

**EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN HEALING:  
AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF IDENTITY IN 'HEALING ON  
THE STREETS' OF BIRMINGHAM, UK.**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

Emilé Durkheim's Sacred and Profane dichotomy is often dismissed by those who claim that it cannot be found in a modern-day context. I demonstrate why this assumption is false, by exploring what happens at the boundary between sacred and profane during the activities of 'Healing on the Streets'; a charismatic evangelical group performing Christian healing as mission. I employ the Ethnographic methods of participant observation and interviewing in order to understand how the group's activities are shaped by their understanding of space and place, how they seek to manage the boundary in different places and to discover the deeper meaning of the sacred and profane within a Christian context. Ultimately I conclude that the dichotomy remains relevant to the study of religion since it finds expression in the activities of 'Healing on the Streets'.

## **DEDICATION**

For Rikard. <3

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## **INTRODUCTION**

As the gathered circle of eight men and women lower themselves to their knees, fellow shoppers become their curious audience; on the outside looking in. A young couple hand-in-hand, jubilant friends overloaded with plastic bags, a world-weary mother and father flanked by screaming toddlers and an old man shuffling slowly with the aid of his walking-stick; members of the public, hold or repeat their rushed, bewildered glances. Something in the air has shifted. A boundary has been crossed; transgressed.

A man in low-slung jeans stops suddenly in his tracks, to observe the kneeled prayers of the assembled, humbling themselves before God, lowered together in reverence; each body folded forward over the worn paving-slabs of the High Street. As palms are pressed firmly to the ground, and eyes are locked closed in peaceful contemplation, a voice rings out; barely audible above the roar of the traffic; both vehicular and human. "We claim this place in the name of the Holy Spirit", she says; "The Enemy will have no place here".

### **Charismatic Evangelicalism and Healing in the United Kingdom**

Religion "from the Latin *religio*, means 'to bind together'. Religion [...] create[s] mutual obligations, cementing social relationships" (Turner, 1991: 47). Not only does religion nominally bring together individuals with the same religious beliefs (as in the congregation), but it encourages a collective reach outward from the faithful to the unchurched, out of a sense of moral obligation to and identification with the rest of humanity as God's creation. Central to Evangelical Christian ideology and endeavour is the imperative to reach those who are non-religious and to spread the Gospel; the 'good news' lies within the belief that all people can come to faith and ultimately, salvation through Christ.

Mathew Guest has said of Evangelical Christians that they “recognise the post-Christian nature of contemporary UK culture and engage with it as a spiritual challenge” (Guest, 2007: 3), intending to make the world ostensibly ‘healthier’ through encouraging non-Christians to engage with God. For the Evangelical, it is not enough to be faithful yourself; your life should be an endeavour to induct others into a relationship with God also. Evangelicalism is not constrained by the walls of the church building, but is instead a lifestyle which integrates faith into everyday life. David Bebbington’s quadrilateral definition of evangelical Christianity reflects these aims, defining it as consisting of “conversionism, the belief that lives need to be changed; activism, the expression of the Gospel in effort; Biblicism, a particular regard for the bible; and what may be called crucicentrism, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross” (Bebbington, 1989:3).

Charismatic Christians are committed to the notion “of the ‘power’ of the spirit” (Davies, 2002: 92). Hans Mol explains that “the term ‘charisma’ is from the vocabulary of the early Christian church, where it meant the ‘gift of grace’ [...] it expressed God’s spontaneous, unmerited gift of divine love which was necessary for man’s redemption” (Mol, 1976: 44). Mark J. Cartledge developed a model describing the process of charismatic worship as that of a sequence of “search-encounter-transformation” (Cartledge, 2006: 25); in other words the search for, encounter with, and transformation by the third person of the Holy Trinity; the Holy Spirit. What it means to be a charismatic evangelical healer then is to locate the Holy Spirit, to experience its presence and its power to heal people and hopefully, as a result, to bring them in to the right relationship with God.

The focus of this ethnographic study is a group called 'Healing on the Streets'; its members are "neo-charismatic" (Burgess & Van der Maas, 2002, p. xx) evangelical Christians from a variety of churches in Birmingham. Their mission statement is to encourage "committed Christians regularly connecting with the life of the church" (Marx, 2008: 22) to actively engage, on a spiritual level, with people passing by on High Streets around the United Kingdom by administering Healing. The movement was initially developed as a model for ministry in 2005 by Mark Marx of Causeway Coast Vineyard Church in Northern Ireland but has gained popularity throughout the country; the group I have studied represents one local chapter of this national movement.

Healing on the Streets can be considered what is commonly known as "third wave" (Poloma & Hoelter, 1998: 259) charismatic evangelical. The group follows a diktat sometimes referred to as "every-member ministry" (Cartledge, 2004: 180); the belief that "the power to heal [...] is available to all Christians [...], taking it out of the hands of a few and placing it in the reach of the masses" (Poloma & Hoelter, 1998: 259). The Healing on the Streets group believe that all Christians have the kingdom authority to perform healing; not merely those who are considered to be in the possession of rare 'gifts' of the Holy Spirit. The members belong to a number of local congregations within the churches of Riverside Church in Moseley, New Life Baptist Church in Kings Heath, St Martin at the Bullring and Oasis Church Centre in Edgbaston.

The people involved in *Healing on the Streets* express a "worldview that expects the involvement of God in the world in which we live, and the extraordinary becomes accepted as part of the normal dynamics of this world" (Cartledge, 2004: 180). The ordinary and

extraordinary dimensions of life find experience and expression through charismatic worship. *Healing on the Streets* can be seen as worship, since it is defined as “the place where people seek the presence of God [...] where the glory of the Lord is revealed in power and people are transformed for the sake of the kingdom of God” (Cartledge, 2006: 51). In essence, the activities of *Healing on the Streets* seek an encounter with the divine which they hope will result in “unity, transcendence and transformation [... which are] central to the Christian discourse” (Stringer, 2008: 14).

The missionary imperative of Evangelical Christianity, Mathew Guest tells us, “is pursued in such a variety of ways and with such varied results that the evangelical engagement with culture remains but a foundation for a far more complex analysis” (Guest, 2007: 3). It is my hope that this study of the boundary between sacred and profane within one example of Evangelical, Charismatic Healing, can be seen as a small contribution to this wider understanding.

### **Émile Durkheim’s Sacred and Profane as Elementary Forms of Religious Life?**

Our social world is governed by boundaries; human beings identify and locate themselves according to their similarity or difference to the ‘other’ with whom they share space. ‘Same’ or ‘different’, ‘together’ or ‘separate’, ‘attracted to’ or ‘repulsed by’; social interactions of all kinds, including those which are religious in nature, are governed by the influences of these kinds of opposing forces.

Émile Durkheim characterised these parallels as the influence of an “absolute [and] universal” (Durkheim, 2001 [1912]: 38) polarity, often referred to as the ‘sacred and profane’; a dichotomy which he argued spans the entirety of human social life, including the

sphere of religion. Like Auguste Comte before him, Durkheim concerned himself with discovering supposed laws which govern society, and he planned to do so by “setting up sociology as a science, using positivist methods and looking for social facts” (Douglas, 1990: xvi). Durkheim’s “last major work” (Fish, 2005: 17) *‘The Elementary Forms of Religious Life’*, asserts an understanding of the world as necessarily divided in to “two comprehensive domains, one sacred, the other profane [; a distinction which he considered to be...] the hallmark of religious thought” (Durkheim, 2001 [1912]: 36). The ability to classify the dichotomy as a universal was supported by Roger Caillois, a member of the Durkheimian-influenced *‘College de Sociologie’*, as he noted that the sacred and the profane has never been absent from any definition of religion ever formulated (Caillois, 1959: 19). Likewise, Hans Mol claims that “there are no societies in which the sacred is not manifest in some form or other” (Mol, 1976: 203).

There are however those who deny the dichotomy any such claim to being universal or absolute, and question whether Durkheim went a step too far in trying to “provide a general theory of ‘religion’ of a kind which has not, and [...] never will be, successfully formulated” (Runciman, 1990: 336). There have been ethnographers who “have denied that this [...] dichotomy occurs at all among the people they have studied” (Parkin, 1996: 29) and it is often suggested that “religion, morality and society, as a coherent symbolic domain underpinned by vital circuits or collective effervescence, have ceased to exist in the modern world” (Shilling and Mellor, 2001: 49). I would like to address these opposing views by exploring the dichotomy as ethnographically observable phenomena, specifically in the context of contemporary public worship, in order to determine what is happening at the threshold between sacred and profane.

The question of whether or not Durkheim's 'Elementary Forms', including the Sacred and the Profane, are universally applicable frameworks is an unanswerable one. It will forever remain unclear both temporally and spatially, whether our entire social world can be understood in terms of Durkheim's dichotomy. I would however like to argue that in this case the Profane and the Sacred *can* be observed in the exhibited action and behaviour of the Healing on the Streets group. I see no justification for dismissing Durkheim's sacred and profane altogether and I will show that the dichotomy provides a remarkably representative framework with which to uncover truths (rather than the law which Durkheim posited). I will decode the amazing occurrences at the boundary whereby "the reality of a profane world [...] is established opposite a holy and mythical world" (Bataille, 1989: 37).

### **Reconsidering the Sacred**

At first glance it may appear problematic to use the sacred and profane dichotomy in order to analyse the structure of *Healing on the Streets'* social lives, since Durkheim was a functionalist and rejected the idea of substantive phenomena in explaining the birth and continuation of religion in society. He reduces religious activity to "nothing more than the symbolic expression of social experience" (Davie, 2007: 30-1) because for Durkheim, it did not make sense to speak of religion as arising from the Gods, as "one could not explain a phenomenon scientifically by means of something which did not exist" (Parkin, 1996: 27). Durkheim was privileging his own atheism over the theism expressed by the people he studied; a misjudgement that I would be loathe to follow. It is undoubtedly the case that to provide an accurate representation or analysis of Healing on the Streets, a substantive dimension of understanding is needed.

The group understand their collective and individual existences as intrinsically related to their experience of and relationship with a personal God, and would strongly “react against attempts to represent religion as a purely human activity” (Fenton, 1984: 217). Durkheim however thought that “sacredness is not a matter of some quality deemed to be inherent in the object but concerns its endowment with sacredness by society” (Parkin, 1996: 27). There is nothing contradictory about accepting that the sacred and profane dichotomy serves a social purpose and has social effects, as well as claiming that in the eyes of those who perceive and maintain the dichotomy, God does exist. There is no reason why we cannot suppose the existence of God as well as say that the sacred is something discerned by the people who encounter something as ‘other than’; be that ‘something’ God or some other spiritual entity. When Durkheim developed his *Elementary Forms*, he was interested primarily in how religions “make certain forms of action and experiences of life possible” (Mellor, 1998: 88) and I do not think that the sacred and profane dichotomy loses its’ power to provide an answer to this question if we accept a substantive dimension to religious action. People will still experience God in different ways, and it is with how Healing on the Streets perceive and describe these encounters that I am concerned.

#### **Knockin’ on Heaven’s Door – At the Boundary of the Sacred/Profane Dichotomy:**

Emile Durkheim’s famous definition of the Sacred characterises it as “things [which are] set apart and surrounded by prohibitions” (Durkheim, 2001 [1912]: 46); the sacred is, at its very core, defined in its otherness to the profane. The sacred can be understood as “a concept by which people define and mark the boundaries between themselves as individuals (the body and its boundaries) and as a community (ethnicity and territorial boundaries), between

auspicious and dangerous days and times, as well as between what is human [...] and what is outside of it" (Pyysiäinen, 1996: 22). Religious practices, Durkheim claims, are always "relative to sacred things" (Durkheim, 2001 [1912]: 46).

Charismatic experiences of the sacred, such as those exhibited by Healing on the Streets are characterised by an "expectancy of otherness" (Davies, 2002: 134) and an understanding that something "distinctive is taking place, something that does not belong to the ordinariness of everyday life" (Davies, 2002: 134). According to Durkheim's definition, "the sacred thing is, par excellence, that which the profane must not and cannot touch with impunity [...]. If the profane could enter in to relations with the sacred, the sacred would serve no purpose" (Durkheim, 2001 [1912]: 39). The sacred ceases to have any binding, emotional or contagious effect unless it is kept entirely separated from the profane which does not have this power, by some sort of ritual or a set of prohibitions which ensure that the space represents one realm rather than the other.

The fragile nature of the dichotomy can be explained by understanding that the two realms "both conflict and compliment, both differ profoundly and yet are very relevant for one another, and even undermine one another. The point where the function of each is maximized is never equilibrated, and is always under strain" (Mol, 1976: 204). Hence, the two aspects are changeable but cannot be allowed to mix or overlap; in order for any changes in the boundary to be made, the profane must *become* something sacred or vice versa. The "potential for transgression from both sides requires [... the boundary] to be fortified, policed, fought over, and constructed repeatedly in order that the other beyond it

may be recognised and kept out” (Knott, 2005: 203). The otherness of the other is a constant threat to the nature of that which is expressed in any given place at any given time.

Religious ritual is a good example of how the sacred and profane are kept separate; in fact, their performance is “often required to approach the sacred [...and so] these rites invariably accentuate its separation from the profane” (Mol, 1976: 203). It is also important to note that the sacred has a dual-nature which “can pass from a benevolent to a malevolent form without changing its essential nature. This occurs because the two forms of sacredness share strong emotional energies and a contagious nature, which carry it through the social body” (Fish, 2005: 28). There are those who argue that unlike the benevolent sacred, “some sacred beings threaten rather than uphold the social, thus logically detracting from Durkheim’s account.” (Parkin, 1996: 29) such as demonic forces which “strive [...] towards maximising inauthenticity and estrangement in the world” (Yong, 2000: 130). I do not think that the malevolent form of the sacred detracts from Durkheim however, as W.S.F. Pickering “argue[s] that society may create a belief in malevolent forces as well as in the power of ritual action to overcome them” (Parkin, 1996: 29). It is in this context that Healing on the Streets groups understand themselves; as pitted against, and bidding to transform the profane and the malevolent sacred in to the benevolent sacred represented by the Holy Spirit.

### **The Study**

An ethnographic study of religion finds its starting point “from the actions, events and intentions of cultural agents in specific contexts as they make distinctions between spaces, mark them for specific uses, create visible and invisible boundaries, and establish cultural

conventions of behaviour towards those boundaries” (Anttonen, 2000: 43). In section two, the methodology section, I explain how I went about performing my research, how I approached, constructed and developed my encounters with the participants, and I discuss some of the theories which shaped my understanding of human social interactions.

What is considered ‘ordinary’ and what is ‘extra-ordinary’ in contemporary life is perceived in relation to all of the other elements which share the space. It is clear that “the concept of sacred space lies at the heart of sociologists’ distinction between the sacred and the profane” (Hamilton & Spicer, 2005: 2) because “sacer and profanus [the Latin derivations of the terms used by Durkheim and again later by Eliade] had a primarily spatial meaning” (Hamilton & Spicer, 2005: 2) which related to places as well as objects. This accentuates the pertinence of the sacred and profane dichotomy in the study of contemporary anthropological spaces and places and in particular, the ones that Healing on the Streets make use of. In section three and section four I explore the perception of and use of these socially-determined anthropological spaces; firstly focusing on the construction of sacred space and place out on the High Street and in the latter, exploring the meaning and interpretation of sacred and profane body-spaces within the individual.

It is clear that “neither communities nor embodied individuals can be examined in isolation from each other” (Mellor & Shilling, 1997: 14), which is why I will provide an analysis of both the interactions on the High Street and the effect that they have on the individual, in order to give a comprehensive representation of the inter-personal establishment and alteration of the sacred and profane at each of these levels.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The title of this research identifies it as 'Ethnographic', which is an empirical strategy defined as the participation "... in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions – in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995: 1). I have proceeded with the ethnographic data collection in two ways; I took part in regular participant-observation of the 'Healing on the Streets' group on ten occasions between April and August 2010<sup>1</sup>, and I performed semi-structured interviews with eight participants selected from within, and representative of, the wider demographic of the group<sup>2</sup>. I also collected a number of documents such as training manuals, leaflets<sup>3</sup> and letters. The benefits of employing these ethnographic research methods, grounded by theoretical frameworks, lay in their usefulness as ethically sound, qualitative rather than quantitative, inductive rather than deductive, paradigmatically constructivist rather than essentialist and reflexive in nature. No matter which strategy is used to collect data, the researcher has a responsibility to present the subjects of study *as they are*, but also to give their own interpretation of events, all the time being honest about the limitations of the methods involved in these processes.

### **Ethical Ethnography**

How to proceed ethically is a vital issue that any researcher should consider before moving past the early stages of research design, but this imperative has a particular urgency in the

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<sup>1</sup> A full list of the dates and locations of the participant observation can be found at Appendix 3.

<sup>2</sup> A full list of the interviews performed can be found at Appendix 4. The interview questions are Appendix 5.

<sup>3</sup> Leaflets can be found at Appendix 6a, 6b and 6c.

case of Ethnography. Working with human research subjects is an ethical minefield; avoiding harm to themselves or their subjects while performing ethnography, can be far more complicated than the researcher first imagines. Marlene De Laine tells us that “Ethical and moral dilemmas are an occupational work hazard of fieldwork that the researcher cannot plan for” (De Laine, 2000, p.16); we cannot avoid the need to make ethical choices, often on the spot, when faced with them, but we can anticipate, prepare and educate ourselves about the more common problems before we begin.

The first action that I took, after I had decided on the group of people I wished to study, was to complete and submit a University Ethics Form, which required me to consider and explain how I intended to conduct myself with the participants. Following submission I received feedback which helped me to reconsider some of my choices in order to make the project as ethically safe as it could be. After this process had been completed, and the University were satisfied with my proposals, I went about gaining access to the field and obtaining the informed consent of the participants. I first met with several people often referred to as “gatekeepers” (Denscombe, 2007: 71); those overseeing and responsible for the group’s activities, and following their approval I approached individual members of the group for their consent. I designed a clear and concise ‘information sheet’<sup>4</sup> for each member of the group to read, which disclosed my full intentions for the project. It contained an outline of my research objectives and gave my contact details, as well as a full explanation of what role they, as a potential subject, could have in its development. Afterwards, when I was satisfied that they understood what they would be committing themselves to, I asked each

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<sup>4</sup> Information Sheet can be found at Appendix 1.

participant to sign a consent form<sup>5</sup> to confirm their understanding of the information sheet and express their permission for me to carry out the research with them. I went to great lengths to ensure that the consent of the participants was fully *informed* consent; that their decision to participate was based on full possession of the relevant information.

Moral philosopher Immanuel Kant claimed that “rational beings are called persons inasmuch as their nature already marks them out as ends in themselves [...] not to be used merely as means” (Kant, 2005 [1785]: 915); researchers should not *use* their participants, but ensure that they are recruited to the research process of which they are a part, not merely treated as passive objects to study. This process includes accepting if someone does not want to take part and understanding the researcher’s obligation to explain the subjects’ right to withdrawal from the project at any time. A consent form does not bind the subject to the study irrevocably; it is only applicable as long as their consent remains. Affording the participant their basic human freedoms should be the very first step in providing an ethically sound project; however, the benefits are more than simply those related to a decrease in perceivable risk. Treating the participant as a valuable partner in the research marginally minimises the sizable discrepancy in power relations between researcher and subject, as well as building trust and openness, which in turn is conducive to a more accurate, detailed and truthful dialogue.

As much as I would like to think that, as a researcher, I informed the participants of everything they might want to know about the research, I doubt that this could ever be the case. Whilst I provided them with the information about what would be required of them

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<sup>5</sup> Consent Form can be found at Appendix 2.

and the risks involved, I acknowledge that “the covert-overt distinction is a continuum, rather than a black-white divide” (Punch, 1986, p.40). One cannot be entirely truthful or entirely untruthful with their participants, and “even when operating in an overt manner, ethnographers rarely tell *all* the people they are studying *everything* about the research” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p.265), simply because it would take far too long and much of the information might be confusing to someone with no research experience. It is preferable to spend some time before contacting anyone for their consent, to consider what information is vital to provide to the subject. Anything which may be a factor in their decision-making process should be made explicit, and the researcher should always be prepared to disclose *any* extra information about the research to the subjects, should they ask for it. It is not a perfect system, but with Ethnography “Perfection is professionally unobtainable. These lies are not lies that we can choose, for the most part, not to tell [...] We must suffer the reality that they are part of the methodology” (Fine, 1993, p.290). What is important is that the researcher does whatever is realistically possible to prevent harm coming to their participants in any way.

### **Ethnography as a Qualitative rather than Quantitative Methodology**

Ethnography is a qualitative methodology which includes tools particularly useful for the study of human societies. Qualitative and quantitative research methods were each designed to enable the researcher to collect specific and distinct sorts of data. It is possible to choose between them, or to employ a Mixed Methods approach which comprises both. Where the two strategies vary is in the fact that “qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality [...] and the situational constraints that shape enquiry

[...whereas] quantitative studies emphasise the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000: 8).

I decided against the use of quantitative methods, as I felt that the model would not be well suited to collecting the kinds of data that I would need from my human research subjects.

Quantitative methods, which are routinely used within the Natural Sciences, often consider subjects which are from “a nonhuman object domain” (Kvale, 1996: 66) and it presupposes “a fixed reality, which rigorous method could uncover, describe and explain” (Brewer, 2000:

21). Quantitative methods were developed for the discovery of, and appeal towards universal laws which determine how the natural world functions; they are used to test the relationships between variables; everything else being equal, it is expected that the results should be reproducible under the same conditions. Human behaviour, interaction and emotional response are however not held under the sway of universal laws, and will not produce consistent results if tested in the same way as the properties of non-human subjects; a fact which has resulted in the claim that quantitative methods should take precedence over a qualitative methodology because it “lacks objectivity” (Kvale, 1996: 64).

This criticism, whilst warranted, does not allow for the consideration of just how different human beings are as subjects than, for example, a chemical reaction. Research methods should always be designed so that they are fit for purpose. So-called ‘objective’ methodology, which was designed to study static, predictable objects and phenomena, would serve as far too blunt a tool if it alone were used to study wholly ‘subjective’, changeable, complex and unpredictable subjects.

Furthermore, quantitative methodologies do not allow for a complex, detailed or descriptive representation of social worlds; “an insistence that any research worth its salt should follow a purely quantitative logic would simply rule out the study of many interesting phenomena relating to what people actually do in their day-to-day lives” (Silverman, 2005: 6). Studying a human being *as* a human being, requires an understanding of, and the use of methods which account for the subject’s nature; highly subjective, fully autonomous and therefore complex and changeable. The critics “confuse reports on subjective phenomena with the objective reporting of these phenomena. Subjective ethnographic data [...] mean[s] objectively reporting on the subjectivity of our subjects” (Thomas, 1993: 17). I agree with Jim Thomas inasmuch as I recognise the desire of most, if not all researchers, that their work represents as objective and accurate a result as possible. The subjectivity of the researcher is however undeniable because the researcher, not merely the subjects, is human too. Qualitative methodologies are subjective inasmuch as they are fit for the purpose of studying human subjects and are performed by a human researcher, but if it is the subjective nature of the researcher which means that the work falls short of total objectivity, then it is not only qualitative methodology which is found lacking; research which employs quantitative methods would also be subjective.

In the case of qualitative Ethnography however, it is a recognised aspect of the method that acknowledging how the researcher’s own identity impacts on their perception of the world, is vital to ensure the value of their interpretation. It is because of the subjective nature of the human subjects, as well as of the observation and interpretation by the researcher themselves, in lieu of their own humanity, that making overarching claims or asserting ‘laws’ which govern social phenomena of one kind or another is not possible. This does not mean

however that works which use Qualitative methodology suffer a privation of value or of academic rigour. I would like to distance myself from the view expressed by early Sociologists like Auguste Comte, who thought that “facts in themselves had no [...] scientific status. By neglecting to formulate general laws, empiricists failed, in other words, to provide useful knowledge” (Pickering, 1997: 22). Instead, I accept Martyn Hammersley’s concept of subtle realism, where he makes it clear that while human behaviour does not conform to universal laws, he “believes in independent truth-claims [ ... whereby] knowledge is based on assumptions and human constructions” (Brewer, 2000: 48). Just because people are not scientifically predictable or testable in the same way as objects within the natural sciences, it does not mean that their behaviours do not represent observable social ‘truths’ of some kind. It is as Silverman tells us, “the strengths and weaknesses of any model will only be revealed in what you can do with it” (Silverman, 2005: 11) and qualitative ethnography’s strengths lay in its’ capacity to reveal truths, not laws, about human societies.

Ethnographies are best understood as subjective, contextual truths that are best used alongside other ethnographies, as a cumulative source of knowledge reconstructed from a variety of places and times. My research could be used in conjunction with similar research projects, to better see the range of similarity, difference and divergence across the beliefs and activities of a variety of Christian charismatic and evangelical groups.

### **Overcoming the problem of Reflexivity**

It is vital to remember from the outset that within Ethnography unlike the natural sciences, “the ‘objects’ studied are in fact ‘subjects’, and themselves produce accounts of their world” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995: 124). The inductive nature of the method means that the

researcher, rather than going in to the field with a set of pre-conceived ideas and hypotheses to prove or disprove, can instead proceed with an open mind and use analysed descriptions of the activity of the participants themselves as the findings. It is as Karen O'Reilly tells us, that research with "an emphasis more on induction than on deduction is also more empowering than purely deductive research since the participants always direct it to some extent" (O'Reilly, 2005: 183). This understanding of research as participant-led is accurate, up to the point where we understand the researcher and participant as being in an honest and mutually beneficial partnership; we must however remember who it is writing up the findings. It is the researcher who is interpreting the participants' actions, making value judgements and analysing the meaning in their words.

It is important not only to take in to account the subjectivity of the participants, but also the subjectivity of the researchers' ethnographic account. The selfhood of the researcher is a vital Ethnographic research tool, and their influence and presence within the group will undoubtedly affect the data collected; however this does not have to be seen as a negative feature. Recognising the reflexive nature of the relationship between human researcher and human subject, is a realistic and truthful way to proceed; anything other than this runs the risk of de-humanising one or the other, or being unrealistic about what can be achieved. In accordance with the constructivist paradigm of identity, we must understand the influences social actors have on one another as Goffman does, conceiving that "each giver is himself a receiver, and each receiver is a giver" (Goffman, 1963: 16); this is what is called "reflexivity" (Aull Davies, 1999: 3). In other words, the relationship between the subject and the researcher will always be a complex, complicated and ultimately, a mutually influential one.

The subjects in my study have been aware of my presence and my intentions throughout the course of the observation and interview processes, in accordance with acceptable research ethics. Gary Fine tells us that “if subjects know the research goals, their responses are likely to be skewed” (Fine, 1993, p.274). As autonomous, free agents, there is the possibility that they may have altered their ‘normal’ behaviour in light of my presence as someone collecting data on their behaviour. Erving Goffman tells us that social actors are “primarily motivated by a desire to be well regarded – both by others and by oneself – and every interaction offered occasions for eliciting that regard” (Goffman & Best, 2005 [1967]: viii); if people know they are being watched far closer than in their average everyday interactions, it will make them far more inclined to ensure they make a good impression, rather than relaxing in to their usual way of conducting themselves.

Many who are concerned about the reflexive nature of ethnography encourage others to conduct their research in accordance with the philosophical concepts of Positivism and Naturalism. Both are however naive to the complexities of Ethnographic research and fail to provide adequate solutions to the perceived problem. Proponents of positivism insist that to maintain due objectivity, the researcher must seek to eliminate their influence on the group under study and the work which is produced; to “avoid influencing or ‘manipulating’ the setting as much as possible, even when the data is generated through face-to-face interaction in the field site” (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999: 42-3). Conversely, Naturalism demands that the researcher fully submerge themselves in the way of life lived by those that they are studying, and “go native” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003: 170) as it is often called. Both of these strategies are unrealistic in the case of Ethnography, since the researcher unavoidably becomes part of the field that they are studying, but the relationships built there will always

be ones of researcher and subjects, rather than of fellow group members. The participants will always have in their mind why it is that the researcher is there, provided the researcher has proceeded ethically and secured their informed consent. It is clear that “the fundamental presumptions of positivistic sociology deny the emergent, fragile, and reflexive nature of modern life” (Van Maanen, 1995: 247) but followers of Naturalism also have a degree of naivety if they believe that they can “study things in their natural state” (Denscombe, 2007: 70) by doing ethnography ethically.

The ethnographer must understand that their task can only ever be one of constructive description and interpretation; the Ethnographic process has the inevitable effect of sifting the views and feelings of the subject through the filter of the researcher’s own voice, and unavoidably presenting them as a reconstruction of the original testimony. Karen O’Reilly tells us that “some people present their findings in a very descriptive way as if they have done no analysis and as if the data speak for themselves – they don’t!” (O’Reilly, 2005: 195). Writing ethnography is not simply a process of describing what happened, but also involves the author’s ethnographic authority to break up and reconstitute the data into a form which demonstrates their own analytical interpretation of events; it is the researcher “who decides what belongs where” (O’Reilly, 2005: 185). It is therefore necessary to accept that Ethnography “is not a direct ‘reproduction’, [... it] inevitably owes something to the ethnographer’s own experiences” (Denscombe, 2007: 62). I do not think of ethnography as either a construction or a reproduction, but rather as a reconstruction.

Reflexivity, as a problem of influence from the researcher, can be addressed by disclosing pertinent information about the researcher; about their lives, beliefs and possible biases

which might influence the final piece. In the spirit of this proposal, the following brief account is offered in order that the reader may better discern my voice from those of the participants in the later sections. I am a white female in my early 20s, state-school educated and raised in a two-parent home. My mother has long been interested in New Age spirituality but is not practising. My father was raised in a large Irish-Catholic household, he has mixed emotions about the religious aspects of his early life and now identifies as an Atheist. My one younger brother and I were both christened into the Church of England as babies, although were not raised with any explicit religious agenda and we currently both identify as 'open minded' Agnostics.

With dozens of competing voices, written ethnographies can be conflicted and busy, but my hope is that by expressing this basic information about myself any biases I possess will appear obvious, and stand illuminated against those of the participants.

### **Constructivist rather than Essentialist paradigms of Identity in Religious Ethnographies**

Performing Ethnography requires the researcher to understand the nature of the human self and its relationships with others, as well as how they are formed and maintained; it requires an accurate paradigmatic conception of identity, both individual and collective. In order to study and eventually come to understand people, one must know how they come to define themselves, as this will always affect how they treat others in a given situation.

The key to conceiving the rhyme and reason of any human activity, in its most basic form, is the understanding of human beings as primarily social creatures who seek to establish complex and mutually favourable relationships with others, as a necessary condition of our species' survival. People do not just seek a connection with others however, but are in

competition with them, both as rival individuals and as warring groups. Richard Jenkins defines identity formation as the consideration of “two criteria of comparison between persons or things: *similarity* or *difference*. [... Identity] isn’t ‘just there’, it’s not a ‘thing’, it must *always* be established” (Jenkins, 2004: 4). This can be seen in stark contrast to the understanding of identity present at the Enlightenment, when it was said to first exist “when the subject was born, and unfolded with it, whilst remaining essentially the same” (Hall, 1992: 275). Rejecting this essentialist characterisation of identity, Jenkins proposes that a person establishes their own identity through their social interactions with others, and that these identities become temporarily consolidated in terms of the categories ‘self’ and ‘other’; ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’; ‘us’ and ‘them’. The identity of the “post-modern subject [...] is formed and transformed continually in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround us. It is historically, not biologically defined” (Thompson, 1998: 97).

Individual identities are multi-faceted and remain in a constant state of development. Since they are defined according to what is external as well as what is internal to them (such as learned behaviours and memories), the identities of those people around them adjust accordingly with these changes, and groups of people who define themselves as similar, band together. Nick Crossley tells us that “the process of world building [...] is a collective and collaborative venture achieved through human interaction” (Crossley, 2002: 20). This paradigm of identity as ever-changing and multi-faceted is called Constructivism; this is a far more persuasive explanation of how social identities are formed and maintained than an Essentialist one which characterises identity as homogenous and static.

The main differences between the two paradigms is that “whereas essentialism views people as unchanging, constructivism views people as always changeable, if not actually always changing [...and] where essentialism views people’s identity in terms of one of two dimensions, constructivism points to the multiplicity of the individual and social identities we bear” (Smith, 2001: 34). It is for this reason and because I hold a constructivist view of identity that my ethnographic research cannot be used to make generalising statements about identity labels, such as ‘Evangelical Christians’. Since I feel that human identities are ever-changing, the findings are only relevant in exposing truths about that *one* group in the *one* time when they were observed or interviewed.

I recognise that people are not just one identity or another, and cannot be described through a singular label, hence any ethnographic generalisation I make about one identity-label or another, in any context other than the one which I observed, could not be an accurate one. People adapt to the changing worlds around them; identity “is never gained nor maintained once and for all” (Nelson, 1971: 88). It is for this reason that I am in a position to recognise and analyse the multiplicity of shared and individual identities within my group of study, and try to understand how these relate to the unique experience of Western religious devotion.

Identities which are concerned with religion in some way are representative of not just human relationships, but of another which is unique and distinct; the one between the individual and God. Human understandings of and relationships with the sacred are often, Thomas J. Csordas tells us, “an existential encounter with Otherness that is a touchstone of our humanity. [...] It defines us by what we are not – by what is beyond our limits, or what

touches us precisely at our limits" (Csordas, 1994: 5). Our conception of this boundary, in Durkheimian terminology, is the place where the 'Profane' and the 'Sacred' meet; where the everyday, mundane occurrences of life are transformed by an awe-inspiring encounter with the Divine. Most importantly, Durkheim believed that "without these deeply energising forces, as his study of suicide suggested, individuals can even lose their thirst for life itself" (Shilling & Mellor, 2001: 41). It is clear that, to Durkheim, human beings need encounters with the sacred in order to thrive and that "it is society that, by bringing [... the individual] in to its sphere of influence, has infected him with the need to raise himself above the world of experience and has, at the same time, provided him with the means of conceiving of another" (Durkheim, 2001 [1912]: 318). Therefore, an understanding of individual and collective identity as ever-changing and socially constructed is vital if one is to illuminate encounters with the sacred when and where they are experienced.

## **CHRISTIAN HEALING AND THE SACRED & PROFANE DICHOTOMY ON THE HIGH STREET**

The High Street is a place which “is not best conceived as a particular location with an idiosyncratic physiognomy or as a uniquely individualistic node of sentiment, but rather as a social position within a hierarchical system” (Smith, 1987: 45). While we can physically stand on the High Street and feel the paving under our feet, this individualistic and materialistic understanding of the place misses the real complexities contained within it; reflected in our relationships with others, both human and transcendent. The character of each place is determined by the mixture of “elements coexisting in the same place [which] may be distinct and singular, but [...exhibit complex] interrelations [...and a] shared identity conferred on them by their common occupancy of the place” (Augé, 1995: 54). Human beings, while sharing in geographical closeness, also define themselves by what is different about themselves in relation to those objects and subjects with which they share space.

Antony P. Cohen explains that, in social terms, “boundaries are marked because communities interact in some way or another with entities from which they are, or wish to be, distinguished” (Cohen, 1985: 12). I intend to discuss how the High Street space is used in the development and expression of Christian and Non-Christian identities, in order to show how these understandings of identity and spatiality are represented by the shifting boundary between sacred and profane.

### **‘Making’ or ‘Discovering’ the location of the Sacred?**

The average UK High Street is not, by default, a place which many would consider Sacred. The majority of people are drawn into this same area by a common want, but there is no binding force, no common symbols, no collective effervescence; only a set of differentiated

individuals going about the mundane tasks of earning and spending money. It reflects an individualistic world which has, for the most part, dispensed with the sacred and instead “cultural artefacts, images and fashions become increasingly rationalised and can circulate at a quantity and with a quality which leaves people with a sense of fatigue, boredom and dissatisfaction” (Mellor & Shilling, 1997: 25). The Moseley, Kings Heath and Birmingham High Streets are, for all extents and purposes, secular shared spaces; for the most part they have no explicit sacred worth for those who visit them.

A whole variety of religious groups have however begun to utilise the High Street in order to pray to, preach about and worship their Gods. Since the world of the profane is always, by necessity, kept separated from the world of the sacred, this movement away from traditional sacred spaces to secular, profane ones is motivated by a desire to tangibly change the latter. Jonathan Z. Smith thinks that there are two kinds of sacred locations; ‘space’ and ‘place’. Sacred space is “permanent, somewhere that has been set aside for ritual or other purposes and which takes on a symbolic association of its own” (Stringer, 2008: 64); this includes spaces such as churches (although they continuously go through varying ecclesiastical rites of consecration), pilgrimage sites, mountains or anywhere else which is revered enough to be set apart from the world of the profane indefinitely. Sacred place however, “is created for a purpose and is unique to that purpose and those who are involved in it” (Stringer, 2008: 64); they are areas which do not start out as having any remarkable features but somehow become scenes of otherworldly importance, able to inspire strong, contagious emotions that they would never have caused before. The religious activity of Christians which is normally ‘set apart from’ the street and housed in magnificent church

buildings is, through the work of out-reaching charismatic evangelicals, being brought out of the churches and enacted in the outside world:

*“Churches being in buildings is great, but - if that’s where you stay you’re going to miss a lot of people because it’s – I think sometimes you lose sight of how difficult it can be, especially for somebody who’s never been to church before [... It] can be so difficult for them, and actually, Jesus didn’t hold himself up in a building and go ‘right everybody come to me’, he went to them [...]. It’s actually a chance to, sort of, really show my faith and show the love of Jesus to other people, out where they are”* (William, interview).

Those people who aspire to a higher reality than that of their own individual existence, and who want to demonstrate the wonder of “*God’s love*” (Peter, interview) in the world, share in a common understanding of boundary between sacred and profane. In actively seeking a transformation of or merely by acknowledging sacred spaces and places, these groups are seeking to create or recognise, for a short time at least, “a better version of the same world – the existing order – not the imagination of a different world” (Knott, 2005: 210). Through interacting with this new order, a person might be able to access the sacred power of the substantive Divine in the form of a “Religious experience [which] provides an authority that challenges other cultural authorities” (Cooley, 1994: 45). However, one might ask how it is that the High Street becomes sacred for the purposes of Healing on the Streets’ activities?

Chidester and Linenthal offer two explanations for how sacred areas come to be recognised as such; “one substantial, the other situational” (Chidester & Linenthal, 1995: 5). Substantial definitions appeal to the “essential character [... of the sacred, and its] experiential qualities

[which are...] full of ultimate significance” (Chidester & Linenthal, 1995: 5). Belden C. Lane delineates four phenomenological ‘axioms’ to describe the character of sacred areas, the first of which is that “sacred space is not chosen; it chooses” (Lane, 2002 [1988]: 19). In a substantially determined sacred area, it is some extra-ordinary happening or miracle which determines its sacredness; such events result in what Mircea Eliade calls the “revelation of a sacred space” (Eliade, 1987 [1957]: 23). Lane tells us that “God chooses to reveal himself only where he wills” (Lane, 2002 [1988]: 19) and that the spot at which he is revealed becomes imbued with reverence and emotion as a consequence. A shrine, statue or temple may be erected at the spot where the event took place, as a marker to indicate that the sacred has revealed itself there. Situational definitions however, such as the one developed by Durkheim, identify the sacred as located “at the nexus of human practices and social projects. [...] The sacred is] an empty signifier [...] and] a sign of difference that can be assigned to virtually anything” (Chidester & Linenthal, 1995: 5-6). In other words, it is human action that determines which areas are sacred, through using ritual to ‘invite’ the sacred to a particular location. According to Jonathan Z. Smith, “ritual is not an expression or a response to ‘the sacred’; rather, something or someone is made sacred by ritual [...]. Sacred and Profane, are transitive categories; they serve as maps and labels [...]; indices of difference” (Smith, 1987: 105).

Healing on the Streets recognises the inherence of the sacred as well as the possibility of its presence occurring through spontaneous expressions. The sacredness of the spaces they use however, are both substantially and situationally determined. The physical area is chosen by the group, but the sacredness of the place depends on the substantive sacred responding to their actions to solicit it. The group have a shared desire to make the place sacred as shown

through their prayers, while at the same time recognising that the sacredness is ultimately determined by the choice of the substantive sacred to inhabit it. Once the group consider their invitation to have been accepted, they ensure that the presence of the sacred is made explicit to outsider eyes by their use of symbolic expressions.

### **Symbolic Expressions of the Sacralised Place**

Healing on the Streets uses sensory clues to prepare for, to announce and to symbolise the presence of the sacred at each place; they are 'drawing a line' around the space and differentiating it from the surrounding area by virtue of its content, characteristics and power. It has been noted that "Christianity in general is territorial. Its central doctrine of the incarnation, locates it both in time and space [... which] helps to shape the ritual" (Albrecht, 1999: 127). A place is only sacred for Healing on the Streets inasmuch as the sacred can be sensed: people can feel the extra-ordinary presence of the Holy Spirit and the place is differentiated from its surroundings by how it feels to share it with the Spirit.

The group's first activities when they arrive on the High Street, even before the presence of the Holy Spirit has been solicited, are practical ones designed to establish themselves in that area. These consist of:- unpacking boxes of leaflets, towels, and tissues; unfolding and spacing out the wooden chairs in a line; dispensing soft foam kneeling-pads either side, as well as a 'follow-up letter'<sup>6</sup> beneath each chair; assembling the flagpole-style banner which reads 'Prayer for Healing' in blue and white; and a CD of ambient instrumental music is placed into a portable sound system.

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<sup>6</sup> Follow-up letter can be found at Appendix 7.

What the team is doing is “set[ting] apart” (Durkheim, 2001 [1912]: 46) and delineating an area which is forbidden to the profane and malevolent sacred. Changes are made to alter the physical environment in order to symbolically demonstrate the substantial spiritual change it is hoped will happen there. This is particularly important for those situated outside the boundaries of the sacred place, since they are not exposed to the emotional experience of the Holy Spirit. For those who are already Christian but are outside of the sacred place, they may, through their experience of the embodiment of the Holy Spirit, feel drawn to the place regardless of any sensory cues. Peter described living with the Holy Spirit inside of him by saying that *“if I’m sensitive to his leading, I can detect that tug”* (Peter, interview). For non-Christians however, who have no Holy Spirit living intertwined with their spirit, they must experience him either through inhabiting a sacred place imbued with his presence, or by being drawn by sensory cues which reveal the nature of the place as what William visualised; as a sacred *“oasis, full of life-giving water”* (William, observation) out in the ‘desert’ of the profane world.

The outsider who comes into the space may not perceive its sacred nature at all, since “sacred place can be tread upon without being entered” (Lane, 2002 [1988]: 19). An atmosphere of faith is required to create a place “where God can move” (Marx, 2008: 20). Alice explained to me the importance of creating a certain kind of atmosphere; *“[It] does seem to produce more healing where if there’s more people who believe, or are expectant, God is able to move more, and disbelief, or – what’s another word for that? Where people just sort of, very sarcastic about the whole thing - that actually almost prevents God from moving”* (Alice, interview).

To perceive the space as sacred requires one to be in a position of faith; expecting God to intervene since “the force that moves and reintegrates humans and communities is perceived to be entirely outside human control. It purifies, inspires and ‘welds’ emotions. Faith, on the part of leaders and participants, is necessary [...] to obtain this mystic sensitivity” (Mol, 1976: 47). The sacred place, “to any outside eye or ear remains wholly ordinary” (Smith, 1987: 104) whether being outside means being outside of the physical area which has been ‘set apart’ for the purpose of hosting the presence of the Holy Spirit, or outside of the state of mind, belief system or position of faith held by those who expect the Holy Spirit to respond to them. In many ways the two are linked; the place is experienced as sacred by those who inhabit it by virtue of having a perception of it which proceeds from a collective shared belief. The sacred is determined to be imbued with that power which causes the circulating, contagious emotional energies felt by all within its’ boundaries. Symbolic expressions of the sacred, spiritual activities happening for Healing on the Streets in that area are designed to represent the beliefs about and meaning of what is imperceptible to those outside of this context. Healing on the Streets perceives the non-Christian world as relying on physical and rationally-derived signs, so they use sensory symbols designed to draw attention to what they are doing, in order that a non-Christian understanding may grow into a Christian faith within that person.

Audible clues are a particularly important way of representing the spiritual change, which to those outside of the sacred place would be otherwise imperceptible. Healing on the Streets uses music to draw attention to the place as one which is sacred. Since music can “symbolise an entrance into the felt presence of God [...], congregations use their sounds, particularly music, to facilitate the creation of their ritual field” (Albrecht, 1999: 143). Using music to

define the place where the sacred dwells is a method comparable to the ringing of church bells to summon the faithful. It is notable that “church bells were popularly regarded as having the power to banish evil spirits and subdue storms, but they also served to define the sacred audibly” (Hamilton & Spicer, 2005: 8).

Healing on the Streets also uses a variety of visual symbolism to catch the eye of outsiders and to represent themselves to those who do not immediately recognise the presence of the sacred. For example, the location of the healing was to some extent determined by the proximity of local church buildings; recognisably Christian sacred spaces, the congregations of which many group members identify themselves as belonging to.

In central Birmingham and Kings Heath for example, the team always set up alongside, or in front of, the ‘St. Martins’ and ‘New Life Baptist’ churches respectively. The only reason this model is not followed in Moseley is that the corresponding church in that area, ‘Riverside Church’, does not have a building; they hold services at the local ‘Queensbridge School’ instead. While they have an administrative building called ‘Riverside House’, its location was considered too remote to be of use as a site for Healing on the Streets, since the training manual states “try to position yourself where you will get the most amount of human traffic” (Marx, 2008: 21). Making use of a church to indicate a sacred space makes sense since “both a church’s external appearance, and its place in the landscape, often helped distinguish it from the surrounding buildings and pointed to its status as a sacred site” (Hamilton & Spicer, 2005: 6); any activities within or around the church are recognisably concerned with sacred or religious matters. The way in which the churches are used is as a support. During Healing

on the Streets, the chairs are placed against the walls of the church building; a metaphor for being able to 'lean on' the church.

### **'The Church' as a Sacred Place**

When we talk about a 'church', we mean one of two things; firstly, a sacred building or 'place' where Christians may go to worship; secondly, a united community of Christians. Durkheim's definition of a church is anchored in the latter, characterising it as "a society whose members are united because they share a common conception of the sacred world and its relation to the profane world, and who translate this common conception into identical practices" (Durkheim [1912] 2001: 43). Douglas Davies claims that "sacred places can be constituted not simply by awesome natural sites, or by ancient revelation, but also by a group of people. [...Within] Charismatic Christianity the sacredness [is] felt to derive from the experience of believers worshipping together" (Davies, 1994: 6). In Davies' view, the simple fact that Healing on the Streets are brought together by means of a common goal is enough to give the places where they meet its sacred character. Indeed, when they speak of the importance of churches having a "*life*" (Ruth, interview), they are not speaking of the buildings themselves, but the people who worship together inside them.

The team strongly believe that "'God can be worshipped anywhere' and that 'the Christian life should not be confined to the walls of a church sanctuary'. Nevertheless, [... they recognise] the importance of some fixed place [and time] to gather and to worship" (Albrecht, 1999: 128). Not only do they use the church as a symbolic expression of their activities, but it has a more practical purpose, since the manual states that a regular time and place to perform Healing on the Streets is vital to "build relationships and to be

increasingly effective” (Marx, 2008: 24). It is in this sense that the physical places of worship matter very little in terms of inviting the sacred; the only thing that is needed to make a place sacred is a collection of faithful Christians. It is thought that “only in their togetherness can Christians remain alight with the fire of the Spirit” (Taylor, 1972: 133). It is the church, in their shared experiences of the world that defines their shared understanding of where the sacred dwells in relation to the profane; how the boundary should be negotiated and for what ends.

Christian groups rely upon and commit to one another, creating a united force against what they see as a world full of pain and suffering. Scott explained that in terms of Christian activity, *“what influences you is mixing with other Christians, and finding out what they do and how they do it”* (Scott, interview). The churches of which the Healing on the Streets identify as members place much emphasis on the importance of working together. Indeed, “the theme of intimacy is vivid both in the notion of a personal relationship with the deity and in the emphasis placed on a sense of community in Charismatic groups” (Csordas, 1994: 18). When I asked the group about their motivations for continuing with Healing on the Streets, many members highlighted the importance of their commitment to the other people involved, as well as their commitment to God. Fred told me that one reason he continues to go is because he had volunteered to transport the hefty load of chairs, flags and boxes in his car, and that *“I don’t know whether I would go every time if that wasn’t the case. I hope I would, but I’m not sure I would”* (Fred, interview). There is a sense of being ‘in it together’, especially in the case of healing, since “Healing services often engender a sense of emotional support and mutual encouragement, aiming more at some form of deeper integration of individuals than at dramatic healings” (Davies, 2002: 92). The Holy Spirit lives

inside each Christian and the more Christians there are in one place, Alice told me, the stronger the presence of the Holy Spirit seemed to her to be; *“perhaps because there are more people praying at one time”* (Alice, observation).

The Healing on the Streets manual asks the reader to “note that when you gather close to pray, people will slow down and may stick their head in to see what’s going on! A crowd gathers a crowd!” (Marx, 2008: 23). The group are bound together in the emotional experience of the sacred; the physical manifestations of which may interest an outsider, may make them curious enough to want to interact and perhaps to take part themselves.

### **Creating a “zone of God’s presence”**

It is a sunny Saturday morning; at 11am the ‘Healing on the Streets’ team have just finished setting-up for their ministry on Kings Heath High Street. The group of nine people drape the blue lanyards, used to identify members of the group, around their necks and arrange themselves in a circle; convening on the newly laid paving slabs outside New Life Baptist Church. Alice speaks first; *“Alright everyone, nice to see you all. If we could just go around the circle and say some quick prayers?”* (Alice, observation). Standing together the group begin to pray. Individuals speak their prayers freely, for the most part waiting until others have finished speaking to begin their own. Some people do not speak at all, and some follow other people’s prayers by whispering *‘thank you Jesus’* or *‘praise God’* under their breath. When there is a lull, William takes his chance to speak to the team. He tells them, *“God’s just shown me a vision of us as an Oasis in this hot weather and I heard him say to me ‘life-giving water’, so I hope that we can be the life-giving water for the people here on this very hot, very dry day”* (William, observation). Sounds of agreement sweep over him; people nod their

heads and smile softly in William's direction. The prayers continue briefly until Alice lifts her head and says to the others, *"Okay, shall we kneel?"* (Alice, observation). There are murmurs of approval from the circle as people grab foam kneeling pads and reconvene the circle at the same spot, this time on their knees. Everyone in the circle bows their head and closes their eyes; some kneel upright with their backs straight whilst leaning back on their feet, others fold themselves forward over the ground with their palms pressed flat against it, their forehead mere inches from the ground. Peter speaks first; with his hands pressed firmly against the stone slabs he says *"we claim this little patch of the High Street for the Holy Spirit today, so that we may show God's love to whoever comes along"* (Peter, observation). Along with the presence of the Holy Spirit, the group ask for the protection of all who enter that place from the influence of evil Spirits and for the banishment or redemption of 'The Enemy'. As they are praying, Carol asks God for *"protection from dark forces"* and that *"angels might be sent to protect us today"* (Carol, observation). The mood is solemn. People speak slowly but decisively; measuring each word as it is spoken. When the circle becomes silent, people begin to open their eyes, lift their heads and get back to their feet; there is no formal ending to the prayer. Carol fishes out one of the huge stacks of leaflets from one of the many boxes they have brought, and shares them out between the group; ready to begin handing them out to passers-by.

The Healing on the Streets training manual states that before any leaflets are given out or healing performed, the group must pray and "invite the Holy Spirit to come. The presence of the Holy Spirit is vital to this ministry. Don't get up until you sense his presence" (Marx, 2008: 23). It is interesting to note that although sacredness "cannot be constructed [entirely] through ritual [...since it] must depend upon an unmerited grace" (Chidester & Linenthal,

1995: 11) there was never a time during my observation that the presence of the Spirit was considered absent or thought to have declined their invitations.

The “*powerful thing about Christianity*” Ruth said, “*is that God left his Holy Spirit in the world [...] and God’s spirit’s still at work*” (Ruth, interview). As discussed in the last chapter however, according to Healing on the Streets as well as the majority of mainstream Christianity, the world is sick. The Holy Spirit is substantively ‘there’ and does work in the world, but often it takes human intervention; for someone or some group to invite God to transform a particular area. “*Sometimes he does work without any human intervention*” Ruth told me, “*but largely he works through people [...]. He can, if he wants, just Divinely intervene, but very often he wants there to be a channel*” (Ruth, interview).

Healing on the Streets’ sacred places can be understood as ‘situational’ in the sense that the process of inviting the sacred consists of praying, not only that individuals are “*filled with the Holy Spirit*” (Carol, observation) but also that the area itself is “*claim[ed] for the Holy Spirit*” (Peter, observation). The members have no sacred powers of their own to express in ritual, nor do they perform ritual as a response to some prior divine intervention. Beginning in the profane world and from the collection of their profane bodies, they ask that they, the place and all who enter it, be transformed and made sacred by the presence of the Holy Spirit. That particular spot on the High Street then “becomes a temporary ‘container’ of sorts for the sacred, for the human to engage in the sacred [...] It sets a boundary between ritual life and daily life [...]. Wherever and whenever the congregations gather [...] the space-time dimension becomes sacred to them; the whole sanctuary becomes a sacred centre” (Albrecht, 1999: 134). At that place, at that time, it is possible to encounter the sacred.

The fact that this process of ‘making sacred’ occurs at the weekend is significant, since “work is the pre-eminent form of profane activity: its only apparent aim is to meet the secular necessities of life; it connects us exclusively with ordinary things” (Durkheim, 2001 [1912]: 228). The sacred must be kept apart from the profane in order to retain its power, so the sacredness of the weekend is contrasted with the profanity of the ‘working week’. Durkheim said that the “ritual cessation of work, then, is merely a particular case of the general incompatibility that separates the sacred from the profane” (Durkheim, 2001 [1912]: 228).

The sacred place discerned by Healing on the Streets then, is seen to have protective qualities since it sets itself apart from, and cannot be touched by, the everyday world of the profane or the malevolent form of the sacred. The intention in sacralising the space is to “bring the Kingdom of Heaven to people” (Fred, interview) and to create, for just a short while, a place where there is no sickness; in other words, to create “heaven on earth” (Alice, observation) where people may be restored in “spirit, soul and body” (Marx, 2008: 13). The Healing on the Streets training manual states that “we pray from the place of rest” (Marx, 2008: 2), which polarises the sacred-directed activity of Healing on the Streets’ prayer with the hustle and bustle of the busy High Street. The notion of sacred space as a restful safe-haven parallels with the idea of churches being ‘sanctuaries’; places where people can feel safe and in the process, feel free to be themselves. Peter explained that:

*“when you sit in the chair, and people kneel around you to pray and so on, it’s as if – and this is how people have described it, it’s as if they’re cocooned against the outside world. They – they say they become totally oblivious to what actually is happening,*

*people passing by or anything, and – there's a real sense of an, experience that they've never felt before" (Peter, interview).*

The sacred space shields its inhabitants from the profane concerns of the outside world; it places them in continuity with those who share the transformed place with them and encourages the shared expression of emotions. This is in congruence with Durkheim, who tells us that "within a crowd moved by a common passion, we become susceptible to feelings and actions of which we are incapable on our own. And when the crowd is dissolved, when we can find ourselves alone again and fall back to our usual level, we can then measure how far we were raised above ourselves" (Durkheim, 2001 [1912]: 157). All of the people in the place are temporarily 'raised above' the profane world by the collective experience of the Holy Spirit. Since "the sacred is the site of the emotional" (Meštrović, 1997: 106), those who have come for healing often exhibit what the Healing on the Streets manual refers to as "Signs of his presence [...] trembling, fluttering eyelids, shaking, heat, tears, sheen to the face, laughter [or a] deep sense of peace" (Marx, 2008: 11). These experiences are collective, in that they are shared with those performing the healing, by virtue of their contagious nature. Peter explained this phenomenon by saying that *"sometimes, I can feel real heat. Okay? And I don't say anything, but the other person can say 'oh! That really felt hot'" (Peter, interview)* and Scott explained that *"It can affect you emotionally. You do have to get emotionally involved, which is a bit scary" (Scott, interview).* Equally, William told me that *"it gets a bit addictive [...] once you see a few people really get affected by it, it really starts to get to you" (William, interview).*

These powerful, contagious emotions are constitutive of the human reaction to being in the presence of God, since “how can one ‘feel’ a ‘presence’ without perceiving anything? By its emotional effects, evidently” (Beardsworth, 1977: 116). Several of the members of Healing on the Streets told me in interview that, to their knowledge there was not one single person who came for healing who didn’t feel something when they sat down on those chairs. Peter said that *“we have found that every person, without fail, I think – who’s sat down on a chair, has felt – touched. They might not say by God, but they’ve actually felt a real peace come over them”* (Peter, interview). Everyone feels something out of the ordinary, whether that be a positive sense of comfort, removal of pain or peace, or something more ambiguous such as feeling *“strange”* (Alice, interview). Alice told me that:

*“when we pray for God’s presence, which is what we do at the beginning, it is about a place where God’s presence is, there is freedom, and actually, any fear or anxiety or anything else, if people can walk in to a, in to almost like a ‘zone’ of God’s presence, that sounds a bit weird but, it releases them to be able to if they want to come, to come”* (Alice, interview).

The importance of emotion as a characteristic of the present sacred, to an extent protects the subject from claims that their experience was not a religious one, since “if religious experience is rooted in feeling or emotion as somehow unstructured by language, then the subject’s account, once articulated, can be scrutinized only by those who have themselves undergone such experiences” (Cooey, 1994: 47). The fact that many of the members of Healing on the Streets and the people who they want to be healed share the same

experiences or emotions, lends credibility to their claims that they arose from being under the same influence of a common space 'filled' by the Holy Spirit.

There is also a sense to which, for Healing on the Streets, the sacred place becomes located in time whereby "the eschatological event symbolises God's reign and divine presence and thus shapes their whole sense of time, sacred or secular" (Albrecht, 1999: 126). Not only does the promise of salvation affect the perception of time, but the place can, in the minds of individuals, become representative of a wholly different time and context at the same time as being anchored in the temporal immediacy of the Healing on the Streets activities.

The healing activities on the High Street are temporally-located representations of the biblical healing work of Jesus and his disciples; to the extent that the group identify themselves as "*little Jesuses*" (Peter, interview). Jonathan Z. Smith describes this process as something which he calls "memorialization" (Smith, 1987: 117), whereby if an important sacred place is inaccessible, for example, Israel during the time of Jesus' healing ministry, then the individual gains access to it in another way; "through narrative, through an orderly progression through the Christian year [...and] by encountering the loci of appropriate scripture" (Smith, 1987: 117). This is why, when performing healing, the person is asked to "fix [... their] eyes on Jesus" (Hebrews 12:2) and to "never take [... their] eyes off Jesus" (Marx, 2008: 16) when praying for the sick.

In order to understand this standpoint, it is important to note that "the word 'Spirit', whether it be the Hebrew *ruach* or the Greek *pneuma* or the Latin *spiritus*, originally meant a movement of air, wind or breath" (Ramsey, 1973: 2). Healing on the Streets believe that the Holy Spirit is healing 'through' them as they use their spoken "authoritative prayer" (Marx,

2008: 16) to command sickness from the body. The Holy Spirit is the 'breath' which expresses 'The Word' of God, and as such, it reflects the speech and activity which Jesus and his disciples would have utilised during his healing ministry as recorded in the New Testament.

**Summary:**

Healing on the Streets use the High Street as a location, in which to confront what they see as a world full of sickness and disorder. They choose the areas used for the healing in order to maximise the amount of people that they can come into contact with. They then transform the places, both symbolically and spiritually; functionally and substantively, through prayer which invites the Holy Spirit to the place, and through a setup which attracts non-Christians to be a part of God's work of healing ministry.

## **CHRISTIAN HEALING AND THE SACRED & PROFANE DICHOTOMY WITHIN THE INDIVIDUAL**

Just as there are boundaries which characterise human life on a social level, boundaries also exert a decisive presence within the composite individual. The boundary between the sacred and profane can be observed inside of us and, just like the dichotomy in other contexts it is established and manipulated by the external influence of others. How members of the Healing on the Streets team perceive this boundary, how they seek to affect it within the individuals who come to them to receive healing, and how they feel it is affected amongst those who perform the healing, will be the subject of this section.

### **“He hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted” (Luke 4: 18)**

One Saturday morning in Moseley village, a middle aged woman accepts a leaflet from Laura; one of the members of Healing on the Streets. The woman slows her pace to read it and then doubles back. Half serious and half in jest, she asks Laura *“Do you think that you could heal me?”* Laura smiles widely; *“We don’t do anything, but God can do everything! Please come and take a seat and you’ll see”* (Laura, observation), enthuses Laura as she gestures to Susan to join her. Laura and Susan both accompany the woman to one of the wooden folding chairs set up alongside the outward-facing wall of Boots chemist. The woman sits on the chair and Laura and Susan kneel on the ground either side of her; foam pads beneath them to protect their knees. Laura looks up into the woman’s eyes and asks her *“what’s your name?”*; *“It’s Stacey”*; *“Okay Stacey, what would you like us to pray for today?”* (Laura, observation). Stacey explains that she needs surgery on her heart, recounting her experience in detail as Laura and Susan listen sympathetically. When she has finished explaining her illness, Susan asks Stacey, *“do you mind if we place our hands on*

you?" (Susan, observation). *"That's fine"*, Stacey says with a little nod. Laura and Susan each take one of Stacey's hands in to theirs, both placing their free hand on the top of her back. Stacey leans forward and closes her eyes as Susan begins to speak to her heart. *"Heart; be restored. In the name of Jesus Christ, the blockages shall be cleared completely. We ask that Stacey's heart be completely healed in your name, Lord."* (Susan, observation). Stacey's face becomes suffused with emotion; as Laura and Susan command that the illness leave her, tears begin to roll down Stacey's cheeks. After a few minutes, the prayer changes slightly. *"We pray that Stacey will know how much you love her, Lord, and how important she is to you"* says Laura, *"Stacey, God cares about you immensely and wants you to be happy; he so wants you to be well"* (Laura, observation). Susan gives Stacey a tissue which Stacey holds over her face for the remainder of the prayers; only when the women have stopped speaking does Stacey lift her head. *"Are you alright? How do you feel? Any better?"* (Laura, observation) Laura says, still holding Stacey's hand in hers. *"Yes yes. I'm fine, thank you, sorry, there's no way to know if it's better yet"* Stacey replies, suddenly overtaken with embarrassment to have shed tears in public; quickly rubbing them away with the already sodden tissue. Susan reaches beneath the chair and produces a white envelope with the letter 'M' for 'Moseley' written on the front. Susan smiles as she hands the envelope to Stacey and tells her, *"This is just to explain what we did here today and gives you a little bit more information. Don't come off any of your medication, see your doctor and please come back and see us; either for more prayer or to let us know how you're getting on"*. Stacey slowly rises to her feet and, gathering up her heavy bags of shopping, she thanks Susan and Laura. Stacey lifts her head and presents the two women with a cheerful grin, *"Let's hope it worked, eh?"* before resuming her journey up the High Street.

## **Christian & Non-Christian forms of Contemporary Embodiment**

Christian churches have a long established interest in caring for the embodied person, originating with the healing ministry of Jesus and his disciples; this tradition has carried forward in varying forms to the present day. A commonplace view within contemporary Evangelical Christian culture, which includes Healing on the Streets, is that “the streets are full of broken, hurting people” (Marx, 2008: 2) and that *“there’s a sickness in the world”* (Alice, interview) which Christians in particular feel the need to confront. Alice said that as a Christian committed to healing, *“when you do it, you begin to see how awful, people’s lives are and, and, recognising that you can bring some hope”* (Alice, interview). I asked Ruth what kept her motivated to continue with Healing on the Streets, and she responded *“I see that when we pray for people they are visibly changed [...] and yet there are lots of people walking up and down the High Street with tremendous problems; social, emotional, physical, and they don’t know how to pray because they don’t know God in the same way that I’m privileged to”* (Ruth, interview).

It is thought that “modernity has brought with it differentiation, complexity and a consequent breakdown of traditional order, including the elevation of the individual and the dissolution of community” (Guest, 2007: 3). The non-Christian individual, it is said, “wants to be a world in himself; he intends to interpret the information delivered to him by himself and for himself” (Augé, 1995: 37) and has dispensed with the idea of God; a way of life to which Evangelicals react by pitting “communalism [...] against individualism, [and whereby] the embrace of strict moral codes [is] defined in contrast to moral libertarianism” (Guest, 2007: 7). They argue that “in modern Western societies the forces of rational individualism

have aggravated anomie” (Mol, 1976: 50) and that the resulting morally permissive society is broken, fractured and marked by suffering and loneliness. Since no culture is formed in a vacuum, it is important to note that Christian healing owes as much to modernity as it does to rationalism. Characterising ‘Christian culture’ as one separated from the influence of secular culture would be a mistake, but it is important to discuss the differing behavioural trends of those who identify as ‘Christian’ and those who do not.

In most, if not all cultures, a ‘healthy’ person is perceived as one who is ‘whole’; a person whose constituent parts are united and work in harmony with one another. Ill health then, is understood in terms of having ‘something missing’; some privation which effects “people’s knowledge of themselves, others and the world around them [... which are all] shaped by their senses” (Mellor & Shilling, 1997: 5). John Turner tells us that:

“the words ‘Health’ and ‘Whole’ and ‘Holy’ and ‘Hale’ all come from the root word ‘Hal’ which is an old English word meaning ‘complete’. To heal is to make whole, to make complete. A ‘Healthy’ person is one whose body, mind and spirit function harmoniously together, who is in a right relationship with God and with others. Where this is not so, literally there is *Dis-ease*” (Turner, 1978:9).

Alice articulated this point by saying that “*we talk about our different body bits; we talk about sort of, soul and spirit and physical, but actually we’re all intertwined, and everything I am affects everything else I am*” (Alice, interview). Healing on the Streets perceive the human person to be what is commonly referred to as “tripartite” (Hejzlar, 2010: 189) by virtue of its biblically determined trio of constituent parts; “Spirit, Soul and Body” (1 Thessalonians 5:23), rather than the narrow dualism of Body and Mind represented in

secular culture and its' healthcare institutions. Ruth highlighted this popular view by claiming that *"nowadays people think that we have a body and a mind, but they forget about the spirit"* (Ruth, observation). The body is that by which human beings become individualised and represents the person in space; matter is constituted in such a way as to differentiate human beings from one another as well as from the world around them. As a result of the increasingly pervasive sense of individualism in modern society, people are more concerned about their bodies and how they find themselves represented than ever before, since the impetus is on the individual to 'live up' to expectations:

"Devoid now of religious meaning or of the capacity for any fluidity into the divine, shorn of any expectation of new life beyond the grave, it has shrunk to the limits of individual fleshiness; hence our only hope seems to reside in keeping it alive, youthful, consuming, sexually active, and jogging on (literally), for as long as possible"

(Coakley, 1997: 4).

Meštrović notes that modern society is that which raises the status of rational 'mind' over passionate 'heart' (Meštrović, 1991: 14) and that as a result, this "emphasis on rationality and the regulation of passions [...is] expressed in a persistent anxiety about the fleshy body, and the uncontrollable reappearance of passions in the form of modern anomie" (Mellor & Shilling, 1997: 134). It is not the case that the rational mind is seen with disdain within Christian communities, but rather it is understood that cognition should occur from a standpoint of faith. Evangelist Billy Graham, at whose crusade Alice was baptised in the spirit (Alice, interview), claims that "sin effects the mind, whether that mind is of superior intelligence or average. A person may be intellectually brilliant but spiritually ignorant [...].

An intellectual mind can be turned in to a first-class mind when Christ penetrates the heart” (Graham, 1977: 67).

In rationally-driven, secular, social environments, ‘irrational’, negative or extreme emotions and anxieties are not permitted free expression and so become channelled internally, causing a plethora of problems for the individual and their relationship with themselves. Susie Orbach describes the beginnings of this process through the description of a patient suffering with Anorexia Nervosa, whose problems originated in the sense that “uncomfortable feelings were to be hidden. They were *felt* to be obscene, vulgar and overwhelming” (Orbach, 1985: 134). People want to regulate their bodies and their emotions, since “any loss of control over our bodies is socially embarrassing, implying a loss of control over ourselves” (Turner, 1997: 19). As I observed when speaking to the members of the Healing on the Streets group, Christians often encourage the expression, and in the process shedding, of potentially damaging emotions; the most frequently cited of which was ‘unforgiveness’. Alice told me that:

*“if you persist – in say, a particular sin, so like [Peter] mentioned unforgiveness – that can, and I’ve seen it in counselling, people become very bitter, very hard, and – for some reason, I think – you have a disorder in you spiritually or emotionally, it actually affects your body”* (Alice, interview).

Similarly, Ruth told me that she felt that *“If we follow God’s laws then there’ll be a lot of ill health that we’ll avoid. If you get bitter about things that can have internal effects, can’t it? [...] And I think there are other illnesses that are emotionally based and yet if we were following God’s way, we’d be living in peace”* (Ruth, interview).

For those within Healing on the Streets, becoming a Christian remedied a lot of potentially painful features of contemporary lifestyle that they considered problematic before entering the Christian community. During his interview, Scott told me that:

*“At one time all I wanted, all I had in my mind – I’ll get a car; I’ll save up for a car and a house, and then everything will be fantastic. There’ll be no problems; so I get those, and uh, I think, hang on a minute, I’ve got those, what’s next? That is not what it’s all about. It’s nice to have these things; it gets you established, it’s good. But, y’know, there’s more”* (Scott, interview).

Testimony of this kind was not unusual within Healing on the Streets; many people told similar stories of disenchantment with their previous non-Christian lifestyle, and conversion was often seen “in strong contrast with the ‘tortured’ past, full of doubts, conflicts, and confusion, ‘the tasteless, colourless world of those who don’t know’” (Mol, 1976: 51).

For a group like Healing on the Streets, the body valued above the spirit represents “the metaphor of fallen man and the irrational rejection of God” (Turner, 1997: 21). The body is “the ultimate idolatry, which must be regulated by religious practices [and] by the medical regimen” (Turner, 1997: 38) and the absence of the spiritual is thought to be a loss which at best leaves human beings lacking wholeness, and at the worst, leaves them completely “empty” (Carol, observation). Carl Jung thought that “there is a purposeful centre of reality with which man needs to be in conscious contact for his full health. Man is seldom in sound physical and mental health unless he can find some way to relate to this centre of being whom he calls God” (Maddocks, 1990: 5). Similarly, Arnold Stocker claims that “Because man

has closed his eyes to the world of the spirit, he has become incomprehensible to himself. He no longer understands himself and he lives in confusion” (Tournier, 1965: 36).

While Healing on the Streets claim to heal ailments affecting all dimensions of the human person (appendix: leaflets), it soon became clear that absence of, or fault within the spiritual faculty was perceived with the most urgency. Christian evangelist Fred F. Bosworth argues that body, soul and spirit are not considered to have equal importance or value to Christians. His son, Robert V. Bosworth explains how, to his father, “the saving of souls was paramount, and every other consideration, including the healing of the body, was secondary” (Bosworth, 2008 [1924]: 9). In interview Alice expressed her feelings that while the physical and mental dimensions of health were important, the ‘real’ healing happens when a person becomes ‘aware of who they are’ and reconnects with their missing spiritual faculties:

*“at the end of the day, the real healing is when people find faith, and become aware of who they are and how much God loves them, and, to me that’s – that’s real healing, not – physical is fine, but it’s about their walk with God, which is the most important thing” – (Alice, interview).*

The spiritual element of man, say Healing on the Streets, is neglected by many in contemporary society; it is only fully recognised and its’ full potential realised when a person becomes a Christian. Fred explained that God “*desires men to have fellowship with him, into eternity. It’s what he made us for, and originally he had fellowship with Adam and Eve in the garden. So, becoming a Christian is in one sense a restoration to God’s original intention for man*” (Fred, interview). While conversion is experienced in many different ways, it is common for charismatic Christians to “say that religious experience allows them to discover

their 'real self' [rather] than to claim that they have been given a 'new self'. Identity is expressed as a sense of coming to know 'who I am in Christ'" (Csordas, 1994: 18). For instance, becoming a Christian, for William was a decisive act which elicited "*becoming almost who I believe God designed me to be, actually, that's probably the best way of putting it – is that, not that I'm trying to be somebody different I'm just trying to become a better version of who I'm – I was originally intended to be*" (William, interview).

Those who privilege body and mind over the spirit will not only be deviating from their created purpose in the eyes of Healing on the Streets, but a lack of spiritual connection with the divine means that death really will be the end; there is no salvation for those who do not accept God in to their lives. I asked Fred what his most positive experience has been whilst performing Healing on the Streets, and he told me that "*the most positive result is that two or three people have been saved. Now I think that is more important than people who are healed; but it is lovely when they're healed*" (Fred, interview).

A Charismatic Evangelical reaction to all of this suffering in the world, perceived to be a result of the absence of God in people's lives, is "to make a positive contribution to the regeneration of society as a whole" (Lanternari, 1963: 315) through action which solicits the Holy Spirit's involvement in the world. The Healing on the Streets training manual explicitly states that "our goal is to create [...] stepping stones where people can find Jesus and get healed along the way" (Marx, 2008: 23), highlighting the fact that 'getting healed' is considered a secondary occurrence, experienced only after having 'found Jesus'. It implies that there is "a relationship – namely a relationship with the divine – that must be in 'right order' before other forms of healing ordinarily can take place" (Poloma & Hoelter, 1998:

269). As a result of the perceived suffering in the material world separated from the Sacred, Healing on the Streets can be seen as an attempt to re-introduce the divine other into the world. A successful healing can, among other things, be seen as a re-assertion of God's power over the physical and the rational mind when it is inclined away from the realm of the sacred.

### **Human Spirit and Holy Spirit as the Sacred within the Human Person**

For Evangelical Christians, not least Healing on the Streets "it is precisely in the Spirit that the Church experiences the presence of God" (Schweizer, 1960: 34). Those involved experience the Holy Spirit both externally and socially through God's presence in the world, and internally as individuals.

Ruth spoke of being a committed Christian, having a "*personal relationship with God* [whereby God's spirit is] *always there*" (Ruth, interview); this dimension of closeness with God, through the spirit, is what makes Christianity "*a living faith; a vital thing*" (Ruth, interview). I asked Scott at which point a person can claim to have the Holy Spirit inside of them and he responded, "*when you accept him into your life, he never goes away*" (Scott, observation); this makes the internal experience of the spirit possible only through faith. I asked whether non-Christians could ever have the Holy Spirit inside of them and Scott responded that since they do not "*know God*" (Scott, observation), the Holy Spirit cannot be with them until they "*open their hearts to God*" as Alice put it (Alice, observation). The Healing on the Streets training manual contains a bible verse which states that "if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you" (Romans 8:11),

implying that the Holy Spirit, when inside, has the salvific power to raise the human person above the level of mortality and to save him, in some sense, from the finality of death.

Becoming a Christian, Ruth said, *“means that you are making yourself open to God, to work in your life, or in your body; in your emotions and in your physical possibilities”* (Ruth, interview); faith is the first step to gaining and preserving any sort of relationship with God, represented individually by the bodily internalisation of the Holy Spirit. Since God created humanity, Ruth said, he wants to have a personal relationship with every person and God has *“put it in everybody’s heart to, cos’ he’s made them, to potentially, try and find him. But they [the person] have made the choice [...] to react to this feeling that’s in them”* (Ruth, interview). God has equipped all human persons with the faculty required to know God, and as the members of Healing on the Streets say to those for whom they pray, *“God loves you and longs to have a loving relationship with you”* (Follow-up letter, Appendix 7); but faith is required since God has also equipped humans with Free Will. As a result, the internalisation of the Holy Spirit is essentially a combination of the person choosing to recognise and acknowledge God, and God’s grace.

Within the individual “the ‘willing spirit’ [...] is contrasted with the ‘weak flesh’ [...]. It implies that the opposite of (sinful) flesh is not some better part of man’s nature, but is the effect of God’s will [...]. What is meant by ‘spirit’ is the Spirit of God which is temporarily imparted to a man and fights against human weakness” (Schweizer, 1960: 24-25). What we have in terms of an embodied Christian spirit therefore, is the internalised presence of God which need not and may not necessarily exist within the human person. While Durkheim was not a Christian theologian, he gives a description of spirit which closely describes this phenomenon.

Durkheim stated that “although often closely bound to a particular object [...] and residing there by preference, [the spirit] can readily take its leave and lead an independent existence in space. It also has a more extensive sphere of action. It can act on all individuals who approach it or whom it approaches” (Durkheim, [1912] 2001: 203). The naturally occurring spiritual faculty in human persons therefore, is the *capacity* and the *potential* to know God through having his Holy Spirit dwell inside of them.

The individually internalised Holy Spirit, for those involved in Healing on the Streets, represents the sacred dimension of the Christian body, since “the Spirit, who is infinite reality, forms the link between God and finite beings [...] the heavenly Spirit is the intimacy of God with the earth, the hand of God touching this world” (Durrwell, 1986: 21). The Holy Spirit is indwelling within the profane physical aspects of the person, but it is entirely separate from it; the Holy Spirit lives “intertwined” (Marx, 2008: 13) with the Spirit of the person which is where “the HOLY SPIRIT comes to live when we become Christians” (Marx, 2008: 13). This means that the Holy Spirit has a certain influence which it *can* exert while working with and through the body and the soul, but it is not a faculty which ‘belongs’ to the person within whom it dwells. The human Spirit is therefore only sacred as long as it is a *place* which contains the Holy Spirit, or inasmuch as it represents the potentiality for transcendence. The sacred Holy Spirit begins where the profane physical body ends; literally so, when we consider that it is the Holy Spirit which gives “life to your mortal bodies” (Romans 8:11), ensures membership of the Kingdom of Heaven and ensures a spiritual life after the death of the mortal, profane body, since “no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit” (John 3:5).

Not only is the Holy Spirit differentiated from the profane observed in the biblical adherence of Healing on the Streets, but it also has the character of the sacred observable through the deeply emotional experience of its presence. The collective emotional experience of the Holy Spirit is that which brings the members of Healing on the Streets into communion not just with the Sacred, but with each other and those people that they seek to heal; it draws people from the profane space to the sacred space through the contagious energies which it produces from those who come in to contact with it. It remedies the problems of contemporary society by invoking emotional reactions which might otherwise be kept hidden and cause harmful effects. It combats the strain caused by individualism since “the Spirit builds community and creates fellowship by freeing people from seeing themselves as the centre and measure of all things” (Schweizer, 1978: 125) as well as binding that community in a common moral code since knowing God “leads [...] to respect for the dignity of all created things, in which God is present through his Spirit” (Moltmann, 1992: 10). God is seen as all-loving and inspires togetherness through loving acts, in contrast to those forces which promote sickness and division.

### **Sickness as the influence of the Malevolent Sacred.**

For Healing on the Streets, the perceptible sacred does not end with the goodness of the Holy Spirit or “*angels*” (Carol, observation), but extends to the negative form of the sacred that it opposes; that of “*evil spirits*” (Alice, observation) and “*The Enemy*” (Carol, interview).

Morton T. Kelsey has noted that the belief in a realm of spiritual beings “has been rejected almost universally in modern times. [...] The] idea of active and effective spiritual entities is regarded as absurd” (Kelsey, 1978: 51). For Healing on the Streets however, there exists a

spiritual dimension to the world which comprises beings that are either on the side of God or that of 'The Enemy', both of which seek to inhabit the human spirit. These beings differ in their motivations; as "the Holy Spirit works to constitute each thing in its own normative integrity within the broader harmony of relations, the demonic strives towards maximising inauthenticity and estrangement in the world" (Yong, 2000: 130). The Holy Spirit promotes the coming together of people and the integration of all into society, since "God delights in family, in friendships, and in relationships in homes, in churches and in society. [... God] is community and wills community" (Pinnock, 1994: 41). The Demonic, on the other hand, promotes chaos, prideful individualism and division in the world; making human individuals believe that they are the be-all and end-all of life. It is for this reason that the actions of Healing on the Streets are spiritual warfare, as they seek to defeat the loneliness and isolation caused by the "father of lies" (Rhoads, 1994: 7) through the collective, joyful expression of the "Spirit of Truth" (John 14).

Durkheim explained that "all religious life gravitates around two opposite poles, which share the opposition between pure and impure, holy and sacrilegious, divine and diabolical" (Durkheim, [1912] 2001: 305). Robert Hertz termed this ambiguity of the sacred the 'pure' and 'impure' to explain that "the religiously inauspicious and impure are seen very much as a part of the sacred, not the profane. Satan is an impure, not a profane being; a corpse, blood, etc. are sacred things, though impure" (Parkin, 1996: 27). 'Pure' religious beings are seen as "benevolent, guardians of the physical and moral order, dispensers of life, health, and all the qualities that men value, [... whilst it is] negative and impure powers that produce disorder [and] cause death and illnesses" (Durkheim [1912] 2001: 304).

The ambiguous nature of the sacred is clearly observable within the spiritual beliefs of Healing on the Streets, since Amos Yong tells us that “the demonic [can be seen] as a contrast symbol to that of the Holy Spirit” (Yong, 2000: 131). Just as the Holy Spirit becomes housed inside a human person, exerts its influence and performs certain actions through that person for or as God, so too do evil spirits or demons working for or as The Enemy. Alice told me that *“we pray for every sickness, but there’s very few occasions where we’d suddenly feel that maybe, this is something extra that has come from some evil spiritual influence”* (Alice, interview).

Much like the sacred and the profane, the two aspects of the sacred cannot blend with or ‘touch’ one another, and as a result there are clear attempts from both sides to claim the spiritual part of the human person for the side of light or that of darkness. In interview, Carol elaborated on her belief in *“dark forces”* (Carol, observation) which compound the problem of worldly sickness, by explaining that *“there’s no sickness in heaven. And I think there is plenty of evidence that there is an opposite force to God, if you can call Devil, Satan, The Enemy, and that sickness is part of his kingdom, cos’ Jesus talked about the kingdom of light and the kingdom of darkness”* (Carol, interview). The Holy Spirit and his light healing ministry is dichotomised with the other pole of the sacred; the dark sickness brought upon humanity by The Enemy.

The origins of the negative sacred’s worldly influence can be seen biblically in Genesis 3, in the account of ‘the fall of man’ caused by the original sin of the first humans. The Enemy, in the guise of a serpent, tricks Adam and Eve into betraying God and this results in their

banishment from the Garden of Eden; "And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3: 22-3). Alice explained that:

*"in the garden of Eden there wouldn't have been any sickness or anything, and it was out of their fall, and in a sense, they – handed over authority to the enemy – the snake – by – in a sense, doing what he said. So the world itself came under the enemy's authority rather than man's authority. So, The Enemy is about evil and darkness and everything else. The whole world has become sick, not just people" (Alice, interview).*

As a result of man's original transgression of God's laws then, Alice believes that the world has been made sick through its early alliance with The Enemy, who is as much responsible for sickness and dis-ease as Jesus is for health and healing. She espouses the belief that sickness was introduced to humanity through sin, and that sickness impresses itself more strongly the more a person continues to sin, since "demonic strongholds are established via human agency and intensify with our persistent rebellion against God" (Yong, 2000: 131).

Another example of this view was expressed by Ruth who told me that *"I think there are some things though, where because of our own selfishness we cause it [sickness] ourselves, don't we? Look at smoking. We don't have to smoke. People do. And they become ill, so you can't really blame God for that"* (Ruth, Interview). Through smoking people disrespect their body which God entrusted to them and expected them to care for as a 'Temple of the Holy Spirit' (1 Corinthians 6:19) as well as potentially endangering the bodies of others through passive smoking.

Unrepentant sinners distance themselves from God, making the possibility of sickness much greater and the more vulnerable they make themselves to The Enemy and the sickness

which is his domain. Third-wave Charismatic John Wimber for instance, claims that “there are many reasons why people are not healed when prayed for. Most of the reasons involve some form of sin and unbelief” (Wimber & Springer, 1986: 164). Wimber claimed that “Jesus’ ministry reveals sickness as intrinsically demonic, and that God’s will is to liberate from it. Failure to receive healing is thus largely attributable to human causes” (Turner, 1996: 332). God wants people to be healed, and “longs to have a loving relationship” (Appendix: follow-up letter) with each of them but God’s intervention requires the faith of those whom he is to help.

There is however a problem in rigidly dichotomising the wellness-giving of the Holy Spirit with the sickness-giving of The Enemy, as there were some members of Healing on the Streets who characterised sickness as a potentially positive experience and even one which can be God inspired! Fred told me during interview that, *“I believe God can and does send sickness sometimes, as a warning to people”* (Fred, interview). Just as God sometimes sends sickness he thought that *“healing can also be done through evil”* (Fred, observation). After an encounter during Healing on the Streets with a woman from a local Spiritualist church who also claimed to perform healing, he told me that the spiritualists labour under *“deceptions”* (Fred, observation). Fred subscribes to the view that “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit’ is committed [...] by those who, when Jesus casts out devils, mistake the power of God for the apparently similar power of the devil” (Schweizer, 1960: 25).

That the power of the Holy Spirit and the power of The Enemy are seen to produce some of the same results demonstrates that the two forms of the sacred, the ‘pure’ and ‘impure’ are, so to speak, two sides of the same coin. According to Francis MacNutt, the idea that God

sends sickness “completely undercuts the idea of divine healing” (MacNutt, 1999: 33) since the biblical Jesus always identifies sickness “as a manifestation of the kingdom of Satan which he has come to destroy” (MacNutt, 1999: 34). Emma did not share Fred’s view that God ever sent sickness into the world, but she suggested that *“getting sick isn’t always a bad thing; it builds up your immune system. It brings out the best in people sometimes, when there’s ailments – look at how much charitable stuff people do for cancer, to raise money and awareness; it can bring out the best in people”* (Emma, interview). Emma sees sickness primarily as a negative with the potential, through human action, to bring positive results. Sickness is seen as a negative obstacle to be overcome, so too the primary cause of sickness; healing through the Holy Spirit is an assertion of the power of good over the power of evil. The human person, disregarding the spiritual dimension which could be a conquest of either darkness or light, is that profane thing which is to be transformed by the sacred, either in the negative or the positive sense. In the case of ridding a person of a demonic or spiritual ‘possession’ of a negative sort, healing is no longer seen as the ‘sacralisation’ of the profane by the introduction of the Holy Spirit, but the driving-out of evil spirits; the deliverance of the person from the malevolent sacred through the power of the benevolent sacred.

### **Healing with the Spirit – The Sacralisation of the Human Person**

There are many different aspects to Healing on the Streets, but the vital precursor to the Healing is the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, as “the promise that God will put his Spirit upon his Servant is seen to be fulfilled [...] in Jesus’ work of healing” (Schweizer, 1960: 26). The members of Healing on the Streets believe strongly that “In his Spirit God lives in the hearts of men and women, moving and inspiring them, calling them to action or granting

them peace and quietness” (Schweizer, 1978: 2). During our interview, Ruth explained that when there is healing, *“God’s healing through me. No, I’ve got no ability”* (Ruth, interview). The presence of the Holy Spirit is felt or seen where it has been prayed for; notably within the people doing the healing, in those people receiving healing and in the temporarily sacralised space. Healing on the Streets teach that there are many signs that the Holy Spirit is at work; usually signs of emotion or sensation such as “vibrations or feelings of ‘electricity’ in their bodies [...] this occurs especially with healing or being healed (Beardsworth, 1977: 113) and “feelings of ‘warmth’ were common” (Beardsworth, 1977: 113). Ruth told me that:

*“Most people who ask for prayer will [...] sometimes say ‘oh, I feel so peaceful. I feel quite rested’. Some have a sense of warmth, some will just find that tears are coming, y’know? Not sobbing, but just, and – there’s this sense of ‘I feel better for having that. It’s done me good’ [...] I’ve seen that more than just a straightforward physical healing. From what I’ve seen the physical healings start at that point”* (Ruth, interview).

Healing on the Streets perform the healing with their ‘hands-on’ the person in the chair, so I asked Alice how important the laying on of hands is for her. She explained that it is a misconception that Christian healers think that they have some sort of “powers” (Alice, observation), but rather it is the Holy Spirit working through them. The healer acts as the “vessel” (Alice, observation) within which the spirit resides by God’s grace, granted as a result of their faith, and is then administered to the sick. She expressed it as a “flow” (Alice, observation) of power from the healer to the person in the chair, although admitted *“I still don’t know how it works exactly, but he uses us”* (Alice, observation).

Ruth thought that the hands-on aspect was more metaphorical; *“God is at work in that person’s life. But that person is human, and as a human, it can be helpful to have something tangible. I don’t think there’s any need to lay hands on the person, it’s just that in the bible they often did that [...] and I think it speaks to them of God touching them”* (Ruth, interview).

Ruth speaks of the laying on of hands as more of a symbolic expression, because while “the laying on of hands is clearly a symbol of the prayer which calls down God’s blessing; at the same time, it symbolises the blessing which comes down from God upon the person”

(Sullivan, 1994: 43). Morris Maddocks claims that the laying on of hands finds its

significance, not just theologically or historically but also psychologically. He explains that

the experience of touch is one which humans associate with comfort, since “love is

expressed by touch in so many ways. The mother’s first instinct is to hug her child and so

heal the trauma undergone in the birth” (Maddocks, 1990: 122). This maternal comfort is

expressed further by the fact that the Holy Spirit is often seen as the feminine dimension of

the Holy Trinity; that it is the “feminine and fluid intimacy of the Spirit [... which appeals]

from the heart to the heart” (Martin, 2002: 103-4).

The Laying on of Hands, in the context of Healing on the Streets, can be seen as a symbolic

transgression of individual boundaries and of socially constructed norms. Contemporary,

individualistic societies are built “on the notion of ‘privacy,’ and on the injunction ‘don’t

touch’ [...] Laying on of hands is thus an instance in which the relative values of sociocentric

and egocentric self are problematized” (Csordas, 1994: 55). By consenting to the laying on of

hands, the person in the chair implicitly enters into an arrangement which subverts the

individualistic, ‘go-it-alone’ way of life and they are introduced to a more continuous,

collective experience of the world. This focus on bringing the egoistic individual to an

integration of self into the collective, reflects Durkheim's view of the human individual as a Homo Duplex; "leading a double and conjoint life: at the 'individual' or 'profane' level, and at the 'collective' (social) or 'sacred' one" (Fenton, 1984: 204). Integrating the individual into the community and encouraging a step away from egoistic individualism, is a vital method by which Healing on the Streets attempts to represent the sacred.

Introducing the individual into the Christian community is the ideal outcome for Healing on the Streets, since they want as many people as possible to find a relationship with God. Alice told me that *"we've had some people who've really encountered God sitting on those chairs, and actually said I want to give my life to God then, there and then"* (Alice, interview).

Somehow the vastness of the change from profane absence of spirit to the sacred 'filled with spirit' is the *most* sacred time; the overcoming of mundane physical reality only to find it replaced with something transcendent, distant; something other-than. It is "the conversion experience [... which] is looked upon as sacred [...]. The process of change itself is sacralized rather than the goal to which change leads" (Mol, 1976: 53), since it is the moment when the person internally encounters the Holy Spirit for the first time.

### **Summary:**

Healing on the Streets set themselves in opposition to what they see as a world marred by the influence of the malevolent sacred. One of the ways in which the malevolent sacred affects the world is by distancing people from God, leading them to disregard the spiritual and to attach excessive value to matters of the profane. It does this by making the individual feel isolated and alone, unable to reach out to others and understand themselves as living with and for only themselves. The ambiguous, two-fold nature of the sacred means that the

deeds of the malevolent sacred can be seen in stark contrast with the emotionally joyful, open and collective expressions which the Holy Spirit brings forth. Through the small glimmers of hope and faith demonstrated by those who come for healing, Healing on the Streets appeal to the Holy Spirit to fill their spiritual void and become part of that person's life. As a result, they expect to see healing as a result of the restoration of the wholeness intended for the human person by the creator God, as well as being assured of that person's salvation through their inauguration into the Kingdom of God.

## **CONCLUSION**

Over the course of this piece I have tried to show that Durkheim's sacred & profane dichotomy, while unrealistic in part, still has some applicability to the religious activities of the charismatic evangelical Christians at the centre of my study. As I stated at the outset, the dichotomy should not be discarded and considered completely irrelevant simply because it cannot meet Durkheim's claims that it is a universal. I have shown during this work, by studying what happens at the boundary between the sacred and profane, that the dichotomy still finds expression in the modern world, despite the fact that there are no effective means of measuring just how widespread or common these expressions are.

Critics such as Anthony Giddens claim that the dichotomy is a useless framework for analysis, since "more often than not what Durkheim distinguished as the sacred and the profane intermingle in everyday conduct" (Giddens, 1978: 102). During the course of my research I have not however found this to be the case; on the contrary, the dichotomy, as manifest in the activities of Healing on the Streets, is anything but weak.

The places where the Holy Spirit is said to dwell are those considered to be sacred. A pre-determined system of prayer and activity was designed, and is regularly performed in order to define and preserve an area *for* the sacred to inhabit if it so chooses by the grace of God. Be they areas of land or a location within the embodied individual, by attempting to keep them somehow differentiated by requesting that they be distanced from the profane and the malevolent sacred, Healing on the Streets are knocking on heaven's door and awaiting an answer. The prayers do not guarantee anything; Healing on the Streets are not *making* the places sacred on their own as Durkheim's functionalism suggested, but they prepare the

spaces and *request* the presence of the sacred; they *claim* the place, reserve it and *ask* that it be filled. There is an expectancy that God will respond to the prayers of the group and turn up on request, but this is not taken for granted. Healing on the Streets request and celebrate the Holy Spirit's sacred expression in the world; its presence transforms places from something ordinary and makes them in to something extraordinary; it makes people do and feel things that they never would have done had they not fallen under its influence. Its contagious, socially binding nature invokes an environment whereby the faithful believers; the individuals who fall under its' influence, "feel themselves to be part of the larger truth of the timeless and potent community, which stands above the individual's limitations and morality, self-interest and personal weakness" (Thompson, 1998: 104).

All of the members of the group emphasised how the Healing performed on the Streets was not them; that the work done each Saturday was the work of the Holy Spirit, not of the people who gathered to pray. The prevalence of this view demonstrates how the group, while experiencing the Holy Spirit so closely and intimately, still characterise it as above all else, something totally 'other' than themselves. The presence of the Holy Spirit on the high street sends a message of dissent; of breaking cultural norms, signalling its presence and asking to be noticed; transgressing established, individualistic social boundaries. Only then can the full force of sacred power be recognised by insiders and outsiders alike for what it really is; other, in every way.

## APPENDIX

### Appendix 1: Information Sheet

#### Information about the Research Study:

**Researcher:** Erica Bromage  
**Contact Phone Number:** [REDACTED]  
**Contact Email Address:** [REDACTED]  
**Supervisor:** Professor Martin Stringer  
**Contact Email Address:** m.d.stringer@bham.ac.uk



UNIVERSITY OF  
BIRMINGHAM

#### Title of project:

Evangelical Christian Healing.

You have been invited to take part in research being performed at the University of Birmingham. Before you decide whether or not you would like to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what the process will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. If you have any questions, my contact details are listed above.

**Purpose of the Study:** The aim of my study is to explore the identity of Christian groups as expressed through contemporary Evangelical healing within a secular context. The study will involve participant observation over a number of weeks (I will be watching and listening while healing is being practiced) and I would very much like to interview any willing participants in more depth.

**“Do I have to take part?”** No, it is entirely up to you. If you do decide that you would like to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep for your own reference and you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part and consent to being studied you are still free to withdraw from the project at any time and you do not have to disclose any reasons for your choice.

**Confidentiality and Anonymity:** All information that is collected about each individual will be kept strictly confidential and I will try to make it anonymous (no real names), although there is a chance you may be recognisable through characteristics. The data generated in the course of the research will be securely stored for up to a period of ten years after the completion of the research project.

**What will happen to the results of the study?:** I am performing this research as a registered student at the University of Birmingham in order to fulfil the requirements of a postgraduate degree; more specifically, an MPhil(b) in Religion and Culture. Therefore, the results of the study will form the basis for my thesis. If you would like to read the finished thesis, contact me; I will make it available.

**Who has reviewed the study?:** It is a requirement of the University of Birmingham that all potential research be given the all-clear by the Arts and Social Sciences Ethical Review Committee before getting started. My research has been approved by them and by my supervisor within the department of Philosophy, Theology and Religious Studies; Professor Martin Stringer.

**Can I have Feedback?:** Of course! I will make access to the completed thesis available to all participants, as well as a shorter, executive summary of the results determined in the research.

**What to do if you have any further questions:** If you have any questions at all relating to the study, if you would like things clarifying in any way, if you would like to withdraw or if you would like another copy of this information sheet or the consent form do not hesitate to contact me through my email address or my contact phone number if you would prefer.

**Thank you** so much for taking the time to read this information sheet. I hope it was illuminating and answered all of the questions you have about the research project; if you have any questions at all for me, do not hesitate to contact me.

**Signed:**

A black rectangular box redacting the signature of the researcher.

**Date:** March 2010.

## Appendix 2: Consent Form

### Consent Form

**Title of Project:** Evangelical Christian Healing

**Researcher:** Erica Bromage

**Contact Phone Number:** 07857 021 458

**Please Initial Box:**

1 I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet about the above study and had the opportunity to ask questions.

☐

2 I understand that my participation in the project is voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw at any time without any given reason.

☐

3 I agree to take part in the above study

☐

**Please Tick Box:**

**Yes**

**No**

4 I agree to any formal interview I choose to do during the course of the study being audio recorded.

☐☐

5 I agree to the use of my anonymised quotations to be used in the publication of the research.

☐☐

6 I agree for any data gathered in this study to be stored (after it has been anonymised) and may be used for future research.

☐☐

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

**Appendix 3: Comprehensive list of the dates and locations of participant-observation:**

**Week 1.** Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2010 – Moseley

**Week 2.** Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2010 – Kings Heath

**Week 3.** Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> May – 2010 – Moseley

**Week 4.** Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> June 2010 – St Martins

**Week 5.** Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> June 2010 – Kings Heath

**Week 6.** Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> June 2010 – Moseley

**Week 7.** Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2010 – St Martins (Training)

**Week 8.** Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2010 – Kings Heath & Moseley (Moseley Festival)

**Week 9.** Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> July 2010 – Moseley

**Week 10.** Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> August 2010 – St Martins

#### **Appendix 4: Comprehensive list of semi-structured interviews with participants:**

*Please note:* Names have been changed in order to protect the anonymity of the participants and their ages appear as the bracketed numbers after the participant's pseudonym.

1. Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> June 2010 – Alice (58) and Peter (61)  
Time and Place: 13.00 at Riverside House.  
Length of Interview: 1hr 13mins.
2. Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2010 – William (28)  
Time and Place: 14.00 at Riverside House.  
Length of Interview: 1hr 13mins.
3. Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2010 – Fred (78)  
Time and Place: 10.00 at his home in Moseley.  
Length of Interview: 1hr 19mins.
4. Friday 9<sup>th</sup> July 2010 – Scott (61)  
Time and Place: 12.00 at New Life Baptist Church.  
Length of Interview: 1hr 16mins
5. Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2010 – Ruth (65)  
Time and Place: 13.30 at her home in Kings Heath.  
Length of Interview: 1hr 9mins
6. Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2010 – Emma (34)  
Time and Place: 14.00 at 'Eat' in Birmingham Town Centre.  
Length of interview: 33mins
7. Wednesday 21<sup>st</sup> July 2010 – Carol (63)  
Time and Place: 10.30 at MAC in Cannon Hill Park.  
Length of Interview: 1hr 23mins

## **Appendix 5: Semi-Structured Interview Questions**

### **Background Questions:**

- ➔ What is your name, age and where in Birmingham do you live?
- ➔ How long have you lived in Birmingham? What does Birmingham mean to you?
- ➔ What do you do/have you done as a job?
- ➔ Could you tell me something about your background as a Christian?
- ➔ Which church do you go to?
- ➔ What made you want to take part in 'Healing on the Streets' originally?
- ➔ Which of the three Healing on the Streets sessions each month do you take part in?
- ➔ Now you have taken part for a while, what are your motivations in continuing to be a part of 'Healing on the Streets'?

### **Sickness and Healing:**

- ➔ Do you think that healing through prayer is the best way to cure a sickness?
- ➔ Do you see healing through prayer as an alternative to medical treatment?
- ➔ What do you consider to be the origin of sickness? Why do you think people get sick?
- ➔ Does sin have any connection with sickness? On the part of the individual or society?
- ➔ What is happening when you take a part in 'healing' someone?


### **The Healing on the Streets on the inside looking out:**

- ➔ Are public reactions to the healing activity usually positive, negative or apathetic?
- ➔ What, in your experience, has been the most positive thing to have come out of Healing on the Streets?
- ➔ Do you ever receive criticism from the public during 'Healing on the Streets'?
- ➔ Have you ever seen a 'miraculous' healing? What did it look like? How did you feel?
- ➔ Do you think that non-Christians are receptive to the idea of healing through prayer?


## Appendix 6: Leaflets

### Appendix 6a: Leaflets handed out at Healing on the Streets in Kings Heath:

# Prayer for Healing



New Life Baptist Church



RIVERSIDE CHURCH

# Need Healing?

We believe God heals today and so we'd love to pray for you.

Do you suffer from Back Pain, Arthritis, MS, Addiction, Cancer, Ulcers, Depression, Allergies, Migraines, Asthma, Paralysis, Crippling Disease, Phobias or any other sickness, illness or injury?

We are Christians from Riverside Church and New Life Baptist Church. We believe that God heals today and that prayer is a vital part of the healing process. So we'd love to pray for you.

If you'd like prayer please come & sit down. It won't cost a thing - just a moment of your time.


**Prayer for Healing** Kings Heath High Street 2<sup>nd</sup> Sat 10:30am-1pm  
Moseley Farmers' Market 4<sup>th</sup> Sat each month 11:00am-1:30pm

<b>Riverside Sunday Services</b> at Queensbridge School Sunday 9:30am, 11:15am 442 4484 <a href="http://www.riverside-church.org.uk">www.riverside-church.org.uk</a>	<b>New Life Baptist Church</b> 80 High Street, Kings Heath Sunday 10:30am; Thursday 7:15pm 444 1230 <a href="http://www.newlifebaptistchurch.org.uk">www.newlifebaptistchurch.org.uk</a>
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New Life Baptist Church is a member of The Baptist Union of Great Britain and the Evangelical Alliance

### Appendix 6b: Leaflets handed out at Healing on the Streets in Moseley:

# Prayer for Healing



RIVERSIDE CHURCH

# Need Healing?

We believe God heals today and so we'd love to pray for you.

Do you suffer from Back Pain, Arthritis, MS, Addiction, Cancer, Ulcers, Depression, Allergies, Migraines, Asthma, Paralysis, Crippling Disease, Phobias or any other sickness, illness or injury?

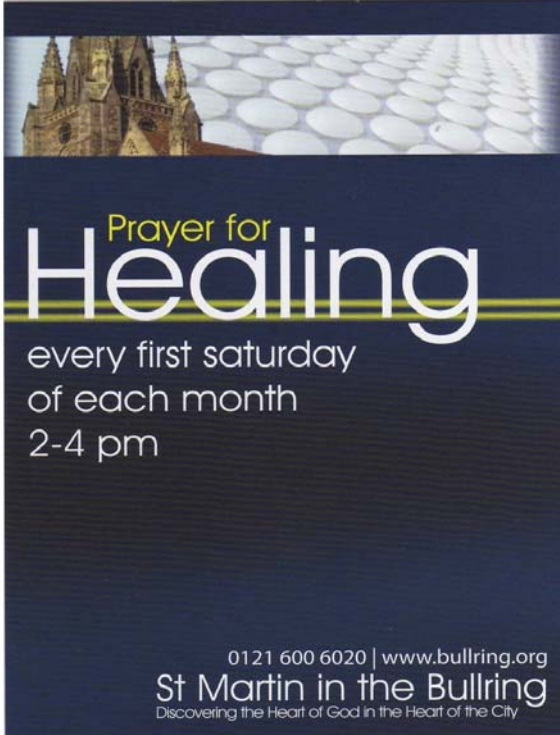
We are Christians from Riverside Church. We believe that God heals today and that prayer is a vital part of the healing process. So we'd love to pray for you.

If you'd like prayer please come & sit down.

**Sunday Services** (Queensbridge School) @ 9:30am, 11:15am  
**Prayer for Healing** opp. Somerfield, Kings Heath 2<sup>nd</sup> Sat and Moseley Farmers' Market 4<sup>th</sup> Sat each month 10:30-1:00pm  
Riverside House, 21 Alcester Road, Moseley, B'ham B13 8AR  
T: 0121 442 4484 [www.riverside-church.org.uk](http://www.riverside-church.org.uk)

Riverside is a Charity No 1059487, a Company limited by guarantee No 4479264 and members of the Evangelical Alliance

**Appendix 6c: Leaflets handed out at Healing on the Streets in the Bullring**



The leaflet features a dark blue background. At the top, there is a horizontal strip with a photograph of a Gothic church on the left and a pattern of white, oval-shaped stones on the right. Below this, the text 'Prayer for Healing' is written in a large, white, serif font, with 'Prayer for' in a smaller, yellow, sans-serif font above 'Healing'. Underneath, in a white, sans-serif font, it says 'every first saturday of each month' and '2-4 pm'. At the bottom, in a small white font, is the contact information '0121 600 6020 | www.bullring.org' and the church name 'St Martin in the Bullring' with the tagline 'Discovering the Heart of God in the Heart of the City'.

Prayer for  
**Healing**  
every first saturday  
of each month  
2-4 pm

0121 600 6020 | www.bullring.org  
**St Martin in the Bullring**  
Discovering the Heart of God in the Heart of the City



The leaflet has a dark blue background. The title 'Need Prayer for Healing?' is in a large, white, serif font. Below it, in a yellow, sans-serif font, is the text 'We believe God heals today and so we'd love to pray for you.' A paragraph in white, sans-serif font follows: 'We are Christians from St Martin in the Bull Ring. Together with other Christians from local churches we believe God loves you and wants to make you whole and bring healing in body, mind and soul. We would love to pray for you in Jesus' name.' Another yellow, sans-serif line reads: 'If you'd like prayer please come & take a seat. It won't cost a thing - just a moment of your time.' Below this, two columns of text are separated by a vertical line. The left column, titled 'Sunday Services' in yellow, lists '9.30am - Holy Communion', '11am - The Crossing', and '6pm - Evening Service'. The right column, titled 'Other Services' in yellow, lists 'Tuesdays - 12.30pm', 'Thursdays - 12.30pm', and 'Saturdays - 2pm'. At the bottom, in a small white font, is 'Registered Charity no. 1127338' followed by the contact information '0121 600 6020 | www.bullring.org' and the church name 'St Martin in the Bullring' with the tagline 'Discovering the Heart of God in the Heart of the City'.

**Need Prayer  
for Healing?**  
We believe God heals today  
and so we'd love to pray for you.

We are Christians from St Martin in the Bull Ring. Together with other Christians from local churches we believe God loves you and wants to make you whole and bring healing in body, mind and soul. We would love to pray for you in Jesus' name.

If you'd like prayer please come & take a seat.  
It won't cost a thing - just a moment of your time.

Sunday Services	Other Services
9.30am - Holy Communion	Tuesdays - 12.30pm
11am - The Crossing	Thursdays - 12.30pm
6pm - Evening Service	Saturdays - 2pm

Registered Charity no. 1127338 0121 600 6020 | www.bullring.org  
**St Martin in the Bullring**  
Discovering the Heart of God in the Heart of the City

## **Appendix 7: Follow-Up Letter**

19 May, 2008

**Riverside Church**



Dear Friend,

Thank you for allowing us, the team from Riverside Church to pray for you today, and to demonstrate that God loves you and longs to have a loving relationship with you. We have written this letter to help you.

### **If you were healed**

If you have been healed since we prayed, then we want to thank God because He is the one who has the power to do this, not us.

There are a number of things we would advise you to do now.

- *If you are on medication STAY on it. Under NO circumstances should you stop doing anything a medical professional or counsellor has advised. We are not medically trained so please verify what has happened through them, and then TAKE THEIR advice. If you have been healed, their verification is a great acknowledgement to others of what God has done.*
- *If you are in a church already, please go and tell the leaders of the church what you believe God has done.*
- *Tell people what God has done, and bring any friends or family along with you again. We will happily pray for them too, no matter what their condition or sickness.*
- *Please let us know if you have been healed as this would encourage us.*

### **If you were not aware of any change in your condition**

Sometimes it is clear you have not been healed. If this is your situation, don't worry... God loves you! Many people are not healed instantly, but recover over time; some people come back to us later to tell us they have been healed. We believe that God teaches us to pray for healing, but we also accept that not everyone is healed. However, God always hears our prayers and responds in some way that brings blessing. If you have not yet been healed:

- *Keep seeking after God; and if you know how to, pray.*
- *If there is some improvement, but not a total improvement, we would love to pray for you AGAIN, you can come as many times as you like. We won't give up if you don't.*
- *Whatever the situation we want to bless you through prayer.*

We believe that healing is a gift from God's grace; it is not earned in any way; and a lack of apparent healing is not due to anything we have or have not done.

We believe God often uses our medical system and treatments to bring healing – they are a great blessing in this country – but sometimes he goes beyond that and heals directly.

TEL  
0121 442 4484  
FAX  
0121 442 4481  
EMAIL  
info@riverside-church.org.uk

WEBSITE  
www.riverside-church.org.uk  
ADDRESS  
Riverside House  
21 Alcester Road Moseley  
Birmingham B13 8AR

### Why did we do this?

We prayed for you today, because we believe God loves you, and wants to bless you.

### How do I find out more about God?

Our hope is that after this encounter with us and God, you learn and discover more of His great love for you. We have enclosed a booklet called "Why Jesus?" as a small gift, to help you on your journey of discovery. Being a Christian is about having a loving relationship with God. There are a number of practical ways you can begin to do this:

- **Read a Bible:** Translations we would recommend are "Today's NIV" or "The Message", as they are easier to read. Start with the New Testament, which will tell you about how Jesus heals people.
- **Pray:** Prayer is talking with God. If you have come to a place where you would like to know God better, there is a prayer on page 18 of the booklet "Why Jesus?" that will help you on your way of coming into relationship with God.
- **Talk to Christians:** Come back and ask us any questions you have, join a church or start talking to some Christian friends you have.

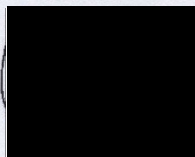
### Who are Riverside Church?

We are a group of ordinary people, who have discovered God's amazing love for us.

We meet together each Sunday to worship God and we live our lives seeking to follow Jesus.

For more information about us see our website [www.riverside-church.org.uk](http://www.riverside-church.org.uk) or visit us on Sunday (details of when and where are on our website and outlined below.)

Thank you and God bless you.



Andy Mackie  
Leader of Riverside Church

### Riverside Sunday Morning Services

at Queensbridge School, Queensbridge Road, Moseley, Birmingham, B13 8QB

**9:30am** – 10:45am (with children's groups for 0-14's)

**11:15am** – 12:30pm (without children's groups)

Or contact us for churches in your area.

Riverside Church is a member of  
the Evangelical Alliance.  
A company limited by guarantee  
Company No. 4479264  
Charity No. 1099487

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