is free to wear a mini-skirt yet chooses not to. Interestingly when Pentecostals are compared to Roman Catholics, who tend to be more restricted in their actions, such as undertaking regular confession and not reading books which the Papacy has banned, Pentecostals have fewer formal constraints yet are extremely diligent in adhering to their chosen restrictions based off interpretation of the Bible which advises certain kinds of conduct. Pentecostals appear to have a mental concept of how they should act as Christians based on the example of Jesus. Research participants often commented that apparently minor aspects of their behaviour and language had changed post conversion. Converts would now never take God's name in vain or join in with 'dirty jokes'. Pentecostals' perception of a boundary indicates what the boundary connotes and stands for. Boundaries of a social or moral nature identify areas of unease for the collective, such as, for instance, homosexuality and the consumption of alcohol -- and I will return to these later. The boundary lines defining these issues and *accepted by the group* can move, retreat or even disappear, depending on the outlook of those to whom they apply. People experience boundaries differently to one another, depending on many factors such as age, gender or race. Cohen (2000:7) spells this out:

Like social groups, persons experience their boundaries differently, according to their personal circumstances. The boundary may be experienced as an extension of the self: at the point where the brush makes contact with canvas, or the mortar with the pestle.

Here Cohen explains how boundaries can be considered to be an extension of a person. The details of one's beliefs matter less to the group than one's actions in maintaining the group's symbolic boundaries. Pentecostals bear this theory out in their ways of bringing those who fall short of the expected standards of behaviour back into line; there is no formal method of confession of transgressions (as exists in Catholic practice), but any observed behaviour that contradicts the church's doctrine is likely to be mentioned to the transgressor by a figure in authority (like a church elder or pastor), and corrected that way.

Other transgressions are left to individuals to correct or seek help on as appropriate; it is public transgressions that are more frequently dealt with by corrective measures from the church's hierarchy. In extreme cases, this may result in an individual being asked to leave the church. An individual's explicit commitment to such (public) boundaries act as an easily surveyable marker of identity. Exactly how an individual experiences the constraints of a boundary is dependant upon his or her own status. Returning to Barth, he notes (1966:1):

...once one admits that what we empirically observe is not 'customs', but 'cases' of human behaviour, it seems to me that we cannot escape the concept of choice in our analysis: our central problem becomes what are the constraints and incentives that canalize choices.

For Barth the choices that people make indicate exactly what is important to them within a social structure. It is these choices that are of interest in determining exactly what religious faith and practice individuals have chosen to follow.

In the same way that boundaries function to mark off communities they also mark off individuals one from the other. Cohen (1982) emphasises that the body is an important means through which identity can be fixed and expressed or can provide uniformity. An important way in which this is achieved according to Cohen (1982), is through choice of clothes and the identity they create in an individual. For example, 'Clothes help to define or camouflage identity' (1982:210). How the body is dressed conveys something about the individual, as the body is a means of expression. For example, during my time in the field although 'uniform' modes of dress were never imposed it was an issue which was occasionally discussed, especially amongst women. People noticed when someone was 'dressed up' or had new or shoes on. In particular 'black' women (and some men) were extremely proud of their 'ethnic dress' and of their fabulous hair styles. These spectacular outfits were usually worn when there was a special event, for example a baptism, although, some congregants chose to wear them each Sunday. Just as ethnic dress is important to these 'black' women, clothes seem equally important to Christian youths, although they were more likely to be wearing the latest fashion rather than ethnic dress. Most congregants wore smart-casual clothing to church; the 'older' generation tended to dress more formally,

something which is also true outside the church setting. What seems to influence people most in what they wear comes through clearly in a conversation I had with several young women. Natalie said that what she wore to church was what she would wear at any other time. Her reasoning was that she was always standing before God whether in church or out on a Saturday night. Natalie now no longer wore mini-skirts. She said she wouldn't wear a mini-skirt to church so why should she on a Saturday night. For her, dressing in this way would give the wrong impression to the 'outside world' and before God.

This attitude reflects a cultural shift within the Pentecostal movement, distinct from the way its members have tended to act in the past. Modern day Pentecostal attitudes towards the body (in terms of dress) have become more relaxed. Hollenweger (1972) observed a stricter code of dress among Pentecostals than in general society at the time, 'fashionable clothes are not for Christians. Women's hair should not be waved; powder and make-up should be left to the world.' (Hollenweger 1972:403). This suggests that 1970s Pentecostals were creating a visible boundary between the group they had chosen to join and the rest of society partly through the suppression of their own individuality (Hollenweger 1972:403). This constrained attitude towards dress demonstrates how Pentecostals wish to be 'good witnesses' as God's representatives, an idea which still continues today, although in a less observable form; there are still constraints on what is considered acceptable dress, even though there are no formal guidelines for such. At the heart of this attitude remains the idea of remaining set apart for God, distinct from the world and so to be perceived as 'Christ-like' by others. One area in which these values became apparent is in their attitude, as a group, to 'bad' social habits, such as smoking and drinking.

The relationship between social constraints and the physical body was famously investigated by Douglas in her book *Natural Symbols* (1973:16):

...concordance between symbolic and social experience will always have to be tested within a given social environment. One of the arguments will be that the more value people set on social constraints, the more the value they set on symbols of bodily control.

Douglas emphasises that the greater importance a group places upon social constraints, the more likely individuals are to be restrained in their bodily actions and behaviour and in being public these actions are communicated to significant others (cf. Leach 1976).

In an earlier publication, Douglas focused on the notion of dirt, pointing out that the term has a dual meaning -- 'care for hygiene and respect for convention' (Douglas 1966:7). As a structural functionalist, influenced by Levi-Strauss, she contrasts the use of the term dirt to its polar opposite clean or pure. Restricted areas are referred to as taboos and often surround the body and encompass a need to control its activities. As Douglas (1973:100) says: 'strong social control demands strong bodily control'. Succinctly defined as 'matter out of place' (1966:36), the concept of dirt is necessary for an understanding of taboos and social controls. The sacred needs protection from contamination so that a distinction can be made between the 'clean' and the 'unclean'. Ritualisation is involved in moving from the unclean to the clean state. Moving in the opposite direction means breaking taboos. The 'dirt' is identified as what is on the 'unclean' side of the borderline (or boundary) defining this difference of states -- for Pentecostals this would include committing a 'sin'. The exact nature of the boundary between the dirty and the clean can change over time though there is always a definite borderline in place. The social theorist, Bryan Turner (1983:227) suggests:

In religious cultures, spiritual norms of behaviour are a gateway to bodily experience, controlling the threat of orgy and permitting legitimate unions. If religion controls the apertures of life through the discipline of female bodies, it also oversees our departures to space where the contradictions between desire and service are finally resolved.

For Turner, religion is described as controlling all aspects of human life which includes bodily behaviour.<sup>93</sup> Limits placed upon the human body and its conduct is part of the culture of religious 'control'. The tenets of Elim Pentecostalism ensure that they remain a temperance movement; drunkenness, smoking and gambling are generally stigmatised by the group. These habits are generally viewed as 'dirty' by congregants and are believed to

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<sup>93</sup> See also Goffman (1968).

be not socially acceptable for a Christian. The socialisation of youths as a potential next generation to continue in the work of God is considered next.

### **Socialising the Young**

One way in which to ensure proper respect for the ‘body-as-temple’ among members is to teach them the basic principles when they are young. Socialisation of youths is encouraged in most religious groups and is certainly true within Elim churches. It is perhaps most marked through their commitment to youth activities (outside of church service) and the fact that each of the churches features in this study had baby changing facilities.<sup>94</sup> Castletown and Riverside have crèche facilities specifically for young children and Riverside, the smallest of the four congregations, put out a large play mat for youngsters during Sunday services. The boundary between childhood and adulthood is a tricky one as bodily development doesn’t always symbolise maturity and vice versa. Similarly, deciding when an infant no longer a baby and is rather a ‘child’ appears to be just as difficult to judge. One social marker for this is when an infant first begins to speak, usually around two years of age, they may be considered to be the entering of childhood. How young children are socialised in churches, particularly by their parents, is often visually culturally specific. Often ‘black’ and some ‘Asian’ parents appear to be immersing their children in how to socially ‘act’ as a Christian, for example, in how to pray and worship. This is something which appears to be crossing into ‘white’ religious culture also, particularly at Castletown, the most ethnically diverse of the four congregations. This perhaps is not so surprising given the comments later on in this chapter by Lily’s experience of other cultures’ higher religious expectations of children -- they are just as able to pray or worship as an adult. During my time in the field I have seen children raising their hands in worship, just as adults do, and also simply vocalising faith. On one occasion I recall a young child, Lisa, roughly six years of age, at a Baptism service wanting to be baptised too. According to Lisa her faith appeared to be just as important as Nathan’s, the man being baptised, and she was able to express in simple terms the Christian doctrine of ‘believer’s baptism’ -- a belief expressed at all Elim baptism services and one which she had assimilated. Lisa also recalled the fact that Jesus had been baptised and that it was in the Bible, this comment was unsurprising since many aspects of Jesus’ life often appears on the walls of the church

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<sup>94</sup> For information on religious youths please see Nesbit (2004), Carroll (2002) Palmer and Hardman (eds) (1999), Coleman (1999), Jacobson (1998).

building. These pictures are done by children and are displayed in areas children meet for Sunday School. In all four churches children were always there for the beginning of the time of worship and returned from Sunday School for the last song or two. The socialisation and inclusion of children in church services was an issue raised by Nathan and Emily:

Emily: ...the Sunday School is run...It's a bit of a bone of contention at the moment because it's run almost kind of separately to the church. They're in for about ten or fifteen minutes at the beginning for a couple of songs...

Nathan: For two songs.

Emily: ...at the beginning and then they're called to the front and we just pray that they'll enjoy what they'll hear in Sunday School and just thank God that we've got them really because they're a blessing and they go through for the rest of the service and just come back through at the end. And during that time they're broken up into age relevant groups, so it's like nursery and reception and then year one and year two and so on up to about the age of about thirteen or fourteen. When then it's either just come to the church, there's not really a lot to bridge that gap. They've had one family service since I was there and the church I went to before had monthly family services. And I feel kids are an integral part of the family so we should -- it is brought up and a lot of people are aware at the moment that we've got a very large Sunday School and we're not integrating them as much as we should. But that, it's not a spiritual thing, it's just a structure of the running of the church that really needs to be addressed.

Nathan: People are aware of it y'know.

Emily: A lot of people have started to comment, who haven't got kids as well, saying: we've got such a big Sunday School and we haven't had a family service in ages. Because at the family service you involve the kids and they'll get up and do a little bit of drama for you or they'll practice a song. It's just made on their

level, it's sort of visual and a lot of contact and short snippets rather than obviously drawn out and long half hour sermons that would lose their attention after five minutes, it's geared at them. But it's not just a child's service, it's a family service so, our church hasn't got it quite spot on yet but we're working on it [laughs].

These parents wanted there to be a regular monthly 'family' service at Riverside, in which children would stay in church and 'take part' as in other churches, as they consider the current provision for children to be inadequate outside of Sunday school. For Nathan and Emily children are clearly an important part of church life and should be socialised into church ways in preparation for when it becomes time for them to choose to attend church once they become older. Interestingly, Emily lamented the fact that in her church there is nothing in place which is likely to encourage youngsters too old to attend Sunday School, into church. The decline in youth church attendance as children grow into teenagers and older youths is not unusual to Elim (Robbins 2000), as figures from the Church of England website registering an average decline of 2,000 in the number of children and young people attending services across the country from 2002-2003.<sup>95</sup> Elim churches manifest the decline of attendance of youngsters too old for Sunday School, though this is less so in the case of Castletown -- one reason this has occurred in this church is that Pastor of this church has school-aged children, and so has more of an awareness of children's current needs. Youths are only one element of the potential futures of the congregations, and all the Elim churches are looking to their own futures in this world, regardless of congregant age.

### **'Our Earthly Future'**

Pentecostals wish to continue their faith and all of the four congregations have plans for their earthly future and these are often summed up in the vision for their church. The Riverside Congregation see their earthly future as 'flower people' -- a term which came about after florists had used the church building during which time God gave Pastor Adam of Riverside a message which we will consider below. The Castletown and Redland congregations have the belief that they will expand in numbers and for the Redland congregation that they will move building. The Castletown congregation has plans to either

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<sup>95</sup> [www.cofe.anglican.org/info/statistics/churchstats2003/12adultchildattendanceawa2003.pdf](http://www.cofe.anglican.org/info/statistics/churchstats2003/12adultchildattendanceawa2003.pdf). Accessed 17<sup>th</sup> January 2008.

move building, enlarge their current premises or purchase land and purpose build. Finally the Sandysore congregation is attempting , at present, to become more inclusive, and hope in the future to provide for more deaf congregants in particular. Pastor Samuel, in his interview in January 2005, believes that the future for the Sandysore congregation will be one where the church will have a greater influence on the community. This he believes will come about after his retirement:

...I think because my of my age -- in my early sixties -- clearly it'll not be all that long before there is a need for a change of minister. I believe that, that probably is a good thing because there is an energy and a freshness of vision that comes with such a change and I would regard it as probably the point at which things should take off again and I think the church is well placed for that. I do believe that it is in God's plans that the church should have a much bigger impact on the community and I trust that in years to come.

Pastor Samuel, spoke of the imminent future as one in which he would retire and believes long term plans for the future of the Sandysore congregation would come from his replacement. Samuel did, however, trust that the church would have a greater influence on the local community.

The Riverside congregation have adopted an emic concept of themselves as 'flower people'. This self designation occurred a few weeks after Valentine's Day in 2003. Amy, a young mother, described how this self designation of being 'flower people' derived from a vision that Pastor Adam experienced:

...it's to do with the flowers thing. Before we came we weren't aware that there was a vision particularly and then the Pastor had this vision. There was one time when the church was like filled with flowers when the florist was using it for something and God spoke to him [Pastor Adam] clearly about the church being like that and having flowers come in to be arranged and then be sent out. So the church is all to do with equipping other people and bring them in and building them up and giving them the skills and tools they need to equip them and send them out again...I think that's all



very well and nice but I think the need for a vision linked in with the Great Commission and actually with day to day life as well.

Amy interpreted Pastor Adam's vision as being like the flowers, coming in and then being sent out again, a theme she links to the Great Commission and thus the church's commitment to mission. Billy, a congregant at Riverside also spoke to me about where God was leading their church and spoke also about the significance of the vision Pastor Adam had:

...we have been given a word from God that our role is to be like the 'flower people' when people come to our church ...Well what happened was somebody came and told us. Adam had a vision one morning and said look these people -- the florists who come and use our building on special occasions like Valentine's day and Mother's day and one or two others -- use it to prepare the flowers. Now they come with all these flowers, they're unprepared and they then prepare the flowers, assemble them together in groups and the flowers then go out to all sorts of events like funerals, marriages, Valentine's day, just generally to bless people or what ever -- you can imagine -- all different occasions where flowers get sent. And what God said to us was the role of your fellowship is going to be that people will come to you -- and we view that as the flowers. In lots of cases they'll come unprepared, they'll need to be cut, arranged and then they'll be sent out again. So our fellowship is never going to be a church where there are thousands of us. But is going to be a place where we invest things in people. I don't know what that will be. Does that mean that we are better than everybody else and we're going to take from the best that we have? Of course not. It's just going to be that this is going to be a place where people find God in a way that's new or encouraging or uplifting to them and maybe we will be a support network for certain things. Who knows what's going to be? But this is what God has said that we're going to be and that's what we're going to do. So I would say this to me is what the vision of the church is going to be. How it's implemented and manifested? I'm not sure. I'm saying well Lord show us. But we need to pray more.

Billy, like Amy, describes the Riverside congregation's 'vision' and the way in which congregants came to refer to themselves as 'flower people' because of that vision. Billy explains how the church building is used on special occasions such as Valentine's Day, by a local florist to prepare flowers before sending them out. The vision for congregants is that they should be like flowers -- people will be prepared in their building before being sent out, and Billy details what he considers this means for the church.

The Castletown congregation, from the outset of my fieldwork, overtly placed their trust in God's plan for their future. This plan is one of growth and will involve either expanding their current building or moving into a new building. One of the most encouraging and rallying sermons that I attended took place one Sunday morning with the Castletown congregation. The event was used to encourage the congregation to become a 'real' part of the vision for the church for growth. The congregational vision for the Castletown congregations is bounded by their immediate community and primarily involves the church's expansion. This growth involves expansion of the physical building of the church or the possibility of acquiring a new site on which to build. The pastor told the congregation on Vision Sunday in August 2003 about how he had been speaking to an architect during the week and that plans had been drawn up for transformation of their current church building, which was to be transformed into a three hundred-seater auditorium for the congregation. The pastor, talking about these plans, was quite animated and obviously excited at the prospect, stating that the issue of money was the only problem. As the pastor told the congregation:

The architect said 'you've only talked vision, not money'.

The Pastor continued:

Money was scary, of how much it would cost. The council is surveying places and doing things for the community so the money may come from there. The architect looked at the building and said with what you are doing and what you hope to do it's nice to talk to someone who speaks as if it has happened and I said well I can see it happening. If it is from God then it will happen.

The pastor continued:

I encourage you to reaffirm our vision.

The Pastor's enthusiasm for the project came through clearly enough, via the tone, the intensity of his voice, yet he wanted the congregation to share the vision, the hope and the enthusiasm he had for the project. It was clear that the project would only happen if the members shared the vision also and trusted in God. The earthly vision for the church growth was spoken of by a visiting Pastor one Saturday evening in May 2004:

I want to tell you tonight friends -- I believe that you and I as individuals can become more than what we are at present. What we see now is not the final picture, it's not all there is to see of us, we can become more than what we are at present. This congregation, this church, this house which God is building; you can become more than what you are at present. Great to think that the building is full, great to think about extensions and buildings and all these kind of things but, but that's not the end of the story; we can become more than we are at present. Do you believe that tonight? I can become more than I am at present -- come on confess it with me.

Pastor and congregation: I can become more than I am at present.

Pastor: This church can become more than it is at present, thank God for that, hallelujah.

Luke, a visiting Pastor used the inclusive language of 'we' in a church which he did not himself lead, a common trait of visiting speakers. He spoke about how he believed that the church could grow and continued to emphasise this point. Luke went on to ask the congregation 'Do you believe that tonight?' before asking them to confess that they believed they could become more than they were at present. The following Sunday morning Luke spoke to the entire Castletown Fellowship saying:

Pastor: I want to tell you folks you've got a future.

Congregation: Amen.

Pastor: We've got a future; this house has got a future.

Congregation: Amen.

Pastor: Again I spoke last night; I believe the future of this house is better than all of your past. We thank God for the past, you've got a good history, this has been good but the future is better than all of the past. You know what? We ain't seen nothing yet. I know it's not proper English but being Welsh I can talk like that can't I! We ain't seen nothing yet -- I want to encourage you to believe that -- you ain't seen nothing yet. Hallelujah. Come one say it with me, do you believe it?

Pastor and the congregation: We ain't seen nothing yet. Hallelujah. Thank you Jesus.

During this exchange Pastor Luke spoke at length about the future of the Castletown congregations. He promises that the future will be better than the past and emphasised this point with repeated words and encouragement for congregants to believe in that vision. The quote above ends with Pastor Luke and the congregation saying together that they 'had not seen anything yet' of what was to come.

The Redland congregation, on the other hand, knows that their hope for a new building is in the process of being fulfilled. Pastor Dylan, during his interview in February 2005, told me about the new building they hoped to move in to:

Well the building we believe we're moving into is virtually identical to ours. In fact it probably inside looks more of a traditional church than ours does. And the first thing we will be doing is to take the high altar out, and the pipe organ out, and the pews out. And so it will be, it will probably be more like the building that we're in at the moment...it is twice the size...the sanctuary is about half as big again as what we

have, but the facilities, the rooms are far bigger and far more so its, it will enable us to do what we want to do.

According to Pastor Dylan the new building will be twice the size of their current church. The building itself is considered by Dylan to have a better internal layout than their current building. Dylan's, final comment -- 'it will enable us to do what we want' suggests that the new site will enable the congregation to be more versatile in their future use of the building.

All four Elim congregations plan for an earthly future -- whether it is related to growth, a new building, a new pastor or plan to be a place where people are prepared like flowers before being sent out. These congregations preach simultaneously that at any time Christ may return. In such contexts the sociological and theological come together in the faith and practice of Elim Pentecostals. Earthly plans are based on sociological experience that the world may not end whereas eschatological or 'end time' prophecy are based on biblical passages which allude to this (see chapter 4 on eschatology and chapter 7 on prophecy). One way to provide a potential new congregation for the future is through socialising Pentecostal youths into the faith. I will go on, in the following section, to consider the involvement and teaching of young people within Elim, as a faith community.

### **Adapting to Youth Culture**

Youth programs are in place in all four Elim congregations each of which hope that these programmes will provide knowledge and socialisation for young Pentecostals to continue in the faith rather than becoming, as Pentecostals would say, 'part of the world' and leaving the churches. Coleman (1999:85) in his work with the Word of Life Church in Sweden says how the church organised youth activities:

Teenage children are often all too aware of alternative lifestyles, and the vigorous youth programs arranged by Evangelical congregations are frequently designed to parallel and thereby counter such influences.

Coleman notes how teenagers are extremely aware of the different lifestyle options available to them outside of the church and how notes that teenagers socialised within the church bring aspects of secular influences, such as music or fashion, into the church culture

(1999:85). He calls this the 'assimilation tendency of modern Evangelicalism' (1999:78). Coleman says:

Teenagers, in particular, articulate with secular forms of youth culture in their expressions of worship, wearing fashionable clothes and buying forms of Christian hard rock whose Manichean imagery is not always very different from its secular manifestations (1999:85).

Coleman notices that teenagers often incorporate modern influences into their 'Christian culture' like rock music and modern styles of dress. The imagery of this hard rock is similar to that of the secular world in its dualistic metaphors of good versus evil. This aspect of incorporating secular influence, such as rock and pop music is something which Youth for Christ has taken onboard. This movement holds monthly youth events in Castletown called ninth-hour, hiring the Castletown Civic Hall, in which their own band YFriday and their dance troupe regularly feature. They are a Christian movement which work with young offenders and in schools and also run youth activities, such as mixing records, DJ-ing, drama workshops and so on. Visually these activities are run by attractive, trendy young Christians who wear modern, fashionable clothing whose aim is to spread the gospel message. Although this group is not part of the Elim Movement, during my time in the field I have met many people who worked for Youth for Christ or had contact with the movement group (often at School or at events specifically for Christian youths, such as IX Hour). The questionnaire data from each of the congregation showed:

**While a young person, did you have any contact with the work of Youth for Christ?**

Response/ Congregation	Yes	No	Not Answered
Riverside	33.3%	66.7%	0.0%
Redland	20.7%	79.3%	0.0%
Riverside	27.8%	70.9%	1.3%
Castletown	34.9%	58.1%	8.8%
All	30.4%	66.5%	2.7%

Totals rounded up or down to one decimal place.

**Table 6.1 Congregant Contact with Youth for Christ**

The statistics show that a number of congregants, just under one third, had contact as a young person especially when taken into consideration that this group was not formed until 1946. We should also note that the questionnaire did not ask if congregants were aware of the group’s activities as adults.

The influence and impact that the young may have on a religious community has become recognised by groups, such as Youth for Christ.<sup>96</sup> This particular group was originally set up in 1946 by the prominent evangelist Billy Graham with the aim of ‘getting the gospel out in a way relevant to young people’.<sup>97</sup> They are an important group in relation to Elim Pentecostal church for two reasons. Firstly, Riverside is the home of the Youth for Christ in the North East, with, many of their workers attending Elim church and running evening youth services. Secondly, at the beginning of my research the Castletown congregation set up a ‘Rock Solid’ group, an outreach program for 11-14s, which uses material produced by Youth for Christ. Adolescents are the main age range in which the

<sup>96</sup> Other Christian groups which reach out to young people are Youth With A Mission (YWAM) and Soul Action.  
<sup>97</sup> Taken from a Youth for Christ leaflet for the North East Region.

church is losing members. They are a group which can have a profound impact both now and in the future of the church, thus, provision of education for the young and the shaping of their spiritual identity is vital for religious youths. A recent TV advertisement by the Teacher Training Agency features young people asking questions, some of which are related to questions about life, such as, 'why are we here?' These adverts suggest that youths have the capacity to consider fundamental questions about life.

Within the church setting there appear to be greater boundaries between the mental maturity of children and that of adults. The difference in maturity perceived by others between someone being a child and an adult is dependant upon the outward maturity of the individual concerned.

British society classifies a person between childhood and adulthood as an adolescent yet classifications relating to age and maturity do not always correlate as Coleman (1999:74) notes:

The notion of childhood is a social construction that raises the question of the extent which biological growth correlates to culturally specific ideas.

Because of this, ideas of what constitutes a 'mature' member of the church community is as ambiguous as elsewhere in society, as there are no clear rites of passage from child to adolescent to adult and the physical changes of puberty are not considered important by themselves. Despite this, youths are a distinct group within each of the churches and make up a section of the congregation which contain both individuals who are Christians and those who are not. Adolescents are individuals with a 'changing body' both physically and mentally and are a category whose needs are actively addressed by Pentecostals since they are expected to become 'the next generation' of the church. In Britain youth are often a marginalised group which are considered not to not truly know their own minds. The potentiality of youths and children socialised within the church is a potential 'ready made' next generation of believers.



## Teaching the Young

The Bible tells us to teach our children in the ways that they should be brought up. I think it's a responsibility of parents to teach children...At the end of the day they're going to come to an age where they've got to make their own life decisions about which way they're gonna go. So we pray for them, we teach them what we believe to be right and they'll make their own judgement at the point where they'll have to make their own decisions.

In the above quote Billy at Riverside speaks of the responsibility of Christian parents to teach their children about God and the Christian faith. Rather like adults, children and teenagers ask philosophical questions. For the young, the decision to become a Christian is their own, yet, they are often not considered mature enough to make that decision by many adults. Making the Christian faith meaningful is an area which is being considered by Pentecostals to allow for the prolonged sustainability of church numbers. Children and adolescents are two groups which tend often to be on the margins of the faith and are the groups most likely to move away from the church if they are not catered for appropriately. This is an interesting point, and, one which, on further reflection, caused me to consider the effectiveness of Elim Pentecostals' attempts to pass on of faith to their youths -- a ready made 'next generation' if they were to become believers. Retention of young people is obviously a priority in most churches, one of the aspects which leaders have become more aware of, is the need for good teaching (including resources) for the young. Amy, a young mother who has children, spoke to me at length about Riverside's children's material and their catering for the young:

...I was involved with the children's work so I know in detail...generally it's quite poor. When I first started doing the Sunday School...I went and watched a few and I was bored to be in the room and it was like they were told a nice story and then they drew a picture or they coloured something in or they made something. And it wasn't relevant...So that was quite poor then I did it for a while so I started doing my own planning for it...I think they found it quite hard because the other way of doing is

quite easy it gives you everything to do, you don't have to plan anything yourself, you just have to turn up pick up the book and do it. And so my way was very much like okay here's what we're teaching them, this is what we want them to learn through this story? Think of a really good way of doing this. What about doing it like this? What about doing it through drama? What about doing it like whatever? And I think some people didn't really have those skills to be able to present in that way, some of them did and some of them didn't...they had to spend an hour or two planning and I think they found that hard to fit into their lives...With the kids thing I'd introduced these really cool action songs with CDs for the kids and the kids loved it and we did lots of games and made it fun because it should be fun, it shouldn't be boring, there's no way it should be boring. So the format of it has changed now but they have gone back to using a book which gives them all the planning which is fair enough because it is hard to do them yourself. So I think the quality is okay but I've just seen it so much better...

Amy discovered that youth work and teaching was an area she felt her church was weak, and firmly believes that youth and children's activities need to be planned and to use modern resources and activities, such as drama to make children and adolescents think. Her church used resources produced by Kevin Mayhew Publishers -- a large Christian publishing group. The conversation continued with Amy about 'kids work':

Helen: Did anything ever surprise you with the 'kids work'?

Amy: I was surprised at how it was being done to start with -- I mean you're always surprised with kids and they always come out with things and they always draw parallels that you don't even see and you think wow that's amazing...when there's been conferences...we would teach the kids from the Bible and what does it mean for our lives and stuff like that....in this lively style with lots of loud messy games and lots of music and messing around and stuff. And like at the end of it, at the end of that week and we kind of said does anyone want to get saved? Because I was thinking they might want to get saved and some of them did...I asked the kids if any

of them wanted us to pray for them about anything. We had thirty kids all week and about like twenty of them wanted to be prayed for about all sorts of different situations and that just completely stunned me. So we put like a worship CD on loop and we'd been doing praise and worship with them all week. So when we prayed with them we said right once you've been prayed for you go along and sing along to the worship songs and worship. And I mean obviously they've seen their parents worship but if you generally watch kids in church they don't generally get involved, some children do more than others, but generally they don't. They might sit, they might stand but generally they don't get involved with worship. And these kids were just like just totally involved in worship, they were raising their hands and it just made you want to cry because they were having experience of God, they were having an encounter with God and I didn't have that until I was sixteen and these kids were like eight, nine, ten, eleven and they were having an encounter with God. That surprised me and it made me think -- wow -- Just because they're young doesn't mean they can't worship...

Amy spoke about her experiences with other Pentecostal youth during conferences and other events in which she was surprised at young people's abilities not only to ask faith related questions but pray and worship God. This is an aspect that Amy notes is lacking in most churches despite children and adolescents seeing their parents and other Christians expressing their faith in these ways. I find it particularly interesting that at conferences children and youths were more able to express their faith in ways which they do not in British churches or at other times. In a conversation with Lily it became clear that children of other cultures are able to articulate worship, and, in particular, pray. Two examples are cited, the first is about her experience of African children praying and the second, American children. She said:

...I have had contact with Africans -- Zimbabweans -- and they certainly pray more fervently than we do and really pray believing. I remember going to the home of one couple when she had arrived in this Country and been granted leave to stay. So then her husband and children came and when I went to visit them we were definitely wanting them to get moved out of this two bed roomed flat because there were so

many of them in the house and openings just weren't happening. And so I said lets pray about it and immediately they called the children who were aged six to twelve, they called them into the room to pray as well. And we all just prayed, they prayed in their language and I prayed in mine for about half an hour all at once, including this six year old. In this country we would have sent the children to go and play while we prayed. So the children actually see it lived out, with their parents. I do think we have a lot to learn from other countries. I think people are much more committed than we are here...

In this first extract Lily describes how when African families pray, especially during a time of crisis or need, then the children also pray. It is interesting that Lily was aware that had she been with a British family then the children would have been sent out to play rather than pray. This provides an anecdotal but important observation: while in Britain children are considered too young to 'really pray', this is not so in other cultures. Lily then continued to provide another example of children praying:

...And another instance I remember when I was in America. A call went out to go to pray at this hospital because somebody had been taken into hospital and about twenty people, eleven o'clock at night, including children were standing in the street outside the hospital praying and then we went along to McDonalds which stayed open longer there and this little boy hit his head on the corner of a table and the other children immediately gathered around him and prayed over him, not the adults, the children. Well you just don't see that here and I think it's because they don't see the example in us because we're -- particularly English people-- we have great bondages.

Lily describes how, when she was in America, she experienced children praying with the same vigour as adults and could do so independently of being instructed to -- a situation she noted did not happen in Britain due to our 'great bondages', which other cultures do not have. Through this conversation it became clear that children are as able to pray and worship, just as adults do, yet in British churches this is not happening. The capacity of

children and youths to ask deep and meaningful questions, often about the meaning of life, aspects of faith and other issues, is an area in which the church, in the opinion of Pentecostals, should continue to build upon since young people are the potential next generation of believers. The influence of Elim in shaping the future world in which the next generation of believers will reside was discussed in chapter 5 through Elim's involvement in politics.

It is clear that in the churches I studied there was an awareness of what children were and were not likely to do and understand about church, religiosity and faith in general. There was little formal understanding of what this entailed, however, and explicit understandings of developmental faith in the mould of Fowler (1981) were lacking. However, despite this the groups were tailored to roughly Fowlerian models as regards age-development, although I do not see that Fowler's model can be entirely transposed to understand the faith as expressed by Elim Pentecostals; while notions of tolerance of other faiths and practices are encouraged within the churches as an inevitability, there is little acknowledgement of the automatic and universal fellowship between all faiths that Fowler sees as a characteristic of a stage-six individual. However, the early stages of Fowler's model are useful in our understanding of how Sunday school is taught: Fowler proposes increasingly abstracted understandings of religious messages from their original stories, and how they apply to the life of the individual. This means that the earlier stages are characterised by understandings of narratives, and any abstract learning is fable-like at best, with cross-referencing to larger narrative themes and overarching faith issues being only marginally addressed by the Sunday school teachers. At the point where Fowler believes that a believer can be moving away from a "faith ideology" towards a more individualised understanding of faith (stage 4) the churches offered nothing in the way of structured teaching, with youth events for adolescents upwards tending towards the purely social aspect of the church, which continue through until the adult events become available to them. I do not consider Oser's (1984) model to be close enough to the Sunday school understanding of faith development to merit a comparison. Not only is Fowler's understanding more theological and thus closer to the churches' understanding of necessary development, but the Sunday schools understand faith as something necessary to life and moral wellbeing, which is analogous to Oser's first stage, but this is never considered to be reworked or changed into something else, and indeed a dependence on God throughout a believer's life is encouraged regardless of the 'stage' of their faith.

The final stage of this earthly life is death. Death is the final section of this chapter just as death is the final destination of life's journey for the human body as a vehicle which contains the 'soul'.

### **The Mortal Body: Death**

'It [death] is an important an important dimension to the panic culture of post-modern sensibilities (Kroker and Kroker 1987). Our metaphors of disorder perhaps reflect our consciousness that death visits our bodies, not through violent acts of overt violence, but secretly through cancerous growths, silent viruses and humiliating strokes.'

In the above quote from Turner (1983:12), death and the fear of death and old age is marginalised in British society with death usually occurring in an institutionalised setting rather than the home (Turner 1983:229).<sup>98</sup> Turner (1983:229) presents data that indicates that in the UK at least 50% of the population die in an institution. For many people death is perpetually hidden from view although no-one is unaware of the inevitability of death. Turner notes how devastating disease now often comes via 'hidden' cancers and debilitating effects on the physique, such as with strokes. These illnesses afflict Pentecostals also and charismatic healings are a part of church services. Pentecostal explanation of such practice appears to be that just as God could heal the afflicted in biblical times, so too can God heal today. The fact that I did not encounter dramatic healing such as people getting up out of wheelchairs and so on during my fieldwork suggests that they are uncommon, but on the other hand, extraordinary stories of healings were told. Today, even with all 'our' technological advances, death cannot be conquered and some illnesses remain incurable. Pentecostals believe that God can heal even those which medicine or science cannot, although not all people with an illness or disability are healed. During an interview Lily explained her theory of why healings by God are less common in the UK than in less economically developed countries being put down to their more fervent faith. All four Elim churches held times of healing during my time in the field which

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<sup>98</sup> For further information on death, dying, bereavement and the mortal body see Sharp (2006), Jupp (2006), Walters (1999), Davies (1997), Jupp and Rogers (eds) (1997), Howarth and Jupp (1996), Walsh and McGoldrick (eds) (1995), Walter (1994), Davies (ed) (1994), Hockey (1990), Kubler-Ross (1989).

consisted of people being prayed over. Many of the congregants I spoke to during interviews told me of their own personal experiences of receiving healings. Not all believers are healed however. Some aspects of faith such as why God chooses to heal some people and not others cannot always be rationalised by Pentecostals. The non-healing of believers is usually prescribed to their illness or disability being part of God's greater plan for that person and that it may not be till they are with God in heaven that such things will be explained to them. One certainty in this life for Pentecostals is that the mortal body which we all possess will one day die.<sup>99</sup>

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Death, for Pentecostals, is a positive event because it is their return to God even if a person suffers a horrific earthly death. Pastor Dylan spoke of this in a sermon:

...the worst thing that anyone could do to you is to murder you -- to kill you -- that is the worst things that can happen, that's the ultimate. Sometimes I'm listening to the news, and, God help me to say and help you to hear what I'm saying, but when a believer is beheaded -- when a believer is beheaded one part of me says: terrible, one part of me says: I want to weep and another part of me says: hallelujah, they're in the presence of God now, where the devil can't do them any harm. Fear not him who can kill the body -- fear him [the devil] who can take the soul when it has left the body and bring it into hell.

Dylan believes that the worst that can happen to a person is that they are murdered, yet even after this horrific event then a Christian can have certainty that they will go and be with God. Conversely, if someone is physically alive but spiritually dead then they run the risk of going to hell (for more on risk see chapter 4 on 'risk and salvation'), which Dylan considers a far worse thing than physical death. Pentecostals confidently profess that they know where they are going when they die -- a certainty that, as believers, they will enter heaven and remain, eternally, with God.

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<sup>99</sup> For more on Charismatic Healing and Religious Experiences see Csordas (1994b).

This belief that faith in Christ will bring them to spend eternity with God is the bedrock of the Pentecostals' faith. However, they are rarely explicit as to the exact nature of this eternity. It is usually expressed, even during sermons concerning the end times, in vague terms about 'being with Jesus' and 'going to heaven'. There is affirmation that this will happen as part of the new creation as noted in Revelation (particularly chapters 20 and 21), but there is no development of the exact perception of future events, with church members instead trusting in God that things will unfold as he plans, and that such an unfolding will be beneficial for all believers, in whatever form it takes.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter considers how Christians view their bodies as moral vessels and a gift from God. Their understanding of the body, taken from Pauline theology, distinguishes between the 'body' (soma) and the 'flesh' (sarx) in which the 'soma' is not sinful but the 'sarx' is potentially so, although Pentecostals have the capacity to choose not to sin. In exploring this theme I move on from theology and examine the work of Csordas (1994a, 2002) on embodiment. For Csordas, human agents interact with the world around them and have knowledge of their geographical and social environment based upon their previous experiences; he therefore re-locates the theology in the interaction of people going about their daily lives. I consider how Pentecostals experience and enact with their environment and include a discussion of the Pentecostal philosophy that 'all believers can serve God', from the perspective of disabled congregations. In essence I consider the Pentecostal viewpoint that all believers can serve God since Pentecostals believe that they embody the Holy Spirit.

I also discuss the idea of freedom and constraint, often termed structure and agency by other social scientists. I note how Pentecostals often consign the status of being liberated people and free from the vices of this world. However, from an 'outsider' perspective they appear to be people who are restrained in their behaviour. I consider the reason for this constraint from the Pentecostal perspective that as 'born again' Christians they wish to reflect their 'born again' status through their words, action and choice in everyday life. Later in the chapter I consider the implications of socialising young people into church culture. I chart the opportunities provided for young people in Elim churches and consider the potential impact this may have on the potential next generation of believers. I discuss how Pentecostals appear committed to teaching the young in the ways of their faith and



key biblical teaching. I conclude this chapter by returning to the physical body as a vessel; the human body is continually changing and growing older from birth until death. I end with a discussion of the moral body: death, the final stage in this life but a continuation for Christians, who upon death look forward to beginning their eternal life with God in heaven.

I move on from this consideration of the Pentecostal body, in the next chapter, to consider ritual.

## Chapter Seven

# Ritual

### Introduction

Anthropological accounts of traditional societies customarily treat ritual as a window on the nature of a society, as events that throw light on underlying cultural and structural patterns: *society creates ritual as self-affirmation*. In a movement like Catholic Pentecostalism, this relation between society and ritual is inverted. Ritual events like prayer meetings are both historically and structurally prior to the generation of distinctive patterns of thought, behaviour and social organisation. The events produce the earliest models for the organisation of community life: *ritual creates society as a self-affirmation*. (Csordas 1994b:21)

Rituals are often performed in order to provide unity and cohesion to that society and its members, following Csordas' point that 'customarily...society creates ritual as self-affirmation' (Csordas 1994b:21). However, Csordas also points out that 'In a movement like...Pentecostalism, this relation between society and ritual is inverted...*ritual creates society as a self-affirmation*.' (Csordas 1994b:21) This is so because much of modern Pentecostal practice (if not most modern Christian practice) is not acknowledged within society as a whole, and so the rituals cannot be society-affirming due to their differing values. Within Pentecostal practice there is much emphasis placed on the 'community of believers' there is a social structure within the ritual structure, with language to match the needs of the ritual structure rather than the usual assumption that the language is shaped to meet the needs of the social structure. While there is much overlap between social and ritual practice, it must be remembered that for a community such as Elim, ritual, or 'ways of doing things' or 'established practice' forms the entire support for the social structure, and so the demands of the ritual will define the social needs.

Leach's (1976, 1971) work contributes directly to the literature on ritual, symbolism and the interpretation of the meaning of rituals. Leach (1971) says:

All over the world men mark out their calendars by means of festivals. We ourselves start each week with a Sunday and each year with a fancy dress party. Comparable divisions in other calendars are marked by comparable behaviours. The varieties of behaviour involved are rather limited yet curiously contradictory. People dress up in uniform, or in funny clothes; they eat special food, or they fast; they behave in a solemn restrained manner, or they indulge in licence.

Leach notes that rituals (festivals, in his terminology) do not follow particular patterns due to the nature of the rituals themselves, but such things are celebrated within the context of the society in which the rituals are acknowledged, with corresponding symbolism relevant to that society's habitus. This means that Elim churches, as a specific society with its own symbolism, will produce its own distinct ritualised behaviour; even those churches which profess to have not rituals have 'ways of doing things' which display elements of ritual behaviour, corroborating Leach's point that rituals need have no intrinsic characteristics. Leach highlights the fact that religions often treat certain rites of passage like birth and death as similar events, and yet society still treats them as different ones. The reality is generally that births are joyous occasions and death is a time for sadness and mourning. Leach says (1976:41):

...what actually happens is that the participants in a ritual are sharing communication experiences through many different sensory channels simultaneously; they are acting within a territorial space which has been ordered to provide a metaphoric context for the play acting.

Through what Leach calls 'play acting' the whole community becomes involved as not only is it important for the main actors to play their part but for the rest of the community to respond correctly, such as the acknowledgement by the congregation of the new members of their 'church family' during a child's dedication ceremony. To use an example from wider society, when a joke is told it follows a certain format which is always the same and signals to people that the atmosphere is relaxed and it is appropriate to smile or laugh and

have audience participation in such a manner (Douglas 1975). The joke is an example of a verbal signal; however, I am conscious that non-verbal signs and signals may also occur and be indicative of the situation (For more on 'joking behaviour' see chapter 5). Douglas makes the point (1973: 11), that '[a] symbol only has meaning from its relation to other symbols in a pattern. The pattern gives meaning. Therefore no one item in the pattern can carry meaning for itself isolated from the rest.' Rituals contain symbols that allude to other events or a shared knowledge of meaning not obvious to those uninvolved. When re-enacting an event the act is usually visual; it is choreographed and uses specific verbal and non-verbal communication. Thus the actions of the body, manner of dress, and music all play their part in the ritual performance. Coleman and Elsner (1995:61) argue, further, that many religious rituals are re-enactments and interpretations or inventions. They quote a deaconess when talking about the ritual of pilgrimage:

I have a sneaking suspicion that Walsingham is probably like Scottish culture and Celtic Christianity. They're both inventions of the nineteenth century...I don't think it matters...we've invented it for ourselves. The once newly invented event eventually becomes commonly accepted as 'tradition'<sup>100</sup>.

Rituals, whether historically accurate or invented, surround life-changing events or stages in life to help pass from one stage to another and baptism is one example.

Two types of rituals will be discussed in the following sections; firstly, those which occur only once in life, termed life-cycle rituals, such as birth, death, conversion and baptism. This second is repeating rituals, those which occur frequently and at set intervals, such as Sunday worship, Christmas and Easter. We will first consider life-cycle rituals.

### **Life-cycle Rituals or 'Rituals of Transition'**

Rituals of transition are most famously described in the work of van Gennep (1960). He suggests that life-cycle rituals, or 'rites of passage' are readjustments of physical boundaries and their corresponding social context is adjusted in response to the shift in territory. This pattern is present in the rituals of Elim Pentecostals, although only in symbolic form; the believer moves from being one of the unsaved to being one of the

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<sup>100</sup> For a further discussion of the invention of tradition see: Hobsbawn and Ranger (1983).

saved, with the corresponding changes in social standing. There is little in the way of reference to territory in the physical sense, although the believers' acknowledgement of heaven and hell as physical places (as noted in chapter 4) suggests that this sense of territory is still present to an extent.

The markers used in these transitions are, following van Gennep's pattern for life-cycle rituals, ceremonial events in which the individual moves 'from one defined position to another' (van Gennep 1960:3) in which 'a man's [sic] life comes to be made up of a succession of stages with similar ends and beginnings' (van Gennep 1960:3). In order to classify van Gennep distinguishes between three phases in ritual enactment: 'separation', 'transition' and 'incorporation'. Apart from describing these stages, he is also concerned to note the significance of the transition from one stage to another. Broadly speaking, this is expressed by a movement from the previous area or status to a neutral ground or state, and then a reintroduction to society, with the change in status applied and affirmed by the society in question. For Pentecostals, once an individual has been converted they are changed both internally and externally, in their outward behaviour and inward frame of mind. Van Gennep expresses the full nature of this change well when he proposes a difference in kind between secular and profane changes in status, something I will address in detail when I examine the conversion ritual of baptism. The idea of an internal change occurring within the convert is expressed by both Walsh (2003) and Toulis (1997). The notion of a 'healed spirit' is brought up by Walsh in this context (2003:89): 'Pentecostals believe that to be baptised in the Holy Spirit prepares one for a sanctified life and heals the most intransigent of affliction.' Life-changing events or stages in life are helped in the passage from one stage to another by the Holy Spirit, which is marked out in Pentecostal practice by symbolic language when discussing those events. Other more social changes in life are often bounded by rituals that help create a sense of belonging. For example, a Jewish boy's passing from childhood to adulthood is marked through the ritual of a Bar Mitzvah. For Pentecostals their faith is marked by specific events such as dedication, conversion and baptism, which are integrated into the Pentecostal ritual system by various 'life-cycle' rituals, which denote stages of development in the believer's life.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Life-cycle rituals are a feature of the work of Toulis (1997): for dedication (1997:156-157), conversion testimonies (1997:128-132) and baptism (1997:145-150).

### ***Dedication***

The dedication of infant Pentecostals is the first Pentecostal life-cycle ritual, in which parents decide that they wish their children to be brought up in the Pentecostal faith. It is a decision taken on behalf the child and usually occurs when the child is a few months old, taking place within a normal church service. During the dedication, parents, child and family members stand at the front of the church with the Pastor. Here the family members and godparents promise before the congregation to raise the child in 'the ways of the Lord'. This is followed by congregational members giving thanks and the Pastor (and other elders) praying for the child and family members. The occasion is one of celebration and services in which a dedication has occurred are generally followed by commensality. As with baptism no specific clothing has to be worn but often the parents, children and other family members choose to mark the occasion with formal wear or ethnic dress. Usually the next major life-cycle ritual experienced by the Pentecostal is conversion, which will be outlined next.

### ***Conversion***

To be a Pentecostalist one must have a conversion experience and become 'born again', or converted into the faith. This conversion is a ritual in the conventional sense insofar as it is part of a specific language and practice within the Christian social group; it signifies things for Pentecostals that are part of established Pentecostal practice and hold less significance, if it holds meaning at all, outside that social group. Conversions follow a similar ritual format in which the 'sinner' must admit that they have sinned and ask God's forgiveness. The procedure of conversion becomes the believer's 'testimony' of their faith to others. This 'testimony' is then later told publicly to the rest of the congregation during their baptism. (For more on 'testimonies' and baptism see later in this chapter).

One of the main unifying features of Elim Pentecostals is their obligation, after conversion, to reflect their new found Christian faith. As mentioned earlier van Gennep (1960) provides a framework which helps to classify ritualistic behaviour via rites of passage. Bloch (1992) and Leach (1976, 1971) have all subsequently written on the subject of ritual change following van Gennep's model. For van Gennep, the change in behaviour that should be expressed after the conversion ritual of baptism corresponds to a change in behaviour as befits a change in social status; van Gennep presents this as a change in the nature of the sacred and the profane relative to a recent convert, a change which he

considers to be 'derived from a particular frame of mind' whereas purely profane transitions (such as a change of job) are grounded in preconditions which are 'purely economic or intellectual' (van Gennep 1960:1).

Maurice Bloch takes this idea further with his notion of 'rebounding violence' as an essential part of ritual behaviour (Bloch, 1992). For Bloch, the change in behaviour comes from the necessity of expressing the conquest of the 'transcendental' over the 'vital'. That is to say, the religious system needs to be demonstrably superior to the nonreligious in order to maintain its hold over the lives of the initiates, something which Bloch considers akin to political power.

His theory is different to van Gennep's in the consequences of the liminal stage; not only is the relation between the subject and society changed, but the nature of those things have been forced into a new shape by the conquest perpetrated by the transcendental. This is an accurate reflection of Pentecostal belief in that they consider that the believer is changed by the act of conversion, marking a difference between the old life and the new in the perception and action of the believer, giving a demonstration of the conquest of the transcendental over the vital, to use Bloch's terminology. This reminder of the initial change (conquest) is often reinforced within the Pentecostal ritual system by the frequent retelling of the conversion experiences of congregants in the giving of testimonies.

This retelling and reinforcement of the internal change was remarked on by Stringer in his observation of the Independent Christian Fellowship when he said that 'in the everyday life of the Christian the process of "conversion" is repeated over and over again' (Stringer, 1999:158). While the connotations of violence and political power are not present, the practice is still the same: the internal change is not necessarily permanent of itself and must be reinforced over time to prevent backsliding, and the same idea is present within the doctrine of Elim churches.

The most defining moment in a Pentecostal's life appear to be their conversion experience, where their place within Pentecostal society is adjusted based the ritual actions of baptism and testimony. These individual experiences are often recalled during services and all follow a similar pattern although all believers have different experiences. Usually a testimony commences with by the teller recalling their pre-Christian life prior to their conversion. Often time is spent describing how they did not know God or had 'something missing' in their life as if searching for God. Some recognise that they knew they needed God whereas other did not but all are clear in hindsight that God was always needed. All

testimonies nearly always come next to the moment where they as a person were able recognise that they need God and welcomes Him into their life. The moment is almost always described as a time of incredible joy and a sense of 'peace' that through Jesus' blood they could be cleansed of all their past sin. This is the climax of the testimony and the whole point of the story. The teller then often recalls how they told family, friends and others about their new found Christianity and the reactions they received. The testimony always emphasises how being a ('born-again') Christian is more fulfilling than their life without God. For more mature Christians the story often continues on to recall other events and defining moments in their Christian lives. Here the believer, if converted outside of Elim, will recall how they came to be part of the Elim church (a more detailed discussion of this aspect of Pentecostal practice, including examples, can be found in chapter 5).

Baptism is a boundary ritual which marks out a believer from a non-believer. It signals to the other believers that an internal change has taken place for the individual and that the person wishes to outwardly show this. It is both an action and a reaction; it is a liminal state, the individual is passing from one group (the unbeliever) to another group (the believer). Baptism is public and social and is one of the stages in life that marks a change in status from a non-believer to someone who is born again. The individual physically uses the body on entering the water and being baptised, signifying that the person has undergone a 'spiritual' change and now has a 'new life'. This 'new life' is pure and free from the corruptions of the world and is expressed as being 'saved'. Once 'born again' the believer is free to participate as a full-believer in all aspects of church life.

### ***Baptism***

Each of the four congregations actively encourages and practices the ritual of 'believer's baptism'.<sup>102</sup> This ritual is not practised in most non-evangelical churches and directly marks out Pentecostals as being 'born again' believers. Elim often becomes home to those who did not feel they belonged within their original denominations. This emerged during interviews with Jacob, who took the significant step of leaving Methodism because of the

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<sup>102</sup> That is, a baptism by full immersion in water taken by the believer for themselves, making the conscious choice to declare their faith in front of other believers and before God. This stands in contrast to infant baptism, where the choice to baptise is made on behalf of the child by a parent or guardian and is symbolised by the sprinkling of water on the child's forehead and usually involves the pledging of others to teach the child in the ways of the Christian faith.



fact that he had received believer's baptism, something which, when discovered, became an 'issue' in his Methodist Church.

Believer's baptism is one of the characteristic rituals of Pentecostalism that features in the special edition of *Directions* magazine for new believers. It was also a topic which received mention during the alpha course. Candidates for baptism are adults -- at least 11 years of age; and the candidates have usually undertaken an alpha course prior to baptism. Three out of the four congregations have their own baptisteries and so the service of baptism usually takes place in the actual church. The one church without a baptistery practices baptism at the local indoor heated swimming pool. This is done after a normal service has been held in church. Baptism takes place during a normal Sunday service in which everyone is welcome. All the baptisms I attended were of a similar format -- even in the church without a baptistery.

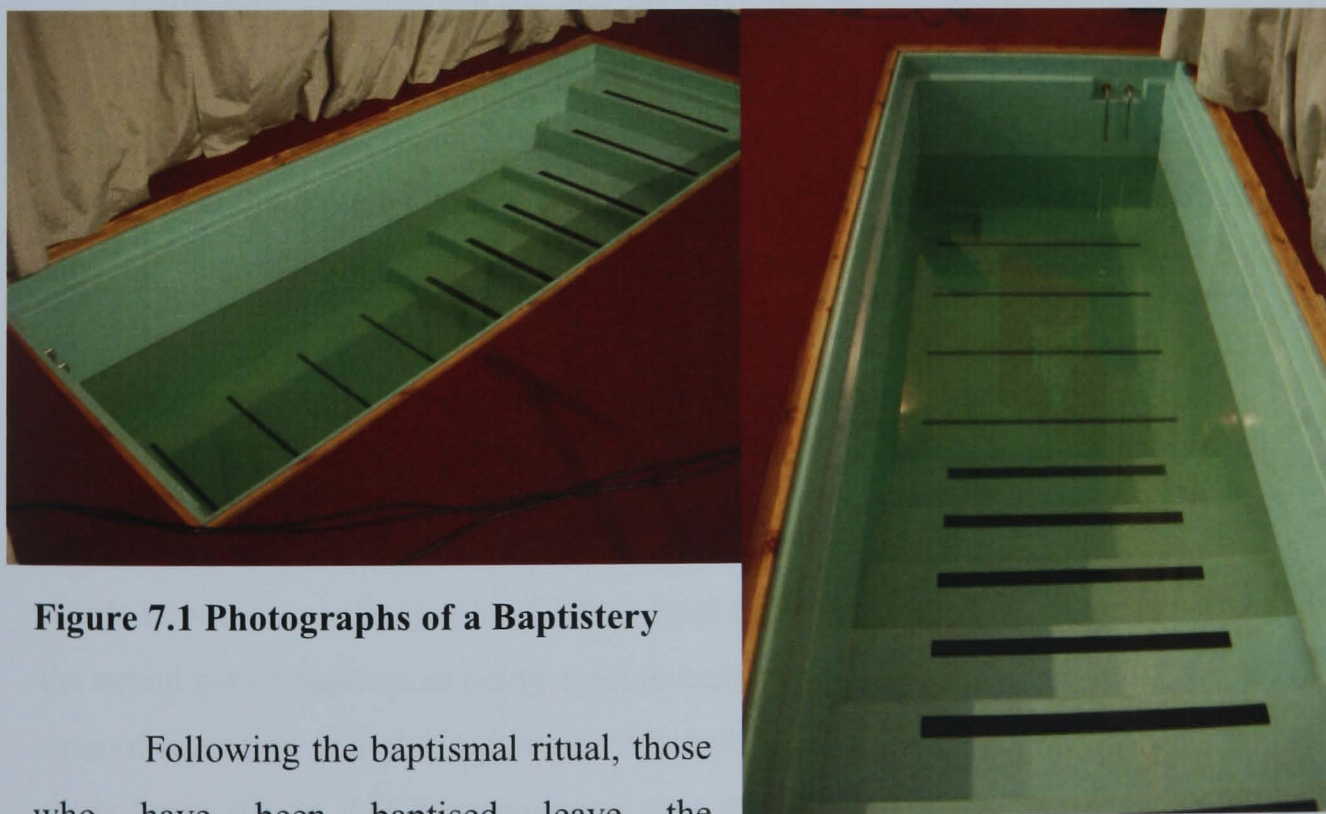
Turner's theory of ritual (1969), based largely on van Gennep (1960), is useful in understanding such rituals. Turner, like van Gennep, argues that all rituals are structurally divided into three sections: preliminal (van Gennep's 'separation' phase), and liminal ('transition') and post-liminal ('incorporation') stages. The key phase in the ritual process is the liminal, which is generally marked out in various ways as the transition point in the life of the believer. Turner builds on van Gennep's work at this point by exploring the separating properties of the liminal stage, which are made quite graphic with the example of baptism; that those in the liminal stage are cut off from society in many ways, and treated as taboo. In both the secular and religious worlds, being 'dead' (truly dead, obliterated, rather than merely gone from this world to the next) is entirely taboo, making the liminal stage, even for that small moment of baptismal emersion, more 'betwixt and between' (to use Turner's phrase) than van Gennep makes clear.

Baptism services usually begin with the baptistery already being open and prepared with water. Musicians gather around the tank ready for the service to commence. The service begins as normal with words of welcome by the Pastor and a modern chorus sung after the welcome. Candidates for baptism are sat with the rest of the congregation during this time. The candidates are dressed in normal everyday clothes and are not visually obvious apart from many having baptismal cards and presents.<sup>103</sup> The actual service begins as usual with perhaps three or four choruses before the Sunday school children are prayed

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<sup>103</sup> Prior to attending my first baptism in a Pentecostal setting I had assumed that candidates would wear white as a sign of purity -- an idea that stemmed from my Anglican upbringing.

for and retire to their usual rooms before another couple of songs are sung. The candidates for baptism are prayed for and their testimonies heard. More choruses are sung and a short sermon is delivered before the baptismal by the Pastor. The physical act of emersion (Turner's liminal phase) then takes place and candidates enter the baptistry fully clothed and are received there by the Pastor (see Fig. 7.1). The Pastor uses the simple words taken from Jesus' commission to baptise believers (Matthew 28: 19-20): 'I baptise you in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit'. Baptism is one of the most visible signs that a person has changed from being a non-believer to a believer: it is the public affirmation of conversion. It is a sign to those within the congregation that an internal change has taken place for the individual and they wish to outwardly show this. Baptism is both an action and a reaction; it is a liminal state where the individual is passing from one group (the unbeliever) to another group (the believer). It is an action as it is a physical ceremony; the individual physically uses the body in entering the water and being baptised. It is a reaction because it is a response to the internal changes within the believer.



**Figure 7.1 Photographs of a Baptistry**

Following the baptismal ritual, those who have been baptised leave the congregation in order to change into dry clothes. The post-liminal phase involves the baptised rejoining the congregation in a meal, a commensal act which is so common in the tripartite rituals identified by Turner, and is a form of *communitas*, which Turner identifies. It is not a complete form of *communitas*, as the believer is no longer in the liminal stage of the ritual, yet it retains aspects of this; all Elim believers have been through the liminal

stage of baptism, which allows for a shared understanding of the condition of 'dying to self' which is explicitly labelled as part of the conditions for baptism. This bond may be partly what lies behind the repetition of testimonials, although not so much of the baptism itself; the retelling of the conversion experiences of others marks them out as members who have all experienced the dying to self, creating a shared identity around that process.

As I mentioned above, baptism can take place for young committed Pentecostals from 11 years of age, the same age as is usual for Confirmation to take place both in the Roman Catholic and Anglican Churches. Mathew, a congregant who became a Christian at a youth event, spoke of his baptism as an 11 year old, describing it as a defining moment in his life:

...I wanted to be water baptised because I recognised the importance of it and I think people could see that, that my heart was in it, so...when I was baptised in water I said with my mouth in front of the whole church: I confess Jesus Christ is my saviour and Lord, he's forgiven my sin and that was just so important and when I think about it now -- I haven't thought about it in a long time but that really, really was an incredible experience. I remember being so excited...I was absolutely hyper, I thought, it's the best thing and the symbolism of it -- dying to your old life and dying to your old sins and being raised in the life of Christ is just incredible and Pentecostals...do a lot less symbolism or obvious symbolism than some other faiths but that was just an incredible experience and vitally important.

Mathew recalls how excited he was the night before his baptism and even remembers the words he said in confessing his faith in front of the congregation. Mathew also understands the actual act of baptism as being symbolically important to him. He considers baptism to be a time of transition and also a process of transformation. Mathew's words echo Turner's two-stage liminality in that he considered that the process of baptism transformed him from dying in his old life to life in Christ. For all Pentecostals it appears that Baptism is deemed to be a demonstration of the individual's reaction to having undergone a 'spiritual' change which has led the individual to lead a 'new life', a 'pure' life which is free from the corruptions of the world. The individual who has become a believer chooses to live by and participate in the rules of the community, and hence to belong. The individual chooses to

alter their boundaries between the sacred and the profane. This is a Durkheimian notion taken up by Douglas in which an agreed set of rules are set in place for society to live by. A breaking of these rules can bring about cosmic consequences. The cosmic consequences for the Pentecostal believer are that sin is disobedience to God and causes a separation from God (Douglas, 1966).

One element which separate believers from the unsaved is that only the saved partake in the regular repeating rituals, like the taking of the bread and the wine. Say a bit more about this here – always avoid single sentence paragraphs

### **Repeating Rituals**

The second type of rituals performed by Elim pentecostalists are repeating rituals which are carried out at set intervals and are familiar to participants. The more significant repeating rituals include, weekly services and communion, Christmas and Easter. Such ritual help define individuals' identity as Elim Pentecostalists. For Cohen (1986), symbolic actions mark differences between people, between those who partake in rituals and those who do not, for example. I believe that it is largely inconsequential that different 'emic' interpretations of the same ritual exist; instead what is more important is that all participants place a common value upon the experience. For example, to most Christians the taking of the bread and the wine (although called different names depending on denominational allegiance) is a significant ritual event insofar as it was a commandment of Jesus. However, what is happening in the ritual can be interpreted radically different by members of the same congregation. The most important repeating ritual is the weekly Sunday meeting during which worship takes place; this ritual will be outlined next.

### ***Worship***

The weekly Sunday meetings have a structure which are common to all four churches whether an evening or a morning service. However, evening services are at times a little shorter in length than morning services but the structure is roughly the same in the case of each church.

There is little in the way of preparation of the space within the church itself for ordinary worship services, beyond basic cleaning and maintenance of the building. There are no particular areas of sacred space, and in many cases there was no altar or similar structure. If the Eucharist is to be performed, a table is set up, but this appears to be more



for convenience and holding of the instruments of the ritual rather than any particular ritual purpose beyond symbolising 'the Lord's table', and there is no blessing or preparation of the space. The space used by the congregants during the worship services are equally not used in any particular ritual fashion, and the believers are permitted to use the space in any manner they see fit, from sitting to lying in the congregants' space.

Meetings commence with the singing of modern choruses which are announced by the Pastor coming to the front of the stage and announcing the title of the song. The band is always in place and the words are already up on the video projector. The band consists of an array of instruments but in my experience they always have drums, guitars, keyboard and singers as a minimum. Around five to six songs are sung and these can be interjected at the close of songs with prayers (usually spontaneous from the congregations). A time of set prayer at the end of the set of songs in which all members of the congregation are free to actively participate. During this time congregants are free to sit, stand or even kneel and can often be heard 'speaking with tongues', praying individually and interjecting the main prayer(s) with 'Amen' and 'Hallelujah'. The time of prayer can be silent or with low music from the band depending on the mood set for the prayers.

Next, either the 'Peace' or the bread and wine is taken. However, this can also come after the sermon as the service structure is not rigid. The 'peace' is where congregants move around the church and greet each other with hugs, handshakes and general chitchat. All of the church partakes in this 'gathering' and it is viewed as an important part of the service for the 'social' well-being of believers and visitors alike. The taking of the bread and wine is described later in this section and so I will not dwell on it now. Announcements for the week are given before the sermon or 'message' occurs. This lasts for roughly 45 minutes and frequently commences with the reading of a passage of scripture or an introduction for the theme of the sermon

Sermons are dynamic; they constantly move from section to section, and often contain personal accounts and experience from the speaker's own life; at the same time, pastors in particular embody this textual energy through movement and mode of vocal delivery. Sermons are occasionally delivered by members of the congregations though more commonly by Pastors and visiting speakers and are used to encourage members in their faith. This part of the service is followed by prayers which are in turn followed by further singing -- usually three to five more songs, during which members are free to stand, move about and worship God as they see fit. This time is used for an 'altar call' directly

after the sermon and for people to pray with one another as the rest of the congregation sings. The use of this time is the most diverse and least formal of the Sunday service ritual. The service is brought to an end with a prayer, however, the band usually plays on and people return to chatting with one another. At this point tea and coffee may be served and food is sometimes provided.

The boundary between those who are 'born again' and those who are not is publicly marked or expressed through the division of those present into those who partake of the bread and wine during Sunday services, and those who do not.<sup>104</sup> It is said explicitly every Sunday prior to the blessing of the bread and wine that only those who know Christ and accept Him as their saviour should partake of the event. In all churches the bread is often leavened 'loaves' although during my time in the field I also occasionally saw unleavened wafers used. The bread and the wine is always on a small table in view of the congregation, usually where the Pastor stands behind the table, facing the congregation. The elements are covered with a white cloth prior to the commencement of the ritual. Two or three pre-appointed servers are called out from the congregation to serve the elements and these servers are blessed and prayed for by the Pastor. The white cloth over the elements is then removed and the elements are blessed by the Pastor. The bread is served first by the servers, who move from the pre-prepared table to the congregation, and every believer is given a piece by the server with the words: 'the body of Christ' and the congregant says 'Amen'. The band is usually playing and is usually served the bread last at which point the Pastor will say a blessing and the whole congregation simultaneously eats the bread given to them. After this the servers collect from the communion table trays with thimbles of non-alcoholic wine or blackcurrant juice which is handed again to each believer with the words: 'the blood of Christ' with the congregation response of 'Amen'. Once all believers have received a thimble of wine the Pastor will say a few more words of blessing and all will then himself drink the thimble of wine. At this point personal silent prayers are said and the band will begin to play. Once congregants have finished their prayers the thimbles will be passed to the end of the rows and the serves will collect them and place them on the communion table once more and singing will commence.

The words used in the communion vary from week to week, however the words spoken by one of the Pastors are common:

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<sup>104</sup> From the questionnaire data all but two respondents (who were unconverted) took the bread and the wine.

If you have never asked Jesus to come into your life then do it this morning; you are then free to partake of this bread and this cup. If you do not want Jesus to be part of your life then let this bread and this cup pass you by.

Here the boundary marker of being ‘born again’ is important yet is not exclusive to this ritual. The sense of the community of believers is reinforced in the timing of the ritual; both the bread and the wine are taken as a group rather than individually, representing the sense of all believers ‘being one in Christ’ through their sharing of this ritual.

### ***Christmas and Easter***

Christmas and Easter are the two most important times of the year for Christians, and this is often emphasised in the services at the respective times of year. Christmas is emphasised because it celebrates the birth of Christ and Easter because of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Both events are considered to have eternal significance, and congregants are encouraged to reflect on their own personal response to the events of the narratives; they are not just celebrated as events in the past but as events in the personal faith and lives of the congregants.

They are two occasions during the year when non-churchgoers are more likely to attend the church services, with Christmas drawing in the greatest number of temporary congregants to church. Often new people are attracted to their churches because of the Nativity plays, carol services and Christingle services which they hold as part of the lead-up to the services on the days themselves. The story of birth of Christ is central in all these services and a mix of old and new is apparent, with traditional carols sung as well as some modern choruses. Most churches make an effort to have the Christmas message brought to non-attendees in a modern and innovative way (see chapter 3 for an example of an alternative nativity presented at Castletown) to emphasise its relevance in the life of all believers.

Children feature as major participants in these services, with them being dressed up to perform the nativity and sing about the Christmas message. Christingle services are practiced in Elim churches in a similar way to many other denominations, and with the same symbolism: children are given a Christingle and the symbolism of the Christingle is explained, with the orange representing the world, the candle the light of Christ in the

world, the red ribbon around the world as the blood of Christ and the sweets and raisins as the fruits of the earth. These services are advertised in the community on flyers or specially prepared cards and were extremely popular. The Christingle service is seen as a particularly appropriate vehicle to introduce the basics of the faith to children, particularly those from families outside of the regular congregants. The latter are likely to take part in the Nativity play and already have the level of understanding presented at Christingle services.

On Good Friday each of the four Elim churches joined with other local churches and would carry a cross through the streets of their local towns to a central location in which the gospel message of the death and resurrection would be told; songs would be sung and prayers would be said. Later, the cross would be carried to a local church, the location rotated annually, with a procession of people following it and a service being held on arrival. A service of thanksgiving is held that evening, during which time communion may or may not be taken, depending on other factors within the churches' internal calendars.

On Easter day, a service of celebration for the resurrection of Christ and the good news of the gospel was held in all churches. These services were little different to a normal service except there was an acknowledgement that often non-attendees would be present in both the verbal welcome by the pastor at the beginning of the service and the selection of worship music, which would be more likely to contain 'well-known' hymns rather than more modern worship songs. An altar call would also given, again with a particular verbal emphasis on those who were not regular attendees to the church in question. It was a time when churches would eat together after the service and invite newcomers to eat with them also. Such post-service sharing does not appear to have any explicit ritual significance, particularly as there was no clear delineation of the meal being 'baptised only' or 'non-baptised only'. If there is any such significance to be placed on the meals it is as a 'time of fellowship', where those present can take the time to get to know each other and feel more 'at home' in the church community. In a sense this is still a ritual purpose as there is a command for believers to 'love one another' and be 'part of the Body of Christ', although this is only ever implied, and never explicitly stated as such or behave in any particular way (such as is expected during the Peace) during such occasions. However, it is clear that all the regular members of the church partake in such activities, and so it is possible to tell the regular attendees from the incidental ones by how often and how involved they are in such activities.



Prior to Easter, Elim churches adhere to the time of Lent by encouraging members to fast for one meal per day during this time as often as they feel able to. The time is one in which they members are encouraged to use the time to pray together and read the Bible, either individually or as a group. Fasting is a topic I have covered in chapter 4 of this thesis.

These services had their emphasis on the events of that particular time of year, seen as a regular re-affirmation of the churches' commitment to Christ as a group as well as many of the usual secular themes of the time of year (new life at Easter and a 'time for giving' at Christmas, for example). The events are seen as ones with eternal significance, with one often referring back to the other for its full meaning and to explain the gospel message. For instance, Christmas is seen as being a time of joy not only because it was a time when God was with humanity in the person of Christ, but also because it makes the resurrection at Easter, and thus salvation, possible.

### **The Power of Language and 'Speaking with Tongues'**

Symbolism is prolific in rituals and can take different forms -- physical objects, metaphorical language or symbolic bodily actions. The meanings of symbols are both polyvalent and liable to change. For example, the most well-known symbol of Christianity -- the cross, has been transformed from being a symbol used for death into a symbol for life in Christ. Ritual and symbolic practices when I first commenced fieldwork were not obvious but, as time progressed, ritualistic behaviour became more apparent. For example, the Castletown congregations at a Sunday evening service in 2004 prayed to hear from God about His plans for their 'growth' in connection with the expansion of their building or moving to another site. The Pastor asked that everyone gather at the front of the church in a circle and pray. During this time a congregant received a vision of the building literally being expanded, this resulted with the Pastor asking everyone to touch the church walls and pray (including speaking in tongues) over the walls, 'words for expansion'. At the time I found this a little odd and noted it down. I have come to consider the experience to be an example of 'sacred words', with the characteristic that Schieffelin (1989:204) notes:

Sacred words act as autonomous physical sources of power.

Schieffelin, in considering the performance aspects of Coleman's work with Swedish Word of Life Pentecostals noted how words are powerful. He also says:

Before building their temple, members of the sect held a service in which they walked over the building site speaking in tongues into the ground to saturate it with divine power. The subsequent rise of the building could be seen as concrete manifestation of the power of this sacred language.

For Swedish Pentecostals in Upsala the power of sacred language is vitally important and is validated by the apparent success of their building being erected (Coleman 2000). The power of language and the idea of praying 'good things' into physical items, a building or even a person is present in Elim also. Not only did this become apparent during the praying over the walls of the building but also at other times. Another example would be Pastor Benjamin's claim, made on various occasions, that before he preached his first sermon at Castletown he prayed over every single chair in the building -- for the people who would come to sit in them. It is to this act that Pastor Benjamin often attributes the successful growth in numbers from the period from when he first arrived until the present day -- the notion that words are power. Other words of power, according to Pentecostals, can come via 'speaking in tongues'.

Speaking with tongues (glossolalia), according to Pentecostals, uses words which come to them through the body directly via the Holy Spirit's intervention. Speaking with tongues creates a clearly defined boundary between those who do and those who are unable to. Bloch-Hoells (1964:141) reaffirms the point that speaking with tongues is a boundary marker:

The characteristics of the Pentecostal doctrine (of the Spirit) are, firstly, the distinction between cleansing and spirit baptism, and secondly, that no previous movement claimed that spirit baptism, evidenced by glossolalia, is a normal experience for all Christians.

Cartledge’s (2002:1) work is relevant here in that his primary interest is in ‘charismatic glossolalia within the New Church Movement in Britain.’ He also describes, to some extent, classical Pentecostals and other Free Church movements (including house churches but excluding the Church of England). Cartledge’s (1997) work on glossolalia relates to boundaries as it is predominantly evangelical Christians who ‘speak with tongues’ rather than all Christians. For Elim Pentecostals ‘speaking with tongues’ is viewed as a gift of the spirit which is not taken as a condition of validating conversion. For Elim Pentecostals speaking with tongues is not necessarily a sign of ‘true’ conversion, unlike in the work of Bloch-Hoells (1964). From my questionnaire data it is clear that not all who define themselves as ‘born-again’ believers speak with tongues. The questionnaire data collected from all four congregations showed that on average 68.3% of Elim congregants speak with tongues. For a full breakdown of the number of congregants per congregation who spoke with tongues see below:

**Do you ‘Speak with Tongues’?**

<b>Response/ Congregation</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Don’t Know</b>	<b>Not Answered</b>
Riverside	69.7%	27.3%	3.0%	0.0%
Redland	82.8%	17.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Sandyshore	65.8%	26.6%	6.3%	1.3%
Castletown	65.1%	24.4%	5.8%	4.7%
All	68.3%	24.7%	4.8%	2.2%

Totals rounded up or down to one decimal place.

**Table 7.2 Congregants who ‘Speak with Tongues’**

In all congregations over half of all responses indicated that they do ‘speak with tongues’ (68.3%).

Glossolalia, in Elim Pentecostalism, it is not considered to be definitive proof that someone is a true believer. Participation in the act of baptism in which the gifts of the spirit may follow (if not already present in the life of the converted) is taken as a more serious indicator in this regard. However, in 1960s Pentecostalism, Bloch-Hoells (1964:141) found there to be much more emphasis placed upon speaking with tongues as proof of true conversion, something which Cartledge would appear to support in his assertion that ‘in [a] sense glossolalia is learned because it is associated with becoming a member of a social group’ (Cartledge, 2003:217). Elim’s doctrinal assertion contradicts this, particularly given the evidence from the questionnaires that almost a quarter of respondents definitely do not speak in tongues. In undertaking his own practical research with evangelical Christians, Cartledge found that the longer the participants had spoken with tongues the more their speech became fluid and the greater the number of syllables they used (2002:43).<sup>105</sup>

This puts the place of Elim at odds with mainstream Pentecostal thought, if Bloch-Hoells’ evidence is to be taken as true. However, it cannot be said to be so in the light of comments by Cartledge that the practice of speaking in tongues was more public in the 1960s and 1970s than it is at present. Instead, glossolalia is considered to take its significance from being ‘a symbol of private devotion’ (Cartledge 2003:149), a change over time which the churches under consideration do not appear to register and Cartledge attributes to growing postmodernism in all facets of life and thought. It is clear from Pastor Samuel’s comments noted in chapter 3 that this is something the churches in my study follow (knowingly or not); they are something the believer personally contributes to the worship, rather than something which enhances the church as a whole.

## **Prophecy**

There is one further significant area in which Pentecostals experience the gifts of the spirit: prophecy. Hearing from God comes in many different forms for Pentecostals, such as being given a prophetic word or having a vision. Pentecostals’ knowledge of how to proceed as Christians is clearly influenced by their perception of God’s wishes. From the

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<sup>105</sup> Aspects of Pentecostal belief are particularly well covered by Ma and Menzies (ed) (1997) and all aspects of Pentecostalism are usefully covered in: *The Journal of Pentecostal Theology*. The topic of ‘Speaking with Tongues’ is covered by Cartledge (2002), Williams (1981), Christie-Murray (1978), Carlyle (1956). I found in particular that articles by Cartledge (1998) and Csordas (1987) on this subject are scholarly works which relate to modern congregations.

questionnaire data which I collected, spiritual experiences, such as receiving the word, a vision or prophecy were commonplace in all congregations. The results are provided next.

**Have you ever had a word from God?**

<b>Response/ Congregation</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Not Answered</b>
Riverside	66.7%	33.3%	0.0%
Redland	72.4%	27.6%	0.0%
Sandyshore	68.4%	30.3%	1.3%
Castletown	59.3%	38.4%	2.3%
All	66.7%	32.4%	0.9%

Totals rounded up or down to one decimal place.

**Table 7.2 Congregants who Receive ‘Words’**

In all congregations over 59% of congregants had a received a word from God. This figure rose to 72.4% in the Redland congregation. These figures help to back my experience gained during fieldwork of the power and authority which Pentecostals place in hearing from God, particularly with regards to their future plans. I will go on now to consider the findings for Elim congregants who receive visions.

**Have you ever had a vision from God**

<b>Response/ Congregation</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Not Answered</b>
Riverside	51.5%	48.5%	0.0%
Redland	48.3%	51.7%	0.0%
Sandyshore	44.3%	54.4%	1.3%
Castletown	39.6%	58.1%	2.3%
All	45.9%	53.2%	0.9%

Totals rounded up or down to one decimal place.

**Table 7.3 Congregants who Receive ‘Visions’**

Figures on Pentecostals on receiving visions showed that on average 44.1% of congregants received visions. This number, although lower than for words, is still substantial. Finally, for a full break down of congregants who receive prophecies see the following table on the next page:

**Have you ever had a prophecy from God?**

<b>Response/ Congregation</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Not Answered</b>
Riverside	48.5%	51.5%	0.0%
Redland	37.9%	62.1%	0.0%
Sandyshore	39.2%	59.5%	1.3%
Castletown	34.9%	62.8%	2.3%
All	40.1%	59.0%	0.9%

Totals rounded up or down to one decimal place.

**Table 7.4 Congregants who Receive ‘Prophecy’**

Over a third (40.1%) of congregants receives prophecies, a figure which is higher at Riverside at 48.5%. This figure, which is nearly half, is perhaps indicative of the significant emphasis this congregation places on past prophecies (see later in this chapter) and knowing God’s plans for their future. It is clear from this data that prophecy, as with words and visions are common experiences for Elim Pentecostals.

The role of Prophecy from a Pentecostal perspective was explained well one Sunday morning in May 2004 when congregants at Sandyshore were speaking about their ministries. Holly, a congregant, who considers herself to be someone who directly hears God speaking about prophecy, said:

My daughter said to me yesterday: How do you know that what you’ve got is from God?...one of the things that is written in the New Testament -- men are called prophets -- who enjoyed the supernatural influences of the Holy Spirit and spoke in public semblances with that overpowering impulse which characterised the early messengers of God, that is how you know when you’ve got that type of spiritual gift.

There is something that is overpowering that you know its from God. I've been a Christian a while now, almost from the word go God's given me pictures...since then I've had many pictures, sometimes words specifically for one person and I've gone direct to that person but not until I have checked it out with the eldership...because they have spiritual responsibility for this church...I personally believe that God has given me this gift because I struggle with pride. Now if you have a gift of prophecy if you get it right then its got to have come from God, if you get it wrong it's from you - - so you can't be proud of it because when it is right it is His. When we become Christians the Holy Spirit comes and lives inside of us and His gifts are there for us to use.

Prophecy, for Holly, is one way in which God can contact believers to communicate His will to them. Holly believes that God's will must be heard and taken seriously and that anyone who has a prophetic word, vision or other spiritual experience must check that it is authentic, that is actually from God. It is interesting that Holly describes her past experiences of prophecy as evidence that God always provides her with proof that a picture is from Him. Another type of prophecy is the prophetic sign. Elim Pentecostals believe that prophetic signs are being fulfilled today which have been given by God to previous believers, such as Isaiah. They listen and wait for prophetic signs which they understand are related to the 'end times' and with their fulfilment and will eventually lead to Jesus' return.

### **Prophetic Signs**

Pentecostals believe that prophetic signs can be read not only from past but also from current events, which are interpreted as fulfilments of biblical prophecies. This can be considered as an extension of the thinking at the time of the birth of Jesus -- an event which was viewed as a fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah. The notion that prophecies can be fulfilled is a feature of Christianity and is still present today. The most well known prophecies in Christian thinking which are considered as fulfilment of Old Testament are those at the beginning of the New Testament gospels. They include the prophecy of John the Baptist (Isaiah 40:3) who announces that the coming of the Messiah and the birth of Jesus (Isaiah 7:14 and Micah 5:2). Many Pentecostals interpret current events as the fulfilment of prophetic signs. Emma, a congregant at Redland said:



...when you see what's happening in the world, all these disasters and then you go to the scriptures, it's all prophecy, it's all prophecy...so many being fulfilled. There's one, well there're a couple that haven't but all these prophecies are being fulfilled. Well one of them is the State of Israel -- when the Jews came back after 1947 -- after the war...There are two prophecies that haven't been fulfilled; Damascus, that hasn't been fulfilled yet but it will because that is in the bible and the Lord is going to flatten that. And then obviously the Second Coming of the Lord - that will be fulfilled when He comes from the East. And the Med it's all going to be split and that will happen, so that's another prophecy. But all these other ones when you go back from the Old Testament to the New Testament and you go to Isaiah and Zechariah and Moses and all through the coming of Jesus but not only is there prophecy but they tell you of His Second Coming also. It's absolutely mind blowing.

Emma in the above extract perceives that many disasters that have happened in the world were fulfilment of biblical prophecies. For Emma some prophecies were still yet to be fulfilled. Emma ends this quote by saying that other biblical prophecies have been fulfilled. Emma later went on to say:

Well all the signs are there, you see it's so close but then we have to realise that one year to us can be a thousand to the Lord and one year to the Lord can be a thousand to us...I don't know the time on my life...the situation is in the Middle East and Jerusalem and with all the countries I really think that this is the start, they say *the childbirth pains* or *the grumbling appendix* or whatever you want to call it. We're definitely living in the end times but whether it will be in my time or not, I don't know.

Here, Emma notes that 'all the signs are there'. Such signs first need identifying and then interpreting. All congregants watch for signs and interpret current events in terms of biblical prophecies. She also comments 'one year to us can be a thousand to the Lord and that one year to the Lord can be a thousand to us. 'For Emma, Jesus' time scale is not

necessarily the same as an earthly one and she concludes with the words ‘We’re definitely living in the end times but whether it will be in my time or not, I don’t know?’ Jacob, a congregant at Sandysore talked at length about prophetic signs:

...there are a lot of signs, biblical signs that haven’t happened before that are in place now. I mean even when I first became a Christian in the sort of fifties, mid-fifties as a teenager...I mean they were saying look at all the signs happening and this sort of thing. And when you look at Zechariah and it talks about a disease that will strike the nations and the flesh wasting away and their eyes falling out and saying there you are that wasn’t possible before nuclear radiation. It’s even more now with biological warfare, this virus which eats all your flesh off -- it’s a horrific world. The great change is Israel’s status in the world -- that is one. The technological thing -- Olivia [wife] keeps saying to me I don’t think God can let it go on much further but yet that’s a personal feeling isn’t it! How far can you go? The only biblical thing that you’ve got of God stepping in and stopping something is the tower of Babel and that was technological increase wasn’t it! *Let us build and make a name for ourselves!*...I mean it’s quite frightening at times...it’s exciting but it’s frightening in the sense of what’s going to happen? And just the increase in the way in which knowledge is handled, computer technology. I mean I’ve got a computer down there in a briefcase - - it would have filled this house and more when they started being used. It’s just phenomenal. So you’ve got all these sorts of things and people look for signs.

Jacob notes that in the ‘50s many prophetic signs were fulfilled. He speaks of a prophecy in Zachariah about the effects of disease which he believes has been fulfilled due to the catastrophic effects nuclear radiation can cause. For Jacob the idea that biblical prophecy is being fulfilled is both exciting and frightening, particularly as he gets older. He ends the above section by noting that Christians are waiting for signs of Jesus’ return and will interpret them in accordance with prophetic scriptures. Jacob continued with specific reference to the Book of Daniel:

The one at the end of Daniel -- the sign of the end of time -- people running here there and everywhere -- the increase in travel they've been saying this for fifty years! But we're increasing more and more. So those sorts of signs are in place. The church is known in all nations, even more so since the Pope's died [John Paul II prior to the election of Benedict XVI]. I've never seen such coverage -- you'd think the whole world was Catholic!...the gospel's reached the whole world -- it may not have reached the whole world, every individual but then you're always going to have the problem of births aren't you. And you've got this runaway birth pattern, population explosion....He's going to have to put an end to it sometime. I was just wondering how long we've got left if He's got to put an end to it sometime, now's as good a time as any. And it does say when you're talking peace; they talk of all peace and then sudden destruction when you're not looking for it. And a possibility since television which has always been pointed out to us, that well, wherever you are in the world you can see an event happening. So the whole world can see Christ's coming if the television cameras are on [laughs] even if the world's going round and He just appears in one place. That's looking at it from what we can do not from what God can do. So I think it's possible that He could but once it's done it's done. But I do think that it is...I do expect Christ to return. Whether He'll return in my life, I don't know? I haven't made out a will yet but I think perhaps I should [laughs].

Jacob speaks, here, of a prophecy in Daniel and other prophecies. He notes how today we live in a global world in which world events are known about instantly. Jacob points out that If Jesus did return then due to TV the majority of the world would be able to see Jesus' return wherever in the world they were. This is an example of Pentecostal assimilation of the modern and is a characteristic which is noted by Coleman also (2000:65-71). Returning to George, he talks of the tremendous amount of media coverage directly after the death of Pope John Paul II [which took place at about the time of the interview], as verification that the majority of the world (apart from new born babies) knows the gospel message. Jacob ends by saying that he personally does not know when Jesus will return and jokes about it may be time he made a will.

Pentecostals often interpret prophetic signs alongside scriptural passages. These prophetic texts are interpreted as being truths that will be fulfilled, and this understanding

encourages Pentecostals to adapt the meaning of the scripture to apply to their current setting, in a similar manner that the pastors may link and apply modern occurrences with scriptural events (see chapter 5 for more on this). This pastoral use of scripture re-interpreted into the modern day setting seems to originate in this more general practice of scriptural relocation, which places the narrative of the church and the individual in the wider context of Scripture, blurring the distinction of 'then' and 'now', thus making the biblical events seem more real and relevant to the lives of the congregants. This allows prophetic scripture to be applied to the modern world of the believer rather than to the lives of the ancient Israelites or the Early Christians - the time when these texts were first produced. One of the main prophetic passages which Elim Pentecostals are waiting to be fulfilled is one in Joel 2. In Joel 2:23 it specifically speaks of there being 'latter rain' which falls prior to a harvest. It says in Joel 2:23:

*And He will cause the rain to come down for you -- The former rain, And the latter rain'.*

This is interpreted by Pentecostalists to mean that the Holy Spirit will 'pour out' a blessing, drawing on a common metaphor of 'rain being poured out in the future'. Another passage in Joel that is often referred to is that of Joel 2:28-29 on how the spirit will fall on 'all flesh' after the latter rain:

*And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions. And also on My menservants and My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days.*

Here is a prophecy that Pastor Adam referred to and interpreted on the morning of Pentecost Sunday, 2004:

A few weeks ago I don't know if Jill will remember this but after one service she came to me and just said, 'the rains are coming, the rains are coming.' I don't know

what it means! But do you know when rain comes it softens the ground and when the ground is soft it's easier to pull out the weeds. God has promised that in the last days He's going to pour out His spirit. On the last days it's going to be upon all flesh. It's not going to be on the Pastors flesh or the elders flesh or the worship team flesh or even upon the Pentecostal flesh, it's going to be on the Muslim flesh, it's going to be on the Buddhist flesh, it's going to be on any flesh that you would like to mention or name this morning. Today is the birthday of the church, today it started around two thousand years ago. It didn't start in a building, it started in the market place and we want to continue to take it into the market place.

In this extract we see how the modern-day application of Scripture is carried out within the normal life of the congregation. It is interesting to note that although Pastor Adam did not at first know what the words meant he then continues to provide an explanation that links to the life of the congregation. After his initial hesitation he offers a universalistic interpretation, stating that when the spirit rains down it will fall on all people. The belief that this prophecy will be fulfilled is anticipated by many to happen in 2007 on the one hundredth year anniversary since the Spirit is believed to have first fallen in Riverside, Redland -- home of this congregation. The Riverside congregation has the hope that the 'rain' will come before the 'fire' of the Holy Spirit falls in 2007. This will be 100 years after the first fire -- a metaphor for blessings -- fell in Redland. This blessing carries the hope for the Riverside congregation that the Lord will move and cause another Toronto like blessing to take place. Their hope is that this 'fire' will fall in the Stadium of Light, Redland's Football Ground, a place they hope to fill with Christians on the 100<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of when the fire first fell in Redland.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I consider and analyse the most significant Elim rituals, distinguishing between two types of rituals which I refer to as life-cycle rituals or 'rituals of transition' and repeating rituals. Life-cycle rituals are those which only occur once in life, such as birth, adolescence and death. In contrast repeating rituals occur frequently, such as Christmas, Easter and Sunday worship. Under life-cycle rituals I outline the specific Pentecostalist rituals and refer directly to dedication, conversion and baptism. Within

dedication I outline the dedication service which takes place for infant Pentecostals within a normal church service. I then consider the most important Pentecostal ritual, that of conversion, an experience which all Pentecostals must have in order to be born-again believers.

Drawing on influential theorists of ritual, including the work of Turner, Leach and van Gennep, I place Pentecostal rituals within the scheme that these thinkers create for ritual behaviours. I have found that while Pentecostal rituals do contain stages that are entirely analogous to the ritual markers identified, they are not often recognised as such and if they are (for example in the acknowledged transition from ‘unsaved’ to ‘saved’ during a baptism), they are not considered to be part of any particular ‘ritual’ system, apart from being a stage in the faith life of the believer. There is constant referral back to ritual moments within the life of the believers, particularly conversion experiences, but these are also not recognised as ‘ritual’ as such by congregants, more a method demonstrating their faith, as an enactment of their calling to share their faith with others, as well as acting as reassurance to other congregants.

The structure of a conversion experience is sketched out from the data I collected from participants who commonly spoke about their conversion experiences. Within this section I also outline how members from other denominations or non-faith backgrounds came to belong to Elim since this often became a part of conversion narratives. I then outline the ritual of baptism since this follows conversion and provide an account about what occurs during the ritual of baptism. I go on to consider repeating rituals which are specific to Pentecostalism and cite the case of worship as a specific example ritual of this type. I outline a typical Sunday service and include ethnographic data of the specific ritual of the bread and wine within this section. Lastly, I consider the ritual practice of ‘speaking in tongues’, a phenomena which is common in Pentecostalism. I cite my questionnaire findings that the majority of Elim congregants speak with tongues. I describe how Pentecostals believe that the Second Coming of Christ can occur at any time and Pentecostals must be prepared for this time both here on earth and spiritually. I include how Pentecostals interpret ‘prophetic signs’ as relevant to their lives regardless of gaps between biblical times and now, which entwines the narrative of prophetic scripture with those of the congregants’ lives, which generally means for Pentecostals that ‘we’ could be living in the end times.

In next chapter I provide a summary of the main findings of my research and outline future research which could be undertaken with Pentecostals. I also include a reflexive section of my personal journey which I began as a theologian and completed as an anthropologist.

## Chapter Eight

# The Conclusion

### Introduction

Being '[at] the Edge of Faith' is a consideration of the sociality of Elim Pentecostals. It is a deliberately ambiguous title. It encompasses the ways in which Pentecostals differentiate their movement from other faiths and other social groups and the future direction their faith can take. In this final chapter, I will revisit the central arguments of the thesis. From the outset of this thesis I have attempted to understand the characteristics of Pentecostal lifestyles and faith structures through taking each area of Pentecostal concern and examining them for areas which congregants have considered significant, and then attempting to place them within a theoretical context to allow for accurate categorisation and examination of the practices of Elim Pentecostals.

Such examination has only been possible thanks to the Pentecostal practices themselves being distinct and separate from those of other social groups, allowing me, as an outsider, to view the Pentecostal 'system' in its entirety. This is something that Stringer (1999) considers vital in analysing the belief and practice structure as a whole, as one who is situated within that structure cannot see the details and possible inconsistencies and paradoxes that may arise from the practices of the group. Something else that I have been led to consider is that this distinction between being inside and outside the system is something that is constantly referred to and reinforced by the congregations themselves, through both ritual practices and teaching on conduct. This shows that boundaries between elements of their language and practice (such as saved/unsaved, good/evil etc) are pivotal in a believer's understanding of their faith and their own position within it. Because of this, boundaries have become a common theme of analysis over the course of this thesis.

Exactly how these boundaries are defined in various areas of Pentecostal practice has shaped my mode of presentation in addressing the areas of Pentecostal practice; that is, those areas where boundaries are the sharpest have given me the clearest focus on how to examine Pentecostal practices and present a picture of those practices in relation to the boundaries which concern them. This may have led to some repetition of some of the boundaries present in the faith, but this only serves to underline their importance.



### **Characteristics of Boundaries**

All of the key boundaries within the Elim belief and organisational structure are related to faith and, in a similar manner, understanding. This serves to both create a nominal hierarchy within the churches and to allow for further development of the faith through this clear demarcation of understanding. From a believer's time as a 'new Christian' through to possibly a church elder or pastor, or even 'backsliding' as a prelude to maybe leaving the faith, there is an expected level of understanding of what the faith means and requires for that individual, which may lead to correction by other members of a congregation if their understanding is 'incorrect', or thought to go against proper practice. In this way of understanding, a new Christian has less understanding than a regular member because they have had less time to develop their faith through a 'relationship with God', and possibly have less understanding of what the believers consider the consequences of sin and the conduct becoming of one who is saved. Through this process, we see that the boundary of right/wrong is reinforced, as well as introducing a new consideration, time, into the understanding of such boundaries.

Another boundary, that of the saved/unsaved, that I addressed earlier in the thesis (see chapter 4), has the same moral and temporal character. The unsaved, according to Elim Pentecostals, are more likely to (and indeed, inevitably do) commit actions which God and the church find unacceptable. In crossing the boundary from unsaved to saved through expressing faith in Jesus Christ, the believer puts their 'life of sin' in the past and makes a commitment to live a 'righteous life', within the boundaries of what the group considers acceptable. In this example again we see the boundary having both moral (right/wrong) and temporal (before/after) characteristics.

### **Temporality and Morality within Elim Practices**

It is this mixture of the moral and temporal which defines how the boundaries and practices of Elim are understood by congregants, and this understanding in turn alters the moral and temporal concerns of the congregants. In the above example, conversion is understood explicitly in terms of 'before' and 'after', with the temporal components having inherently moral undertones; in the 'before' lies a life of sin and wrongdoing, and in the 'after' lies a life of forgiveness and striving towards righteousness of conduct. Exactly how this impacts on the life of the individual congregant and the church varies from individual to individual, allowing for both a communal and individual understanding of time within their practices, which leads to variances in the significance of time as is commonly understood, although many of the temporal boundaries remain the same.

As I outline in chapters 4, 5 and 6, the life of the congregant is considered, effectively as an 'eternal present', with the future only holding Judgement Day for humanity. This is because there are little or no moral events that can alter that understanding, although backsliding is always a possibility. This is an ever-present danger for Pentecostals as if they are considered to be outside of the community of the righteous when Judgement Day comes, which they can never say will or will not come at a particular time, although some consider themselves to currently be in the End Times, they will not go to Heaven. From this we can see that the temporal conceptual concerns override the purely moral ones, and the life-cycle rituals I consider in chapter 7 are all tuned to bring a believer into the community which exists in their eternal present, and seeks to bring others into it. Because of this interaction with the outside world, some considerations for the 'earthly future' of both the individual and the church are necessary, and so the earthly pasts take on a necessary significance as well, allowing for development and individuality in a believer's understanding of the faith (see chapter 5). This is how the North East's past remains such a significant part of the congregations I studied; it is part of their understanding of themselves and their environment, and does not cross any moral boundaries.

The environment that the church exists in seems to act as a limit on how far the church can consider itself part of this eternal present, as upkeep and more mundane concerns are necessary, although it seems to be little more than this; there is little concern for sacred space and the actual locations of the churches, the only real consideration for them being how they may best serve their congregations. The only real exception to this rule is the Riverside, which commemorates the occasion of the first falling of the spirit with

a memorial plate, although there appears to be no significance placed on the building as 'sacred space' beyond remembering this historical occurrence. It can therefore be said that the considerations about the future of the church buildings are something imposed on the churches by necessity rather than through their choice. So it becomes apparent that it is not just the moral concerns that inform the temporal concerns, but that time creates its own issues for the church, although this is not acknowledged within the conceptual framework of Elim doctrine.

This is even more the case when doctrinal considerations are seen through time; many issues like dressing for church and adapting the exact nature of the services seems to have been done to make the services appealing to modern sensibilities, and have adapted to be so throughout time, although it is not the case that congregations have adapted their codes of conduct to completely embrace modern secular lifestyles. So it cannot be said that it is entirely the moral boundaries that inform the temporal considerations, or that it is entirely the opposite, but we see again, as is the case with attaining salvation, one set of concerns does have an effect on the other; temporal and moral boundaries seem interdependent for Elim Pentecostals.

### **Future Research**

This thesis is a relatively novel ethnographic study -- an account of today's predominantly white Pentecostalist congregations in Britain. Although I feel that some progress has been made in the present work, further work in this field is needed and directions that this work could take are diverse. One possible future area of study might be to broaden the ethnographic reach and thereby expand current knowledge on Pentecostalism and congregations. This could be achieved through study of the three other major Pentecostal denominations in Britain: the Assemblies of God (AOG), the Apostolic Church (AP) and the New Testament Church of God (CG) as comparative studies in relation to this study of Elim Pentecostal Church (EPC). Another aspect would be to study Elim Pentecostals in other regions, such as London or Birmingham, which have different ethnic make ups to compare with the experiences of the predominantly white Pentecostal Christians in the North East. The results of these studies I believe would make fascinating ethnographic reading and would extend this initial study. An additional future area this work could take in the long term is to undertake a future comparative study of North East congregations in this study in 10 years time. This idea sprang from reading Chambers (2005) in which he

describes Pentecostal Churches, Elim among them, as growing churches. Chambers (2005:50) writes, 'in the years 1985-95 they saw some growth, both in terms of membership (13 per cent) and in church attendance (7 per cent).' I believe a future study could help in answering many questions about church growth and decline, including ethnographic work on how Elim churches have changed according to congregants.

In producing ethnography the process is circular -- my research was undertaken among the members of four Elim congregations who willingly allowed me access to their 'religious lives' and has concluded, poignantly, with my making a gift to them of this thesis. Whether 'they', as a collective, agree or disagree with my portrayal of them is now out of my hands. Yet their comments -- whether positive or negative -- will doubtless lead to 'emic' and 'etic' re-evaluation and Pentecostals (self) analysis.<sup>106</sup> What began, for me, as an initial study of British Elim Pentecostals -- a group I knew virtually nothing about prior to commencing this research -- has taken on something of a life of its own. Throughout this research family, friends and strangers have shown a real fascination with the individuals who make up the Elim congregations. This has led to me having many remarkable conversations with and about Pentecostals and I hope that this thesis will prompt the same interest in others. Then perhaps greater insight into the faith and practice of British Pentecostals will dispel any half truths that remain about the fascinating people who comprise the Elim movement.

Autobiographically, the completion of this thesis signifies for me the end of a long journey which I began as a theologian and completed as an anthropologist. I have shown that disciplinary boundaries can successfully be transgressed and that such transgression can even create a more holistic approach to the study of religion. I end this thesis by addressing the aims of participants in this research. I use the words of Matthew and return to a quote by Pastor Benjamin. Matthew, an Elim Pentecostal, discusses his experience of British preconceived ideas of the Pentecostal movement:

...people looking in the phonebook they can see 'Pentecostal' and we've had people ringing up...they've been like oh do you have a gospel choir? They've had no idea! They know, just from TV, that big black gospel choirs are usually Pentecostal -- they've

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<sup>106</sup> The evaluation of material in this thesis, by Pentecostals, will no doubt force them to re-consider their roles and may affect their faith in the future. In a similar way, other researchers of religious groups may interpret my findings in relation to the data of other congregations.

looked in the phonebook and found Pentecostal. So people equate a certain style [of worship] with Pentecostal...people can hardly pronounce the word Pentecostal at times if they've had no contact with a Pentecostal church. So really that's not a very good start to try to attract people...

For Matthew and other Pentecostals, this thesis serves, primarily through the words of participants, to indicate both the similarities and differences manifested by the congregations I have studied. Finally, to return full circle, here are the words of Pastor Benjamin, already quoted in the introductory chapter of this thesis:

Pentecostal churches -- I mean they're so broad. You can have a bag of one sort of crisps and a bag of another sort crisps and they can be so similar and yet very different and the same is true of Pentecostal churches -- they're essentially the same thing but they can be very different.

In this thesis, I hope to have increased our knowledge and understanding of the diversity of British Pentecostalism. The thesis is anthropological and provides much modern ethnographic data from Elim Pentecostals.

**Appendix**

Figure 9.1 Questionnaire Distributed (over page)

**An Ethnography of Four Pentecostal Congregations  
in the North East of England.**

**Questionnaire:** Please fill in and return to the box entitled questionnaires in the entrance of the church, after the service.

**Explanation of Purpose:** The questionnaire has been designed by Helen Cookson and is intended for statistical use in the production of a PhD thesis. The information gathered through the questionnaire will remain anonymous. The questionnaire has been approved by the ethics committee of the University of Durham. This questionnaire should take 5 minutes to fill in.

**1 Age**      18-20 [ ]                      51-60 [ ]  
                 21-30 [ ]                      61-70 [ ]  
                 31-40 [ ]                      71+    [ ]  
                 41-50 [ ]

**2 Gender**    Male [ ]                      Female    [ ]

**3 Ethnic Group**

Asian-British    [ ]      Asian-Other        [ ]  
Black-British    [ ]      Black-Other        [ ]  
Chinese-British [ ]      Chinese-Other      [ ]

Mixed-British    [ ]                      Mixed-Other[ ]  
White-British    [ ]                      White-Other[ ]

**4 Marital Status**

Single                      [ ]                      Widowed    [ ]  
Married                    [ ]                      Co-habiting [ ]  
Divorced                  [ ]                      Other        [ ]  
Re-married                [ ]

**5 Education**

Pre-16                    [ ]      Post-16 Training [ ]  
GCSE/O-level            [ ]      Degree                [ ]  
A-level                    [ ]      Higher Degree        [ ]  
Other (details)\_\_\_\_\_ [ ]

**6 Do you have children?**

Yes    [ ]                      No    [ ]

If yes, how many? \_\_\_\_\_

What ages? \_\_\_\_\_

**7 Are you a Christian?**

Yes    [ ]                      No    [ ]

If yes, how many years ago did you become a  
Christian? \_\_\_\_\_

Was your conversion through the Pentecostal church?

Yes ☐

No ☐

If not, through what denomination, event or method did your conversion take place? \_\_\_\_\_

**8 Did you or do you intend to marry a Christian?**

Yes ☐

No ☐

Don't Know ☐ Do not wish to marry ☐

**9 Did you go to church while growing up?**

Yes ☐

No ☐

If yes, what denomination(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

**10 While a young person, did you have any contact with the work of Youth for Christ?**

Yes ☐

No ☐

If yes, in what form? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**11 As an adult have you attended a different church or churches?**

Yes ☐

No ☐

If yes, which one(s)? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**12 Do you speak with tongues?**

Yes ☐

No ☐

Don't Know ☐

If yes, can you physically resist speaking with tongues?

Yes ☐

No ☐

Don't Know ☐

**13 Have you ever had a word, vision or prophecy from God?**

If yes, which one(s)?

Word ☐

Vision ☐

Prophecy ☐

**14 What activities are you (or your children) part of in the church?** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



**15 Which version(s) of the bible do you use?**\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**16 Do you possess a “gift of the Spirit”?**  
Yes [ ] No [ ]  
Don’t Know[ ]

**If yes, what is your ‘gift’ to the church?**\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**17 Do you believe that Jesus will return in your life time?**  
Yes [ ] No [ ]  
Don’t Know[ ]

**18 What do you believe will happen to unbelievers when they die?**\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**19 Do you partake in the receiving of the ‘bread and the wine’?**  
Yes [ ] No [ ]

**20 Do you believe that children (under 12 years) should partake in the receiving of the ‘bread and the wine’?**  
Yes [ ] No [ ]  
Don’t Know[ ]

**Why?**\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**21 What ‘visions’ do you believe that God has for your:**  
**a Church?**\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**b Community?**\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**c Life?** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**22 Approximately how often do you drink alcohol?**

More Than Weekly	[ ]	Rarely	[ ]
Weekly	[ ]	Ocasionally	[ ]
Monthly	[ ]	Never	[ ]

**23 Do you smoke?**

Yes	[ ]	Rarely	[ ]
Socially	[ ]	No	[ ]

**24 How do you feel about sex before marriage between Christians?**

Approve	[ ]	Disapprove	[ ]
Depends	[ ]	Don't Know	[ ]

**25 How do you feel about divorce?**

Approve	[ ]	Disapprove	[ ]
Depends	[ ]	Don't Know	[ ]

**26 How do you feel about gambling?**

Approve	[ ]	Disapprove	[ ]
Depends	[ ]	Don't Know	[ ]

**27 Can a Christian be homosexual?**

Yes	[ ]	No	[ ]
Depends	[ ]	Don't Know	[ ]

**28 Do you believe that Christians should be able to work on a Sunday?**

Yes	[ ]	No	[ ]
Don't Know	[ ]		

**29 Do you go shopping on a Sunday?**

Weekly	[ ]	Occasionally	[ ]
Monthy	[ ]	Never	[ ]

**Further,** would you be prepared to be interviewed at a later date which would last for approximately 1 - 1½ hours? If so, please provide your name and telephone number or e-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**If you have any further questions then please contact me by phone \_\_\_\_\_ or via e-mail ([helen.cookson@durham.ac.uk](mailto:helen.cookson@durham.ac.uk)).**

**Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire.**

**Further**, would you be prepared to be interviewed at a later date which would last for approximately 1½ hours? If so, please provide your name and telephone number or e-mail address: \_\_\_\_\_

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**If you have any further questions then please contact me by phone \_\_\_\_\_ or via e-mail ([helen.cookson@durham.ac.uk](mailto:helen.cookson@durham.ac.uk)).**

**Thank you for your time in completing this.**

**Please leave in the box provided in the entrance of the church entitled interviews.**

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