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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

**STILL TRANSFORMATIONS: MEDIATING PRESENCE IN CATHOLIC
CHARISMATIC HUMANITARIAN MISSION**

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
Requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Anthropology

by

Nofit Itzhak

Committee in charge:

Professor Thomas Csordas, chair
Professor Fonna Forman
Professor Jonathan Friedman
Professor Marcel Hénaff
Professor Janis Jenkins
Professor Joel Robbins

2016

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This dissertation of Nofit Itzhak is approved, and it is acceptable
in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically:

Chair

University of California, San Diego

2016

DEDICATION

For my father, and for Joëlle

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Still Transformations: Mediating Presence in a Catholic

Charismatic Humanitarian Mission

by

Nofit Itzhak

Doctor of Philosophy in Anthropology

University of California, San Diego, 2016

Professor Thomas Csordas, Chair

This dissertation is an ethnography of the Emmanuel community, a transnational Catholic Charismatic intentional community and its two affiliated humanitarian NGOs in France and Rwanda. It investigates how love, empathy and other moral sentiments are implicated in processes of self and social transformation, and the manners in which Emmanuel's relational ethos, or ethic of love, comes into expression in 1) quotidian life, 2) devotional and ritual practice, and 3) humanitarian outreach. In these settings I show how religious and cultural difference against the background of distinct histories of conflict, violence and complex postcolonial realities

shape sociality.

I argue that for Emmanuel, humanitarian mission and community life are sites dedicated to the dialogical transformation of the self, an effort centered on the intentional establishment of controlled social friction and the creation of opportunities for empathy; and further, that these processes are anchored in the disruption, decentering and reorientation of the self in relation to the divine and to social others. This explicit identification of the locus of self-transformation in the social, and Emmanuel's orientation to change more broadly, are achieved and shaped by the mediation or insertion of the divine into human sociality. This mediation seeks to establish, and is based in the experience of the divine as not only transcendent to the world but as also powerfully immanent in it. Making these arguments, the dissertation intervenes in key debates in the contemporary anthropology of Christianity, the anthropological critique of humanitarianism, and anthropological debates on empathy, intersubjectivity, and self-transformation.

INTRODUCTION

Or, do you see that we do Good?

My last day in Paray-le-Monial also marked an end of sorts to my fieldwork in France. My fourth visit to the Catholic pilgrimage site, it was nevertheless the first real pilgrimage I took, along with my fellow Rocher volunteers and staff, and several dozens inhabitants of the *cit * (the housing projects) where I resided for the past scholastic year as a volunteer for the Catholic NGO. The sixth and last day of our stay was particularly festive. All past volunteers were publicly acknowledged for their year-long contribution and the newly recruited volunteers for the coming year were to be “launched” at the end of the day in a celebration of a special mass dedicated to the organization.

As for me, the last day of the pilgrimage found me in a state of exhaustion. The year of work with the Rocher had already taken its toll and after about a week of living under field conditions in Paray, keeping a rushed schedule of 18 hours a day in a desperate attempt to attend all activities and please everyone who wanted to see me one last time before I left, I was more than ready to head back home. It was around noon that I ran into  lise, a good friend I had known for about two years and in whose home I resided for a short while while conducting fieldwork with the Catholic Charismatic Emmanuel community. An elegant woman in her late forties,  lise was raised a Protestant and converted to Catholicism as an adult in France before joining the community. I had always enjoyed our conversations and the time we passed

together, which was why, perhaps, when she asked me how I was doing and whether I have any reflections on the passing year, I had answered with candor.

I said I felt quite exhausted, that I missed my home, the peaceful quiet of my office, reading a book while sipping my cup of coffee, the small things that made one's daily routines. She inquired on my work with the Rocher, whether I was satisfied with my research and the time I passed in the *cit *. I explained that I was very pleased with my research, but that the work was nonetheless very taxing on a personal level, that while my fellow volunteers could take "time off" from *cit * life when participating in Catholic community life, and with other volunteers in the privacy of their homes, for me, life with the Rocher was like living in a double-*cit *, a strangeness within a strangeness. I tried to convey to her the anthropologist's position, one where strangeness inevitably presses on you steadily from day to day, explaining that the fact that I shared my home and all religious activities with the other French Catholic volunteers of the Rocher meant that I was replacing the strangeness of the *cit * with that of the Catholic world, that being at home or away from official work at the Rocher center also meant work for me, and likewise required much adaptation, attention, and that perhaps that lack of escape has now made me rather tired and homesick. I did not feel I was being negative in my assessment, merely truthful. Indeed I was trying to explain to her that this was somewhat normal for an anthropologist, almost a precondition of our work, and I did emphasize that I was not suffering or displeased with my situation, just ready to go back home to familiarity, to being with others in effortlessness.

Élise, however, clearly found what I told her disconcerting. I was surprised by the worry on her face, wondering if I had not explained myself clearly enough with my far from perfect French. As we spoke on it became clearer that she had indeed interpreted my words differently than I had intended. When trying to communicate to her that there was an inevitable cultural gap between me and my fellow volunteers at the Rocher, I was thinking about such things as our very different political views, the fact that most of the volunteers were much younger than me, and all those tiny or elusive differences that accumulate between people of very different cultural backgrounds. Élise, however, thought I was referring to religious differences, that the fact that I was Jewish and was living with Catholics, participating in mass, adoration and praise on a daily level was somehow bothering me and was at the root of my homesickness.

“But you see”, she said, “explaining this, this kind of interiority, a Catholic interiority, to an atheist Jew, it is just impossible.” I was often told by people that you cannot explain religious experience, that you must simply experience it, and no amount of talking about it would completely shed light on what really matters. I clarified that I had no difficulty accepting and partaking of the Catholic, the religious, that it was the cultural differences that were harder to constantly live with, thinking that she would be appeased. This only seemed to augment her anxiety, however. “Do you think we are closed, a group closed onto ourselves? That we erect walls around ourselves? That we are disconnected from society?” She seemed very disturbed by the possibility that I would view them as closed off to the world. I was wondering at this

point whether Élise's anxiety was due to her worry that I would in some way misrepresent the community in my writings, or that perhaps it was just very important for her that I understand the community as she does. When I assured her that I did not think the community was closed in on itself, she pushed further, "but do you see what we do, do you believe that we do good in the world?"

Do you see that we do good in the world? I could not ignore the anxiety with which this was asked. It was the crux of some matter, the question which, for Élise, at the conclusion of my field research, should be answerable in the affirmative. Do you *see* that we do good in the world? *Es que tu vois qu'on fait le bien?* That I would not or could not understand the particular "Catholic interiority", the particular mode of being in relation to the divine was less disconcerting to Élise than if I had acquired a distorted view of the way the community stood in relation to the world. And what I was hearing in Élise's anxious question, it was becoming clear to me, was not a request for an evaluation of the rightness of the community's project, but an attempt to assess whether I myself was able to discern its rightness for myself, to perceive it, as the truth which she herself saw it to be. Did I see, she asked me, at the end of my time with them, that the community was a collective effort dedicated to the collective Good?

I had floundered in my response to her. In the back of my mind were the months I had passed with the community as they battled ferociously against the legalization of same-sex marriage and adoption in France. Was that the face of the Good? I could not call it that, but for my interlocutors it certainly was. "I don't know,"

I told Élise. “How do you decide what is the good? I see you do some things in the world which I think are good, but others that I do not see as good. It is a question of perspective, certainly?” I knew it was not the answer she was hoping for, and yet I could not offer her anything else. And I knew, also, that there was yet more to her anxiety than merely the fear that I, the anthropologist, the atheist Jew (this, although I had always presented myself not as an atheist but as “sort of what you might probably call agnostic and not practicing of any religion”), would misunderstand, or misrepresent them. There was also a touch of self-doubt that tinged Élise’s anxiety. This self-doubt was not at all about whether the Good was actually the Good, however. Rather, it was more powerfully located in Élise’s other question to me, the seemingly less polemic of the two - do you think we are closed off to the world? For seeing and knowing the Good was not enough, if one could not bring one’s vision to life in the world. It was not enough that the community knew the good. It was important that they did the good, and that this was evident, that even I, the atheist Jew, could see it as such, could see it in the world.

In a sense, this question, anxiously presented to me by Élise that last time I saw her in Paray - but do you see that we do Good? - is at the core of this dissertation. The question also enfolds within it the two core themes that go throughout this text - change, and love. Change, because the project of bringing about the Good is one of world and self transformation. Love, because this was for my interlocutors a collective project, conceived of in thoroughly intersubjective terms, experienced and brought to life through the enactment of social relations.

Love was what first attracted me to the Emmanuel community and what consolidated my decision to carry out an ethnographic study of the community and its affiliated humanitarian NGOs. Perhaps since, as an Israeli Jew, I had very little contact with or knowledge of Christianity before arriving to UCSD, I found the Christian preoccupation with love both baffling and fascinating. To begin with, the fact that love, or Agape, was a central part of Christian theology, did not seem enough of an explanation to me in accounting for the way in which love seemed to now define so much of what it meant, for some people, to be Christian. “What’s with all the love, people?” was, then, my very first research question, and what, to a large degree motivated me in delving deeper into my subject matter.

The emphasis on love - the relatively new idea that “God is love”, that the relationship with Jesus as a close and caring figure was founded on love, or that learning how to love was one’s highest spiritual quest - intrigued me also since I could see that the preoccupation with love - and its host of kindred sentiments and concepts, compassion, empathy, altruism, and other such moral sentiments – was growing well beyond the Catholic or Christian world. The growing interest in what we might broadly call the pro-social was certainly evident in academia. Free market economy, competition and the selfish gene are out. Empathy, altruism, and cooperation are in, or rather, asking how and whether they are possible has become a major concern of scholars across the human sciences (Appiah 2008, Decety and Ickes 2011, Fehr et al. 2009, Hardt 2007, 2011, Nussbaum 2003, Post et al 2002, Preston and de Waal 2002). Within anthropology, a discipline which in recent decades has been especially

committed to the study of human suffering and histories of oppression, this trend is perhaps most evident in the recent renewed interest in the moral, and in such topics as empathy, intersubjectivity, gift economies and human sociality (e.g. Duranti 2010, Hollan and Throop 2008, 2011, Faubion 2011, Lambek 2010, Zigon 2008; See Robbins 2013 for a review of this), alongside a growing concern among biological anthropologists in understanding the crucial role that pro-social capacities such as empathy and cooperativeness played in the evolution of our species (De Waal 2009, Enfield & Levinson 2006, Hrdy 2006, 2011, Warneken & Tomasello 2006, West et al 2010).

Outside of academia, such initiatives as the “charter for compassion”, led by former Catholic nun and Ted prize winner, Karen Armstrong, or the recent National Geographic cover-story featuring research on the brain-level effects of compassion meditation in Tibetan monks, are only two examples highlighting the fact that questions about human sociality are now taking center stage worldwide. What these two examples also bring to the fore is the increasingly growing role that religion, and in particular world religions such as Christianity and Buddhism, are currently taking in promulgating these ethical ideals in the public sphere (see also Mendieta and VanAntwerpen 2011). It is within this broader context that this work is written, both in dialogue with it, and as an ethnographic observation of it.

The ethnographic focus of this study is the Emmanuel community, a Catholic Charismatic intentional community founded in France in the early 1970s, and its two affiliated humanitarian NGOs, Fidesco International and *Le Rocher Oasis des Cités*. I

followed Emmanuel and its two NGOs over a total duration of twenty two months, starting in the summer of 2010 and ending in the spring of 2014. Being a study of a transnational intentional community and one which follows the activities of its humanitarian aid organizations meant that fieldwork was multi-sited.

Thus, although I had spent considerable stretches of time in one place while serving myself as an NGO volunteer, in addition to time I spent as a volunteer for the Rocher in the south of France, and accompanying the work of Fidesco in Rwanda, I also followed the work of the community itself in two locations in France - one was Bordeaux, one of the community's most vibrant local communities and where I had the opportunity not only to conduct interviews with community members, but also to follow and participate in community life and activities and gain insight into the day to day life of community members by sharing their homes; a second was the pilgrimage site of Paray-le-Monial, the Emmanuel community's international gathering place, where I spent several months each summer, from 2010 to 2013.

Participant observation throughout fieldwork included day-to-day work alongside volunteers at the NGO centers, attending volunteer training sessions, participation in religious activities and worship as well as observation of daily and family life, as throughout my fieldwork I shared the homes of either fellow volunteers or community members. I also conducted close to 60 in-depth interviews, including the collection of life history narratives in some cases, with NGO volunteers, local partners and recipients of aid, and community members including priests, administrative personnel, and community leaders. Although the great majority of the

interviews were conducted in French, a few interviews were conducted in English, Hebrew, or Spanish, at the request of interviewees. All interviews were conducted, transcribed and translated by myself. This was supplemented by analysis of media materials and institutional documents produced by the community and its NGOs.

While ethnographers of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal have already identified the need for multi-sitedness in the study of the movement (Csordas 1997, Lado 2009), the decision to embark on an ethnographic study that was spread across two countries and a total of four locations was a product of the nature of the subject of study itself. I found early on that if I wished to understand how Emmanuel were seeking to live and enact their ethical project of love either as individuals or as a community, then I would have to attend to the various levels in which this happened, encompassing both community life and humanitarian outreach. I had originally planned to investigate the community's humanitarian outreach by focusing exclusively on Fidesco International's mission in Rwanda, supplementing this with participant observation in France and in particularly Paray-le-Monial. However, as fieldwork progressed and I had learned of the existence of Emmanuel's local NGO, *Le Rocher Oasis des Cités*, which operated throughout France in the *cités* (housing projects located in the outskirts of many French cities, home to many second and third generation Muslim immigrants from North Africa), my curiosity was piqued and I ended up extending my fieldwork in France, spending a scholastic year as a volunteer for the organization. The result is a an ethnography not just of a people, but of a movement, and one whose gravitational locus is not Rwanda, but France. Indeed, of

my fieldwork in Rwanda, I ended up incorporating into this dissertation only those parts which pertained to the humanitarian work of Fidesco vis-a-vis the experiences of the foreign volunteers, framing that account not as part of ethnography of Rwanda, but of Catholic humanitarian outreach.

A Jew in Paray

A small village in the Bourgogne, Paray-le-Monial is the site where in the 17th century Marguerite-Marie Alacoque, a cloistered Catholic nun, experienced repeated visions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. The village serves today as a pilgrimage site dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and attracts tens of thousands of pilgrims each year. The site was entrusted to the care of the Emmanuel community several years after its establishment, and has since been managed by the community, serving as the location for its summer and winter sessions (religious gatherings featuring intensive sessions of prayer, teaching and other activities), as well as the community's spiritual center, where members from across the country and abroad gather each year.

For many of my interlocutors, Paray was also the place where they first experienced their conversion, or the "outpouring the Holy Spirit" and had their first or first significant encounter with the Emmanuel community. My own first encounter with the community also happened in Paray-le-Monial and it, too, came to take the shape of a conversion narrative of sorts, although one lacking an actual conversion at the end of it. As I gradually came to tell it, and the manners in which I heard it recounted by others, my first encounter with Emmanuel became more than just a

recounting of events. It became a narrative, a story, in which the guiding hand of God was well evident. I recount this story here not simply to convey something about the community itself, but to also bring to light a few of the themes that shaped my particular positionality in the field as a Jewish and Israeli woman studying a community of charismatic Catholics. My entry story into the Emmanuel community is also my story of coming to know Jeanne, a member of the community who had subsequently become one of my closest friends and interlocutors throughout my fieldwork, and without whom my work with Emmanuel would probably have been unlikely to happen.

I arrived in Paray in the middle of July to participate in a “congress on Adoration” organized by Emmanuel in order to get a clearer sense as to whether fieldwork with the community would be feasible. Paray-le-Monial is not an easy place to travel to, and I had spent many hours making my way there on what was a very hot day. After finding the registration desk, I was assigned my lodging, given a badge, some information and a map of the village and started making my way to my room at one of the village schools. I met Jeanne at the reception desk when I came to check into my room. Barely speaking French at the time, I showed her my name badge and registration papers and smiled. Jeanne went over the list and confirmed that I was registered. We then spent a few seconds ascertaining that I did not speak French nor she English, but that we could both speak Spanish. I saw her hesitate then, as she looked at my name in the list, after giving me all the explanation needed about the lodging, and finally she said, “Itzhak. This is a Jewish name, isn’t it?” “Yes”, I

answered, “it is. I am Jewish, from Israel.” “Oh,” she said, “well, I am also Jewish.” Our interaction after that was brief. I had not made anything of her proclamation to me that she was also Jewish. Coming from a country where practically everyone I knew was Jewish, meeting another Jewish person somewhere was not a particularly exciting experience. It had not occurred to me at the time how odd it would be for a Jewish person to be running the reception desk at a Catholic pilgrimage site in the middle of France, nor how odd it would seem to someone to have an Israeli Jew attending a pilgrimage session there.

What I did not know at the time was that for Jeanne, who was a devout Catholic and a member of Emmanuel, the fact of her Jewishness (by descent, from her maternal great-grandmother) was a well-guarded family secret. Jeanne had kept that secret, entrusted to her by her mother when she had turned 18, kept it until that very year of my visit to France, when she was encouraged by a therapist to share it with her family and close friends. That on the same year as she was coming to terms with her own Jewish identity, a Jewish Israeli woman should cross her path in Paray-le-Monial, of all places, was very significant event, indeed.

I was oblivious to all this during my entire stay in Paray, but the encounter had marked Jeanne and she had taken it upon herself to become my guide during my stay, introducing me to people who would later become key interlocutors in the community, explaining and translating sessions, prayers and rites, and encouraging me to deepen my engagement with the community. Two years later she told me that on the day she met me she heard a voice instructing her to care for me, to look out for me. And she

did. We parted as friends, after exchanging information and promising to see each other again before I returned to the US. Jeanne had left me her Emmanuel song and prayer book, and I had gifted her a minuscule book of psalms I carried with me whenever traveling, an old family habit.

A month later I went to visit Jeanne and her family in Bordeaux, where I dined and lunched with different members of the community each day. People seemed very pleased with the idea of a Jewish anthropologist studying the Renewal in France, and Jeanne's enthusiastic endorsement of me had served to open many doors. On the last day of my visit to Bordeaux, Jeanne, her husband and two friends suggested to pray for me. This was ostensibly to demonstrate to me their particular way of praying, a communal and spontaneous prayer involving the laying of hands on the person for whom they prayed, ending with the reading of chance passages from the bible which were considered to be messages of divine origin.

The prayer was not just a demonstration of a ritual for the benefit of a curious anthropologist, however. In their prayer, my future friends had prayed for my safe return home, for the success of my thesis and the continuation of my research and my spiritual wellbeing. One message in particular spoke prophetically of the spreading of the word of God, and I had then the distinct sense that my hosts saw my choice to make the Emmanuel community the object of my study to be divinely inspired, not only insofar as I will be serving as a potential tool for evangelization through the production of literature on the movement, but in directing me personally towards a potential eventual conversion to Christianity.

I had learned much about the way my initial interaction with Jeanne impacted her, and subsequently, shaped my own entry into the community, only in hindsight. This was not only in hearing Jeanne, in later years, recounting our encounter to other members of the community as one of remarkable *hasard* or coincidence, which of course, would reveal itself to be no coincidence at all. It was also in hearing other members of the community recount that story that I came to more fully appreciate that my entry into the community had itself become a story testifying to the glory of God, a story of the community, circulated between members not only as a means of framing my work, but also becoming, for some, a part of their own, and the community's narrative.

More than that, I began to note as my fieldwork progressed, how my own recounting of the story changed and was reframed to fit the genre of what I later came to identify as the Catholic Charismatic conversion narrative, one in which a remarkable set of supposed coincidences come together to bring about a change which was always already waiting to happen, one which seemed to always continue and expand backwards along one's life history, incorporating more and more events that have built up to the moment of one's recognition, not of God's existence, but of God's presence. That moment in my story, as it was reimagined in Emmanuel terms, was my decision to make Emmanuel, but more importantly, the question of love, into my subject of study. This was, for some of my interlocutors, if not an actual acknowledgment of God, a rather close approximation of it. In the course of this reframing, elements of the story which could have otherwise been cast in rather

mundane terms attained a providential air, such as the fact that in spite of never having been interested in Christianity, I ended up working in an anthropology department alongside many anthropologists of Christianity and under the guidance of a dissertation advisor who had been studying the Charismatic Renewal in the United States for the past four decades.

My Jewishness was of particular import in all this. First, since it had actually impacted Jeanne's personal process of coming to terms, and later celebrating, her identity as a Jewish woman as well as a Catholic. But in the broader context of the community, the fact that a Jewish Israeli person was expressing such interest in Catholicism and in the Emmanuel community in particular was meaningful for many. Prior to my first visit to Paray, I was wondering whether the fact of my Jewishness would prove an impediment to fieldwork, would, in some way jeopardize trust. I was quickly disabused of that fear. On the contrary. It seemed that upon hearing I was an Israeli and Jewish, most people became instantly more friendly, more curious, even enthusiastic to be meeting an actual Jewish person from Israel, someone who lived where Jesus had lived, someone who belongs to the people to whom God chose to send his only son. "You see," many people would tell me, "the Jews are the roots of the tree, closer to God, while we the Christians are the branches. But without the roots and the trunk we would cease to exist. The Jews are our elder spiritual brothers and sisters." The metaphor of the tree would crop up on occasion throughout my fieldwork. It draws on an image from chapter 11 of the book of Romans, which refers to the people of Israel as a wild olive tree, whose branches have been cut and grafted onto a

cultivated olive tree, referring to the than non-Jewish, or pagan converts to Christianity. The chapter addresses the mystery of the people of Israel denying Christ, explaining it as a necessary measure to push the apostles out to evangelize the non-believing pagans. In this way, the wild (Jewish) olive branches are grafted onto the cultivated (pagan) tree. For my interlocutors, however, the metaphor was reversed. The Jews were the trunk, the Christians the branches. And as one of my friends once commented to me in amusement, although the branches could not exist without the tree trunk, it was the branches who bore the fruit of the tree, not the roots.

If my friends saw themselves as pagan branches grafted onto a Jewish tree trunk, then my presence in their midst always held the possibility of a Jewish wild branch emerging out of that trunk. For some of my interlocutors, the fact that the historic Jewish people had failed to accept Jesus as God and the fact that Jews the world over have since continued to prove quite resistant to conversion was a somewhat frustrating affair when they turned their minds to it, especially considering the place of the eventual conversion of the Jews in Christian eschatology. In this light, my interest in the community seemed to carry, at least for some, the potential promise of conversion.

Is it in light of this, however, that it is significant to note that at no point during my fieldwork did I ever feel a pressure from the part of my interlocutors to convert, nor an anxiety on their part that I had failed to discover Jesus even after such a long and intimate time I had spent with the community. People would occasionally prod me, and I certainly could feel that some certainly were *hoping* that I would convert, but no

one at any point tried to actually persuade me to. My observation of this, the fact that my interlocutors did not attempt to change me, to persuade me, that rather than “entering into” my self, they instead seemed to attempt to draw me into them, was one of the things that first drew my attention to the question of change in Christianity, and in Catholicism and the Renewal specifically.

The Problem of Change

As I state in the opening paragraphs of this introduction, change is one of the thematic threads that go through this text. Specifically, I focus on examining the manners in which Catholic members of Emmanuel and its affiliated humanitarian NGOs attempted to bring about the transformation or conversion of either self or society in the course of their ritual life and humanitarian work. In this, this work intervenes in key debates shaping the anthropology of Christianity. Having focused primarily on cases of Evangelical and Pentecostal forms of Christianity drawing on Protestant rather than Catholic models of relating to the divine, this literature developed a model of Christian change which stresses sudden discontinuities or ruptures, as converts are seen to attempt a radical disembedding from all social ties upon their conversion to Christianity.

While rupture is now a staple term in the anthropology of Christianity, we seem to know much less about Catholic orientations to change and transformation (but see Csordas 1983, 1988, 1994a in the context of healing, Csordas 1992, 1995, 1997, 2014 on the Charismatic Renewal as a social movement, Greeley 2004, Wilde 2007 on

institutional change within the Church), and those studies which sought to explicitly engage the question of change as featured in the corpus of the anthropology of Christianity (Chua 2012a, 2012b, Lester 2003, 2005) chose to frame the debate through a dichotomous difference between change/rupture and continuity, where Catholics seem to fall on one end of the continuum (continuity), and Evangelicals on the other (change/rupture). My analysis throughout this text, but particularly in chapter five of the dissertation, challenges this dichotomy, arguing that rather than considering Catholic orientations to change to be antithetical to change or to simply be about continuity, we would be better served to consider them as a different route to change, a different orientation and approach to the process of enacting change, be it personal, societal or cultural. Change, for my interlocutors, certainly was not about rupture, not about a break, either with one's past or with one's kin. Nor was change a linear, progressive, goal-oriented thing. Change did not result from one's agentic attempts to make change happen, but rather was something that ensued from the way one inhabited the world, the ways in which one related to God vis-a-vis social others. This was a change that was rooted in an orientation that was simultaneously dynamic and still, a change that spread horizontally, so to speak, not progressing, but reorienting one to the network of relations one inhabited. In other words, Catholic orientations to change, I found, were anchored not in a severing, but in a joining, in a reorientation that was made possible through a shifting of one's relation with the divine from the personal to the social, from the vertical to the horizontal.

What this means is that in order to understand Catholic models of change, we

must first understand Catholic sociality. And so it is with the question of sociality, or relationality, that I open this dissertation. Following chapter one, which provides the reader with a historical and structural account of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal and the Emmanuel community in particular, chapter two of the dissertation opens not with an argument about change, but with one about relationality. Again, intervening in recent debates within the anthropology of Christianity, I demonstrate that counter to the characterization of Christianity as a religion which introduces individualism into the lives of its converts, in the case of Emmanuel, relationality rather than individualism emerges as the prominent value and that this shapes configuration of sociality and of the person and as well as orients self-process in significant ways. Specifically, I demonstrate that the establishment and affirmation of relationships emerge from my ethnography as particularly central to the community's ethical project and ritual life, and that this is facilitated and motivated by the transposition of the personal or vertical relationship members of Emmanuel have with God divine into relationships with real social others. This transposition results in the affirmation of sociality and the identification of the social as a locus for self transformation, specifically through a reorientation or realignment of the self to others. In this, rather than a movement away from the world and towards a transcendent divine, as has been observed in Evangelical, Pentecostal or Protestant contexts, Emmanuel sociality is characterized by an infusion of the social with the divine. Rather than a withdrawal from the social in favor of the divine, then, Emmanuel ritual life identifies the divine as immanent in social life, and furthermore, as facilitating it. It is this infusion of the

social with the divine, what I refer to throughout this work as the immanence of God in the world, that significantly impacts not only on the relative stress on relationality as opposed to individualism observed in Emmanuel, but also shapes Emmanuel orientations to change and transformation.

By making these argument I do not seek to advance the notion that Christianity in itself necessarily promotes relationality rather than individualism, but rather that in certain contexts Christianity may inspire more individually oriented social formation and in others, more relational ones. In stressing this, I suggest that we focus on a comparative understanding of the conditions under which one formation or the other emerges as a more meaningful and prominent value in the lives of Christian persons. An inquiry along those lines would seek to explain not only *why* relationality or individualism emerge as prominent values under certain conditions and in certain contexts, but to also understand the broader effects this has on sociality, as well as paint in detail the particular forms these ethical orientations take in daily life. This, I suggest would further allow us to broaden the current focus of the anthropology of Christianity, which to date has focused primarily on Protestant and Pentecostal forms of Christianity, transforming it into a more comprehensive comparative project, and potentially further embedding it more productively in the broader project of the anthropology of religion.

This dissertation also speaks to two other bodies of anthropological literature. In its analysis of the manners in which Emmanuel's relational ethos and vision of world transformation are enacted in the context of its missionary or humanitarian

projects, this text intervenes in the nascent anthropological literature on humanitarianism. Chapters three and four in particular focus on Emmanuel's humanitarian missions carried out by its two affiliated NGOs, Fidesco International in Rwanda, and *Le Rocher Oasis des Cités* in France. Chapter three examines how aid workers and volunteers working for both NGOs conceive of their work and their ethical obligations to those whom they seek to aid, and in what terms they conceive of their work as an ethical project vis-a-vis the society in which they live. In doing so I challenge anthropological debates on humanitarianism and moral sentiments, such as compassion, which often define such ethical/political projects.

Anthropological accounts of humanitarianism are highly critical, tending to focus on the violence that practices of supposed kindness inflict on their recipients. Much of this critique has centered on what I call here the humanitarian relation, which emerges in these accounts as based on and defined by a supposedly inevitable hierarchical tension between giver and receiver. The humanitarian relation is a violence in these accounts since it creates, on the one hand, an indebtedness that can never be repaid (on the side of the receiver) and on the other, an implicit expectation for reciprocity in the form of change which must inevitably be frustrated (on the side of the giver).

What the ethnography of Emmanuel reveals, however, is that although discourses of compassion and "fellow feelings" which anthropologists today identify as characteristic of humanitarianism, volunteerism and other forms of charity, originate in Christian theology, Emmanuel aid workers reject and are highly critical of

liberal iterations of compassion that highlight “fellow feelings” or emotions of care for the other as legitimate motivations for aid. Instead, the humanitarian project itself is defined in relational terms, as a project of erecting a particular sociality. This shift from an ethic of compassion to an ethic of love is facilitated, I argue, by the introduction of the person of God into the humanitarian relation, shifting it from a dyadic giver-receiver relation into a triadic relationship, where God as an agent serves as a mediator in a manner that *at least potentially* empties or weakens the humanitarian relation of any would-be indebtedness resulting from an unequal exchange relation.

Answering to what reads as an a-priori critique of humanitarian logic in anthropological literature, chapter four offers an interpretive analysis of the humanitarian relation across different social and cultural contexts. To achieve that I abandon the prevalent characterization of the humanitarian relation as one frozen in a supposedly paradoxical tension between equality and hierarchy, and instead, drawing on Goffman’s (1956) dramaturgical approach to social interaction, treat it like a particular form of joint performance. What this analysis of relations as performance reveals, I suggest, is that as fragile as these relations reveal themselves to be, their integrity is dependent not simply, or even primarily, on the establishment of similarity, but on the recognition and experience of profound difference.

The third and final anthropological body of literature with which this text is in dialogue is the anthropology of self and person, especially the literature on self-transformation, empathy and intersubjectivity. In discussing the question of self-transformation, throughout the text I make the argument that the various manners in

which the divine is transposed into sociality in Emmanuel mark social relations as an explicit and privileged site for self process and self transformation. This happens, I argue, through various processes of reorientation of the self, such as moments when the presence of the divine embodied in real social relations disrupts one's implicit experiential sense of self, or allows for a reorientation of the self to others through processes of what Jackson (2005: 32), following Merleau-Ponty, termed "lateral displacement," a gaining of a perspective "from elsewhere." A particular self process I focus on throughout the text is one centered on the attempt of my interlocutors to relinquish their will to that of God's, a process I also refer to as a displacement or decentering of the self in relation to the divine. By tracing the manners in which Emmanuel and its NGOs' volunteers attempt to, or effectively achieve this in the context of religious or humanitarian practice, I make the argument that rather than orienting them away from the world or from the social, this process, which serves to facilitate empathic process, is experienced as allowing real social relations to flourish.

Volunteering, specifically, as an effort centered on the encounter with otherness is ultimately construed in Emmanuel as an exercise in dialogical self-transformation, where the ability to decenter one's self in relation to the other is understood as facilitating empathic process, an actual meeting of the other, which could then result in what Gadamer (1997: 302) termed a "fusion of horizons." In this sense, I argue, we could consider volunteering as an exercise whose ultimate goal is the decentering of the self in relation of the divine – the relinquishing of one's will to that of God's, or inversely, that it is the practice of decentering one's self in relation to the divine that is

used in Emmanuel as a locus of self process the end goal of which is the crafting of a relational, more potentially empathic self. This, I suggest, compels us to recognize the role that *disruptions* to self-coherence play in potentiating positive self-transformation and affirming sociality, highlighting both the rupturing and the joining implied in the establishment of human bonds.

CHAPTER ONE

The Charismatic Renewal, Past and Present

The Early Years, Global Perspectives

Although it has its roots in early 20th century American Pentecostalism, it is a single event in February 1967 that has come to mark the official inception of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, the weekend retreat in Duquesne University (often referred to as the “Duquesne Weekend”), when a group of students and young faculty members had a collective Baptism in the Holy Spirit, the quintessential Pentecostal spiritual experience. This spiritual renewal soon spread to other campuses in the US, most notably to Notre-Dame in South Bend and Michigan State in Anne Arbor, and from there across the US, and finally the world. With respect to both theology and practice the Renewal may be considered to be a synthesis of Catholicism and Protestant Pentecostalism, the Pentecostal elements most evidently expressed in an emphasis on an experience of the Holy Spirit, the establishment of a close and personal relationship with the person of Jesus Christ, and the practice of charisms or spiritual gifts, such as speaking in tongues, the exercise of healing and the utterance of prophecy, as described in chapter 12 of the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

While members of the Renewal do acknowledge the historical link to Protestant Pentecostalism, they do not consider the movement to be a synthesis of any kind, but rather a return to an older form of Catholicism, the event of the Renewal a divine answer to Pope John XXIII’s call for a new Pentecost and his invocation of the

Holy Spirit at the opening of the Second Vatican Council in the early 1960s. The desire to dissociate the movement from its Pentecostal roots is also reflected in the early decision made by the Renewal's leadership to change the movement's name from Catholic Pentecostalism to the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (CCR) (Hocken 2005).

In addition to its stress on the works of the Holy Spirit and the exercise of Charisms, a distinct characteristic of Pentecostal or Charismatic Christianity and key element in the movement's ritual practice is in an emphasis on the establishment of a close, personal relationship with God or the person of Jesus Christ, and a general recasting of God as a loving and close figure as opposed to the punitive and distant deity characteristic of earlier, mainstream Catholicism. Hand in hand with this emphasis on the importance of forming a personal relationship with God goes the general tendency observed in Pentecostal and Charismatic groups to de-emphasize political action and a concern with world transformation in favor of a focus on self-cultivation and an ethical concern with the refashioning of the pious self.

In spite of the fact that the movement's theology is somewhat radical and, as one advocating direct access to spiritual gifts, may subvert Church hierarchy and structure, the Renewal has enjoyed the approval and support of the Vatican. Pope Paul VI publicly acknowledged the movement in 1975, referring to the Renewal as a "new spring" for the Church, and Jean-Paul II continued to encourage the movement throughout his pontificate, referring to it as a "revolution in the expression of faith" and a "sign of the action of God", as well as an opportunity to bring back "the heart" into his project of the New Evangelization, throughout his pontificate. The Renewal

did not disappoint, forming the main driving force behind lay evangelization initiatives and such events as the World Youth Days, injecting a new life into the Church in the aftermath of Vatican II. At the same time, the movement's conservative politics and promotion of 'traditional' values¹ served John-Paul II as a powerful opposition against progressive or leftist elements within the Church in the aftermath of Vatican II, such as liberation theology, while standing as a counterforce against the spread of Protestant Pentecostalism in regions such as Latin America.

It is not accidental that the movement's inception occurred in the immediate aftermath of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), as the changes in Catholic culture and doctrine instituted after the Council provided the conditions needed for the birth of the Renewal. The Church's new position on the possibility of the exercising of Charisms, for example, made it possible for Charismatics to adopt the Pentecostal practices of speaking in tongues, laying of hands, or prophecy while remaining in the fold of the Church. Likewise, the adoption of vernacular languages for worship and the reversal of the direction of the altar so that priests now faced the congregation opened the door to forms of worship and modes of relating to God as approachable, close and loving. The Renewal, in turn, helped to encourage many of the practical changes the Council wished to initiate in the broader Catholic world, such as a stress on ecumenism, lay initiatives, and biblicism (Csordas 1997, Hocken 2005).

At the grassroots level, the Catholic Charismatic movement is organized into either prayer groups or communities. The prayer group is a more open structure, usually parochially based, and commonly organized around weekly prayer meetings.

The Charismatic community is larger than the prayer group, and characterized by a greater degree of member engagement, often in the form of a formal commitment to a written ‘covenant’. Members of a Charismatic community go through a prolonged initiation and indoctrination process, which in some cases may last for up to two years, culminating in the formal commitment to the community. Different communities will vary in their exercise of charisms, both in frequency and in kind, with some communities specifically defining their ritual life around certain charisms, which are said to be granted to either individuals within the group or characteristic of the group as a whole. The National Service Committee’s Chariscenter website records, for the United States alone, 1983 prayer groups and 89 covenant communities, while according to the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services (ICCRS) the Renewal is currently represented in 238 countries. Data from the World Christian Encyclopedia (Barret et al. 2001) indicates that Catholic Charismatics account for approximately 11.3% of the global Catholic population, and 23% of that of Pentecostals and Charismatics (Csordas 2014).

The scholarly literature on the Charismatic Renewal is not an extensive one. In terms of geography, the majority of the accounts are of the movement in the USA² (Fichter 1975, Mawn 1975, McGuire 1974, 1975, 1977, 1982, 1983, 1988, Neitz 1987, Bord and Faulkner 1975, 1983, Poloma 1982, Csordas 1983, 1987, 1992, 1995, 1994, 1997, 2009b, 2011, 2012), Quebec (Reny and Rouleau 1978, Chagnon 1979, Zylberberg and Montminy 1980), Brazil (de Abreu 2002, 2008, de Oliveira 1978, de Oliveira and Martins, 2004, de Theije 2004, Maues 1998, Prandi 1997, Steil 2001,

2004,) and India (Dempsey 2001, Halliburton 1997, Schmaltz 1998, 1999, 2002). The movement has also been documented in France (Hebrard 1987, Charuty 1987, Pina 1999, Lenoir 1988, Hocken 2004, Pingault 1989), Italy (Pace 1978), Zaire (Fabian 1994), Zambia (ter Haar 1987, 1992), Nigeria (Bastian 2005, Ojo 1988), Malaysia (Ackerman 1981), and Japan (Mathy 1992, Yoshimasa 1993).

Csordas (2009b) notes that up to date, the Renewal has had two primary modes of international expansion. Its first mode of expansion, specifically to “third world” countries, was typically facilitated by a visit of a missionary priest to the United States, who would then organize a prayer group in his home country, and invite an outsider to initiate doctrinal instruction or healing services. This mode of international operation is typically facilitated through the International Catholic Charismatic Renewal Services (ICCRS), through the organization of such activities as retreats and workshops. The CCR’s second mode of expansion was facilitated through its communitarian branch.

This took place not only through the establishment of covenant communities, but the creation of global networks of communities, or ‘communities of communities’. Csordas (2014) counts five such global networks: The Sword of the Spirit, and People of Praise (two supercommunities founded in the US in the 1980s), the Catholic Fraternity of Charismatic Covenant Communities and Fellowships, and the European Network of Communities (two loose networks of communities that do not consider themselves a single entity), and the Emmanuel Community in France. The Sword of the Spirit adopted a loose federal government of communities that retained their own

names and currently numbers approximately 10,000 members in 24 countries. The Praise of God is made up of several communities into semi-autonomous branches of a single entity and currently numbers approximately 3000 members in 4 countries. The Emmanuel community numbers approximately 9000 members and present in 57 countries. The Catholic Fraternity unites 69 communities and 16 associated member communities in 18 countries, while the European Network currently has 16 member communities in 5 countries. Alongside the ICCRS, these networks of communities are major transnational religious entities. The CCR reached its peak rates of participation in the US around the early 1980s and reduced markedly after that. This reduction, however, has been less marked in Western Europe, particularly in Italy and France, where the Renewal was historically strongest, while participation in Africa, Asia and Latin America continues to show moderate growth, with a particular presence in Brazil and the state of Kerala in India (Hocken 2004).

The Renewal in France

The beginning of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in France can be traced back to 1971, when two Catholics attended a Charismatic convention sponsored by the *Union de Prière de Charmes*, a Protestant Pentecostal community founded by a pastor of the Reformed Church at Charmes-sur-Rhone. By 1974 several covenant communities were founded throughout the country, including Emmanuel³, and participation in the Renewal reached several thousands (Hebrard, 1987). Today, France is home to approximately 20 large charismatic communities, among those,

other than Emmanuel, are the *Fondations du Monde Nouveau*, *Chemin Neuf*, *Pain de Vie* and *Béatitudes*, as well as over a thousand prayer groups (*groupes de prière*) (Pina 1999). The movement has been particularly successful in France, and communities tended to foster strong ties with local bishops, leading to the ordination and integration of relatively large numbers of charismatic priests and to an increased involvement of charismatic communities in the staffing of parishes (Hocken 2004).

The flourishing of the Renewal in France during the 1970s must be read not only as a direct result of the significant changes that marked the years following the Vatican II Council, but also as the paradoxical results of the events of May 1968. The sixties and seventies were experienced by Catholics in France as a time of crisis in the Church, and the period between 1965 and 1978, from the close of the Second Vatican Council until the death of Pope Paul VI, is normally regarded by scholars to be one of profound crisis in the Church, accompanied by a sharp decline in its perceived authority and centrality in French society, a sharp drop in church attendance, the crumbling of parishes, and a crisis of vocations (approximately 4000 priests left the priesthood between 1965 and 1980) (see Landron 2004: 187).

According to historian Denis Pelletier (2002), however, the period between 1965 and 1978 should also be viewed as a culmination of sorts, a condensed, accelerated chapter within a broader process of transformation in patterns of religious practice already taking place in France and elsewhere in the Western world well before the 1960s. While for those French theologians and clergy who pushed the reforms of the Vatican II council, the council itself was the completion and end of a process, for

those Catholics taking to the streets in May 1968, the council seemed to be merely the beginning, giving rise to a revolutionary, Leftist Catholicism (a *gauchisme Catholique*) in France, and a calling for a continued revolution of the Church itself. But the great confusion, effervescence and searching of those years did not end up sustaining a leftist Catholicism in France. On the contrary, the reaction they had engendered among both clergy and lay Catholics seemed to have paved the way for the entry and remarkable flourishing of the Charismatic Renewal, and the “new communities” in the early 1970s. The growth of the Renewal in France was further accelerated by the engendering of a strong form of individualism by the rapid industrialization and urbanization of those years (Brustier 2014), and it was within the growing anonymity and individualization that the new charismatic communities afforded their members a sense of fraternity. Tracing the emergence of the Renewal in the aftermath of May 68, Pelletier names the movement and New Communities born in France during those years “the paradoxical heirs of May 1968.” Paradoxical, since that event, which in many senses paved the way for the flourishing of the Renewal in France is also in the eyes of most Charismatic Catholics an abhorrent and lamentable event in the history of their country.

In the early years of the Renewal, however, the movement encountered difficulties being accepted by the Church in France. Cardinal Suenens, then archbishop of Malines-Bruxelles and a supporter of the Renewal in the United States, and who also served as one of the four “moderators” of the Second Vatican Council, took it upon himself to form ties with the forming French charismatic communities in an

effort to facilitate the Renewal's acceptance by the bishops. Meeting with Pierre Goursat, the founder and moderator of the Emmanuel community in 1972, Suenens helped formulate the idea that the Renewal must be "Catholicized" while at the same time serving to reintroduce charisma and bring renewal into the Church. In the same vein, Suenens also organized a charismatic prayer group during the synod of bishops in October 1973, which included charismatic representatives from various countries, including Goursat. These efforts bore fruit and the eventual recognition of the Renewal by Paul VI in 1975 granted the Renewal the final seal of approval it desired.

The Emmanuel Community, Pierre Goursat

The Emmanuel community was founded in Paris in 1972 by a small group of French Catholics who experienced the Baptism of the Holy Spirit while visiting the United States in the early years of the movement. The community acknowledges as its co-founders Pierre Goursat and Martine Lafitte (now Martine Catta). The figures of Goursat and Lafitte and the story of the foundation of the community in the early 1970s are an important part of the community's ethos and self-definition as particularly the figure of Goursat, whose cause for canonization has recently been officially submitted to the Vatican, is both a personal role-model for members of the community as well as an embodiment of the charisms that define the community as a whole.

Pierre Goursat was born in Paris in 1914. Although his family was devoutly Catholic and Pierre was consecrated to the Virgin upon his birth, the story goes that he

experienced in his late adolescence a crisis of faith that drew him away from the church, the cause of which was the suffering he experienced as the result of the divorce of his parents and later the death of his younger and only brother at the young age of 10. His return to the fold occurred at the age of 19, after having an uncanny experience, a vivid feeling of his deceased brother being present in the room with him, chiding him for forgetting him and for being “full of pride”. It was at that moment that Pierre felt he had received an outpouring of the Spirit, a spontaneous conversion experience that brought him back to the fold and made clear to him his vocation to become an Adorer of God. His faith never wavered again.

In the years between his conversion in 1933 and the early 1970s when the Emmanuel community began to take shape under his guidance, Pierre had dedicated his life to prayer and evangelization. Among other things, he had opened a bookstore, became a Catholic cinema critic and the distributor of the journal *Revue des Questions Scientifiques*. He also began to run small gospel reading groups and forged friendships and contacts with many lay and clergy that, especially in the aftermath of the Second World War, were searching for new paths within the Catholic church. Cardinal Suhard, then the archbishop of Paris, who helped pave the way to the convening of the Second Vatican Council, became Pierre’s spiritual advisor. It was Suhard who finally confirmed to Pierre that he was not called for the priesthood, but had to remain a lay adorer of the Eucharist in the world and dedicate his life to efforts of evangelization. Evangelization and a new sense of mission in the Church, Suhard maintained, were crucial for the Church’s continued flourishing.

It was only years later, however, in the aftermath of Vatican II, that the ground was ready for Pierre's vision of evangelization and transformation to be realized on a larger scale. Two things happened in 1971; Pierre, then 57, met the young Martine Laffitte, then in training to become a medical doctor, and became acquainted with the Charismatic Renewal through the mediation of Father Regimbal, a Trinitian priest from Canada. It was several months later, on the weekend of February 12-13 1972, that both Pierre and Martine were invited to Troussures by Father Henri Caffarel⁴ for a prayer weekend. The gathering was initiated by Xavier and Brigitte Le Pichon, who had returned from a trip to the United States, where they experienced the Charismatic Renewal⁵. During the weekend, participants engaged in spontaneous murmured prayer. All but five of the 40 or so participants requested to experience the Baptism (or outpouring, *effusion* in French) in the spirit. The encounter had significantly impacted both Pierre and Martine and they decided they must continue the work they began undertaking during the weekend, initially by meeting every day at each other's house for prayer and praise.

A week after the February weekend, Pierre, Martine, and three other of the original participants of the prayer weekend agreed to meet for another prayer session, a meeting which is commonly acknowledged as the founding moment of the Emmanuel community. This meeting was transformed into weekly gatherings, as the number of participants steadily grew. By the summer of 1972, the Charismatic Renewal was gaining ground in France and by the winter of 1973 the assembly, led by Pierre and Martine, numbered in the hundreds⁶. Eventually, the number of participants grew to

such a degree that Pierre and Martine decided to split the group in two. The two groups were to meet separately, but remain “united in the spirit” and it was the need to establish a clearly defined unity between these two groups that led participants to search for a name. The name “Emmanuel”, God is with us, was said to have been simultaneously revealed during prayer to different members and was subsequently adopted with unanimous agreement and enthusiasm. By mid 1973, when the number of regular participants reached 500, Pierre reluctantly agreed to head the community and serve as its “moderator” (a title held to this day by the head of the community). He was ill at ease with claiming a position of authority and leadership and reportedly only relented to accept it at the encouragement and confirmation of the renowned Catholic mystic Marthe Robin⁷.

The end of 1974 saw the establishment of the Fraternity of Jesus at the heart of what would officially become the Community later on. On that same year the community’s monthly periodical, *Il Est Vivant!* (He Is Alive!) was launched, and the *Peniche*, the barge purchased a few years earlier by Pierre, now named “*Mont Thabor*”, was anchored by the Pont de Neuilly in Paris and began serving as a center for persons in need of help and as an unofficial center of the community in the city.

Up until the end of 1974 and early 1975, when Pope Paul VI officially recognized the Charismatic Renewal in Pentecost 1975 in Rome⁸, Emmanuel was more so a collection of prayer groups than a single community, but by the end of 1975 it was established in the minds of its members as a single community bound by a distinct spiritual calling. It was in the summer of that very year that Emmanuel also

launched for the first time its sessions in Paray-le-Monial (each accommodating approximately 600 participants from around Europe), then a sleepy village in the Bourgogne. Other projects, such as the prayer telephone service *SOS Prière*, and the establishment of the *Centre Jean Paul II-Université des Travailleurs* soon followed. In the early 1980s the Love and Truth (*Amour et Vérité*) formation program for couples was created and launched as well as Fidesco, the community's international development NGO. Those were followed by the foundation of Emmanuel's International School of Evangelization, today operating in Paray-le-Monial and Rome. Various projects were also entrusted to the community by the Holy See or dioceses, among those the running of the International Youth Center San Lorenzo and the stewardship of Paray-le-Monial, including management of both pilgrimage activities and the restoration of the site. Through its own publishing house, *Les Éditions de l'Emmanuel*, the community has gained a considerable media presence in the Catholic world in France, diffusing its message through both written and audio media and the publishing of religious works, liturgical music, song books and scores, music recordings and lectures.

By 1990, the community numbered nearly 4000 members, and the Fraternity of Jesus, its committed core group, close to a 1000. By 2013 the community numbered over 9000 members, among those 220 ordained priests, 115 seminarians and 180 lay people (both men and women) living in celibacy 'for the kingdom', and boasted 4 bishops who were issued from the community (issue, and not members of the community, since bishops must officially relinquish their membership in any

community upon their appointment. These bishops continue to maintain particularly close ties with the community, however). The community currently maintains a presence in 57 countries. In 1986, it was recognized as a “Private Association of the Faithful” by the Cardinal Lustiger, and in 1992, as a “Universal Association of the Faithful of the Pontifical Rite” by the Vatican. The community was finally accorded the status of an “International Public Association of the Faithful” in 2009, by a decision of the Pontifical Council of the laity. This recognition, which for members of Emmanuel is immensely important, effectively signifies that the Church recognizes the community as an association that acts in the name of the Church, in view of the common good of the Church for ends that are those of the church itself (cf. canons 116 and 301), rather than merely for the good of its particular membership. This recognition entails a greater degree of public responsibility and engagement in the name of the Church that is entrusted to Emmanuel, including the management of parishes and the training of priests. Emmanuel is the sole charismatic community in France which has to date been accorded this status.

Pierre Goursat died in Paris in 1991. Martine Catta lives still, but does not occupy an official leadership position in the community. Although she is always acknowledged as a co-founder of the community, it is Pierre’s figure that looms larger in the community’s history and plays a greater role in its self-definition. His intercessory abilities are acknowledged by community members in their prayers and the cause for his beatification and eventual canonization has been presented at the Holy Trinity church in Paris in January 2010. The diocesan inquiry was officially

closed on December 2015 and the cause, constituting of over 10,000 pages of testimonies, historical and theological expert opinions given in support of Goursat's life of sanctity and heroic virtue, has now been officially submitted to Rome for further investigation. Community members pray daily for the realization of that cause⁹. Pierre is portrayed, in written records of the community as well as in testimonies of those who met him as a humble, unassuming and utterly unimpressive man. Many community members have repeated stories to me highlighting these traits, and a passage about Pierre in Emmanuel's official account of its history, the book *Fire and Hope* (Catta and Peyrous 2005: 102-103), features this telling anecdote in describing him:

One day, at a Community weekend, someone outside the Community, who had come for the first time, saw a poor man arrive. The man was badly clothed and looked like someone who did not want to attract attention, someone who wanted to slink unnoticed into a corner. People came to him, placed him in the first row, embraced him and cared for him. When the weekend was over, the witness, very edified, exclaimed to an Emmanuel sister: 'What a love you have for the poor in your community! It's really beautiful!' The woman, confused, did not respond. 'But of course, I mean that poor man you all welcomed. You put him in the first row and surrounded him with kindness the whole weekend. You know who I mean ' 'Oh ... you mean Pierre? He's our founder.'

Pierre is also often described as funny and casual, affectionate and familiar with those around him, an eccentric and non-conformist. He was known for his Charism of discernment - his ability to discern people's calling and see their abilities and potential, even as they failed to do so, tireless in his efforts to build the community, but at the same time refusing to take personal credit for any achievement.

Having suffered from tuberculosis, Pierre was always in poor health, and is said to have often attended meetings while lying in his bed, with two phones in his reach, managing the community's affairs and mobilizing everyone around him while lying on his back.

Pierre's self-effacement (said to be shared by Martine Catta to this day) is in particular celebrated by community members. This is not, I would argue, simply since self-effacement is a valued trait for a Catholic to have, but as it helps members vicariously stress a value they would ideally like the community to live by, that of equality through the elimination or diminishing of hierarchy. By stressing the ordinariness of Pierre, his unassuming humility and self-effacing behaviors, to the degree that non-members would mistake him for a homeless person, community members cultivate through their stories of Pierre an ideal, not of a leaderless community, but one where a position of leadership or authority is granted not on the basis of personal charisma or abilities, but by divine Grace.

The ideal of the ordinary, unassuming, non-charismatic leader is still very much alive in Emmanuel, as one of my earlier experiences during fieldwork taught me. As I was leaving the church in Bordeaux after Sunday mass I was casually introduced by Jeanne, in whose home I was lodging at the time, to a man. Jeanne often introduced me to members of the community in the hope of advancing my research and there was nothing unusual about her introduction that time. I had spent a good fifteen minutes casually chatting with the man, who expressed interest in my research, shared his thoughts on the matter and ended by saying that I was very welcome to continue my

research with the community. At the time I thought it odd that he would invite me formally to continue my research, but didn't think much of it. The next day as I was talking with Jeanne she had commented something about the moderator of the community and during the conversation it became evident that the man with whom I casually chatted the other day was the moderator himself. My friend was excited that he had invited me to continue my research, permission which she considered to be crucial in opening doors later on. More than that, however, she seemed exceptionally delighted that I had found myself in such a familiar position with the moderator without having realized that I was speaking with "an important man" of any sort.

The unassuming ordinariness, the quality of "being small" that members of Emmanuel celebrate in their moderators, is defining of the broader ethos of the community, whose members strive to live in the light of, indeed emulate Goursat as a near-saintly figure. In that sense, although the Renewal in France has borrowed much from Charismatic communities in the US¹⁰, its affective tone is distinctly different. While adopting some of the exuberant and affectively expressive prayer and praise style of their American counterparts, Emmanuel retained in their ritual practice elements of worship that are absent or underdeveloped in American communities, such as their emphasis on forms of more contemplative prayer and silent adoration, insisting on the need to practice daily "heart-to-heart encounter with Christ in the Eucharist".

Another key difference between Emmanuel and the American Renewal has to do with differing attitudes towards feminism and the place women are accorded within the community. While far from embracing a strong feminist stance, Emmanuel, unlike

its American counterparts, always allowed women to fill key leadership positions within the community (although the highest positions tend to be performed by either men or married couples) and lacked the masculinist and patriarchal imperative that characterized the American communities. Not only this, but the fact that the affective tone of the community as a whole is a gentler and more “feminine” one, could be due to the fact that in their development, the French communities remained closer in orientation to (feminine) Catholicism than to (masculine) Protestant Pentecostalism, the fact that the community was founded by a man in his late 50s and a young professional woman, as well as due to certain particularities of the French cultural context not specifically related to religion or Emmanuel’s particular historically trajectory. The American emphasis on obedience and submission was also tempered in the case of Emmanuel, where a much greater value is placed on *liberte* (liberty) and equality between members of the community, with the notion of *fidelite* (fidelity or faithfulness) applied exclusively in reference to one’s relationship with the God or the Church. Fidelity here does signal, in effect, a form of submission to a higher authority, but is a mark of faith rather than of submission to human authority, and has a more agentive ‘feel’ to it.

The emphasis on faith is also important in understanding Emmanuel’s relationship to the notion of Charisma and Chrisms. As is often the case with charismatic movements, Emmanuel’s initial charismatic fervor characteristic of its early years during the 1970s cooled down with the passage of time. This change is generally acknowledged by members and considered to be a positive development,

indicative of a development of a more mature spirituality, one which is not reliant on signs and wonders, but on faith. Faith in God (not so much in God's actual existence, in this case, but in God's concrete presence in one's life) is indicative of an unwavering and independent trust, the mark of a mature relationship, one which no longer needs to be affirmed through communication from God in the form of charismatic expression. There are other reasons for Emmanuel's relative diminishing of the charismatic elements in its performance, one being that within the broader context of French Catholicism, charismatics are still commonly perceived as an eccentric sect¹¹. For this reason, as a general practice, the more 'eccentric' or 'hard core' charismatic practices, such as deliverance, healing or even speaking in tongues, are normally reserved for more intimate or community-exclusive events and are avoided in larger, mixed, gatherings.

The concern with the community's official recognition by the Church has been central to Emmanuel from its very inception. Goursat, for example, always emphasized the importance of the community's firm anchoring in the Church's tradition and submission to its authority, insisting that the Renewal was the fruit of John XXIII's invocation of the Holy Spirit at the opening of the Vatican Council. "The Church" he said, "was not born with the Renewal; rather, the latter had to insert itself into the Church's womb, give her new life, and bring the new strength she needed to the world in this age" (in Catta and Peyrous 2005: 56-57).

The preoccupation with being fully embedded and recognized as an integral part of the Catholic Church is also reflected in the curious leaning demonstrated at

least in some quarters of the community towards an introduction of pre-conciliar elements into worship. This makes for an odd mixture between American Pentecostalism and Tridentine traditionalism. The American component is evident in the musical tunes of praise songs, a higher degree of affectivity in one's relationship with God, biblicism and an American psychological culture of "sharing" and constantly reflecting upon one's life and God's presence in it. The pre-conciliar elements are to be found in a revival or return to practices that have become unpopular post-Vatican II, such as Eucharistic Adoration, or recitation of the rosary, as well as a penchant for a particular traditional aesthetic and sensibilities. Some of my interlocutors suggested to me that the Emmanuel community was "*tradi-chari*" - traditional-charismatic, and at least one of the bishops issued of the community, Mgr Dominique Rey, bishop of Frejus-Toulon, is known for his partiality to traditional, pre-Vatican II rites, such as the introduction of Tridentine elements to Mass¹².

Two main impulses can be identified in the community's activity and social imaginary; that of a convergence inwards, exemplified in the community's stewardship, maintenance of, and annual activities at Paray-le-Monial, the traditional pilgrimage site dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus; and that of an expansion outwards, as exemplified not only in its missionizing efforts throughout the world (the community has five mission schools in Europe and maintains several guest houses in various countries), but also the operation of its own faith-based NGO, Fidesco International, which was founded to address the various needs of the "Global South".

Paray-le-Monial, a site where in the 17th century Catholic nun, Marguerite-

Marie Alacoque, experienced repeated visions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (see Jonas, 2000), is a particularly apt spiritual and symbolic center for the Emmanuel Community, considering its self-definition in terms of the three Charisms or spiritual gifts of Adoration, Compassion and Evangelization. Put together, these three Charisms form a motivational thread, whereby the divine love adherents experience from Jesus (particularly at times, and as a result of, Eucharistic Adoration), is transformed into a sense of compassion for all of humanity, which in turn motivates community members to evangelize the world. In the early years of the community, a greater emphasis was given to evangelization and this remains one of the strongest defining features of the community as members themselves see it, something which they also stress differentiates them from non-charismatic Catholics in France who tend to keep their faith to themselves and away from the public eye.

In 1982, over 9000 people from close to 30 countries attended the summer sessions organized by the Emmanuel community in Paray-le-Monial. By 1987 about 20,000 people, as well as 20 cardinals and bishops, attended the session. The event that most defined and changed the status of Paray, until then a marginal pilgrimage site dedicated to the sacred heart of Jesus, was the visit of Pope Jean Paul II in October of 1986, where he gave mass, addressed the crowd of about 130,000 people who gathered in the village for the occasion and met with Pierre Goursat in the chapel of the Visitation, where he reportedly thanked him for founding Emmanuel.

Organizationally, the community is headed by a single moderator and all community activities and aspects of its ritual life are managed by specifically

appointed *responsables*, or directors. The moderator is elected by a select group of community members and is up for reelection every three years. Due to Emmanuel's juridic status as a public association of the faithful, the moderator's appointment requires the ratification of the Holy See. The other *responsables* are typically nominated for the job by their predecessors. Authority is not centralized and *responsables* are not always beholden to someone above them. Rather, each *responsable* has their own domain of responsibility and must be consulted with when authorization or permission is required. This lateral organization of authority can prove extremely exhausting for the ethnographer, one must note, as throughout my fieldwork, although the moderator of the community himself gave me the green light to conduct research with the community I still had to request permission of regional, national or local *responsables* when wanting to gain access to, or participate in various community or NGO activities. Emmanuel, one of my interlocutors jokingly told me once, is a chiefdom where everyone was a chief. Leadership positions (unlike those of *responsables*) can only be taken by members of Emmanuel's Fraternity of Jesus - a core group of lay and religious whose degree of commitment to the community and its mission goes deeper than that of general members.

Persons who are considering joining the community go through a prolonged discernment period during which they participate in community activities and ritual life without having to make a definitive commitment to join the community. At the end of this trial period candidates may choose to join, in which case they must officially declare their intention to become "engaged" in the community in the course of an

official ritual undertaken in the presence of other community members in the course of a special mass during a community weekend. One's commitment to the community needs to be renewed every two years. Independent engagement in the community of children of community members was reported to me to be at an approximate rate of 50%. My impression from interviews was, however, that a greater number of children choose not to engage in the community upon reaching maturity, although I certainly did come across many members who had been raised in the community and chose to become members as adults. Parents generally seemed to avoid applying any kind of pressure on children to join, and indeed avoided applying any kind of pressure on children on issues of faith, even in cases of children choosing to stop attending church altogether.

Reasons for joining the community varied from person to person. For some, a personal crisis seemed to serve as a catalyst, often accompanied by stories of powerful spiritual transformations and born-again experiences while for others, joining the community appeared to be a far more mundane affair motivated by a desire to participate in a particular Catholic sociality. Many of the members I interviewed had joined the community following participation in one of its many trainings, sessions or outreach activities, such as its *Amour et Vérité* (Love and Truth) program geared to help couples experiencing marital difficulties. Many eventual members of Emmanuel also first become acquainted with the community through its summer sessions in Paray-le-Monial, as was the case of a remarkable numbers of my interlocutors, who reported joining the community following a powerful and spontaneous conversion-like

experience of spiritual transformation they had in Paray-le-Monial. Finally, some choose to join the community when the parish they belong to is given to the charge of an Emmanuel priest and members of the community become involved in the daily running of the parish. Volunteers for the community's NGOs also at times chose to join after having participated in community life throughout their year of volunteering.

Emmanuel only accepts as members single people, or couples, and only in the case that both members of the couple wish to join the community, a policy which members explained to me as aimed at reducing conflict both between couples and within the community itself. Single people who are community members are typically in their twenties and are fewer than are couples with (typically four to five) children. The couple is the basic unit of the community, with couples often serving as *responsables* or in leadership positions together. Many of my interviews, as well, were not conducted with individuals, but with both husband and wife present, telling their story and responding to my questions jointly. The community draws on its members resources and time quite extensively. Community members are expected to volunteer (and pay for their board and lodging) for at least one summer session in Paray, and often serve in some capacity or another, even when they are not appointed as *responsables* of a particular project or activity. Most fulfill their roles in the community parallel to holding regular jobs, although some, especially those either in leadership positions or other positions that require a considerable time commitment would be employed by the community.

As they do not live together, most members of Emmanuel come into sporadic

contact with each other through parish activities, as well as various activities organized by the community such as pilgrimages, teaching seminars, communal prayer sessions and other social events - either at the regional, national, or international level. These are all designed and aimed to bring community members into regular contact with each other. However, by far the most frequent, intimate and important fashion in which community members come together are the *maisonnée* meetings.

The *maisonnée* is modeled on the institution of the “household”, a central component of most covenant communities of the Charismatic Renewal today. The first households established in the early days of the movement in the United States were residential household, typically composed of two nuclear families or married couples and at least one unmarried young adult sharing a single domicile (Csordas 1997). Residential households were meant to provide members of the Renewal with an intimate social framework that would support them in leading proper Christian lives. In the case of Emmanuel, however, the decision was made in the early days of the community to avoid co-habitation of members, leading to the adoption and modification of the American model of the “nonresidential household” into its community life instead. Translated into French as *maisonnée*, these nonresidential community households are small sharing groups, made up of less than ten people that convene once every two weeks in a different member’s home, with the stated purpose of allowing community members to share their life experiences in light of God’s Word and to provide a forum for spiritual support for each other.

Regional weekend meetings, or *Weekend Communautaire* (WECO) are

organized once a month, and typically include multiple prayer, worship and praise sessions, teaching seminars and a picnic. Community members may also participate in particular prayer groups, and all members are expected to spend at least one hour a day in Eucharistic adoration. While many members may not achieve this hour-a-day ideal, most do practice adoration frequently on a weekly basis, and members of certain parishes where perpetual adoration is possible coordinate a weekly adoration schedule amongst themselves so that constant presence in front of the Eucharist is maintained throughout the year.

Every person or couple within the community has a person or couple serving as their personal spiritual guide (*accompagneur*), with whom they have periodic supervision meetings, preferably once a month. These meetings are not formal and aim to provide spiritual counseling in cases of distress or uncertainty, particularly as those pertain to one's membership in the community or to interactions with other community members. One of the stricter principles of the community, formulated in its early years by Pierre Goursat, forbids gossip about other community members, or more accurately, forbids criticizing other community members. *Il ne faut pas critiquer les frères* was a maxim that was often repeated to me in the course of fieldwork. However, recognizing that swallowing one's grievances or malcontent may increase tension within the community rather than avoid it meant that the institution of the *accompagneur* can also serve as a pressure valve, affording members the opportunity to freely express criticism or complain about other community members, provided that this is made with the aim of seeking advice in how to best deal with the predicament. Consultations are

completely discrete and members do not share with others things that were divulged to them during such a session. Advice in cases reported to me by my interlocutors often seemed to focus on prayer, either in sharing particular prayers that seem to function to alleviate particular conditions, or instructions for prayers to be conducted for the benefit of the person with whom conflict emerged. All community couples also regularly pray together as a couple. The personal prayer is one of the most important practices for members of the community and couples pray and sing praise songs every single morning in their homes.

The typical Emmanuel household has certain particular characteristics. Televisions sets are often absent and all houses feature either a small space (typically in the living room), or room dedicated for prayer where an altar with icons, a bible and other symbolic objects are displayed. Many homes have an older and traditional rather than a modern look to them, with simplicity favored in the less affluent homes and opulent elegance in the wealthier ones. A style can also be discerned in personal appearance. While members of the community, with the exception of consecrated brothers and sisters who always dress in white and blue, do not dress in a particular way, a certain, subtle dress code is nonetheless evident, not distinct to Emmanuel as a community, but shared more broadly with the Catholic population in France. My interlocutors at times jokingly referred to the manner in which many Catholics dressed as *Catho-chic*. To my eyes, simplicity and cleanliness are two of the most defining terms describing the Catholic self-presentation. Women typically wear minimal makeup if at all, few items of jewelry, and often do not dye their hair when it grays.

Men often wear trousers or three quarter pants and polo shirts, with either boat shoes or sandals. The biblical sandal makes a frequent appearance in the summer months. The general effect communicates a clean, pious European upper middle class selfhood. Many members of Emmanuel belong to the French nobility and the wealthier upper or upper-middle classes, although a greater degree of social variation is evident at the leadership levels of the community.

The Leaven in the Dough of the World: Movement and Social Change

Although it does not draw as much media attention as do other conservative religious movements such as Opus Dei, the Legionaries of Christ, or Civitas, Emmanuel is by far the biggest and most influential of the New Communities in France today, as well as the most socially and politically engaged one, even if this engagement often remains hidden. A prime example is the role played by Emmanuel (and bishops associated with the community) in the unprecedented nationwide mobilization against the legalization of same-sex marriage and adoption in France in 2013. Although the *Manif Pour Tous* collective which led the mobilization against the law was officially non-religious, the movement's leading force was clearly Catholic, and political scientist Gaël Burstier (2014) identifies the Emmanuel community specifically as the main driving force behind the movement, whose activities continue in France to this day. Likewise, it is no accident that it was in 1981, the year of the historical victory of the left in France, that Emmanuel, who up until then, alongside the rest of the Renewal in France, avoided any political involvement, made the decision to officially found Fidesco, its international development NGO. It has, since then,

according to Brustier, become a “central element in the new Catholic militancy” (2014: 109, my translation). What progressivist or labor-oriented currents existed within French Catholicism in the 1970s have all but disappeared, alongside leftist currents which were strong in the earlier years of the Renewal in France¹³, leaving the Renewal in its conservative and distinctly right-wing incarnation the “only real force of engagement of French Catholicism” today (Brustier 2014: 114, my translation)¹⁴.

One of the mobilizing forces behind this renewed interest in the political and a concern with bringing about a particular social change, either through political activity (campaigning against the legalization of gay marriage and earlier, against civil unions) or social outreach (the establishment of humanitarian and development NGOs), was the distinct sense that many of my interlocutors had of being a culturally marginalized, a derided or even persecuted minority in their own country and in Europe more broadly. This was coupled with a profound concern for the moral and social future of what seemed to be a rapidly secularizing Europe, marching into the oblivion of a future bereft of God. “The Pope said we are entering a new era of evangelization, that the Church is growing stronger,” a friend told me once, “but as I look around me I see only the desert.” For others, the undeniable secularization of Europe, the ever-declining church attendance, the retreat of the Catholic Church in the face of Evangelical and Pentecostal Christianity worldwide, indeed the diminishing numbers of the Renewal movement itself, were no cause for concern. Those were not real depth changes that we were observing, but more so the manifesting of a reality now merely making itself more clearly evident, and furthermore, a reality we must not fear nor feel

discouraged by.

“We have always only been 10%,” Pierre-Marie explained to me when I asked him how he understood what appeared to be a worldwide decline of Catholicism. “The Cardinal Lustiger, in his letter to the Catholics of Paris, said that we have always only been 10%. Even in the height of Catholicism, when everybody was going to mass, those who were really engaged, who lived in fraternity, they were only the 10%. And today it’s the same, we are also about 10%, but of real people, of people who give themselves. So, it’s a bit like the parable of the leaven and the dough. Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven is like a woman who took a bit yeast and mixed it with the dough, so that it was leavened. And so the Catholics are the leaven in the dough of the world. And they only need to be 10% to make the world different.¹⁵”

We were sitting on plastic chairs just outside the dining tent in Paray-le-Monial as one more summer session was coming to an end. I was nearing the end of my stay in France, and was pleased to have managed to squeeze in an interview with Pierre-Marie, a member of Emmanuel since the early days of the community who occupied a central leadership role and seemed to be eternally traveling internationally on community matters. A mathematician by training, and an author of several books on evangelization, Pierre-Marie looked at least a decade younger than his sixty odd years and seemed to have an inexhaustible stamina. He seemed completely at ease and unfazed by my supposedly challenging question, almost bemused. It is true, he maintained, that some Catholics were leaving the church to join the ranks of the evangelicals and Pentecostals. Of those, he insisted, many return to the fold after

becoming disillusioned with the shallowness of those churches. But that was not the issue. The salvation of the world would not be determined by statistics, by sheer numbers, but by degree of engagement. All the world really needs is 10%.



I close this chapter with Pierre-Marie's words since they capture something important about the manner in which my interlocutors conceived of and lived what they considered to be their ethical commitments to the world, as well as shed some light on the social realities against the backdrop of which these aspirations took shape. Counter to the trends much of the anthropology of Christianity has identified in contemporary, and particularly charismatic and Pentecostal forms of Christianity, salvation for my Catholic Charismatic interlocutors was not exclusively or indeed primarily realized through the personal, but ultimately through the establishment of a particular sociality, whether in their close social relations with others or in their global vision of crafting the new sociality of the Civilization of Love. As I demonstrate in chapter two, even the very personal relationship with Jesus which my interlocutors strove to establish in their daily lives was mediated for them through real social relations.

What Pierre-Marie's words also highlight are the social contexts within which my interlocutors defined their ethico-religious project: the Charismatic community itself, the Catholic Church as both institution and society, and society at large, either at the national or global level. Most overtly, for all its conviction, the notion of being a small minority laboring for the salvation of a world, which in turn effectively denies

their faith, echoes the very real anxiety many of my interlocutors experienced as Catholics living in what they considered to be a secularized world where their values and ideals were becoming not only marginal, but practically incomprehensible. Perhaps less overtly, the notion of being the leaven in the dough of the world also touches on the manner in which members of the Emmanuel community defined their calling to live in a committed brotherhood as part of a Charismatic community and their position as Charismatics within and as part of the Catholic Church more broadly - that of an invisible agent which nonetheless is responsible for the growth and transformation of the greater whole to which it belongs.

In this sense, Pierre-Marie's metaphor highlights Emmanuel's mission vis-à-vis both Church and Society as one of transformation. In the context of both French and global society, Emmanuel works to counter the rising tide of secularism and moral relativism by presenting to the world an alternative, Catholic way of being in the world, efforts facilitated specifically through evangelization and social outreach. In the context of the Catholic Church, Emmanuel are a core of Charismatics laboring for the Renewal of the Church from within, facilitating the movement of the Holy Spirit in the physical bodies of adherents as well as the greater "mystical body" (O'Neil 1985) of the Church, of which the community forms a part.

As such, Csordas's (1997) treatment of the Renewal as a movement is particularly relevant to understanding both Emmanuel's ethos and modus operandi as an intentional community in the Church and in the world. Anthropological studies of religious movements, Csordas notes, often characterize them as "a kind of 'tribe' or

‘subculture’” (1997: 51), a position which largely ignores the fact that movements are by themselves attempts at cultural or social transformation, and that “issues raised by a movement are coterminous with themes of the culture in which it occurs or that the course of the movement is itself bound up with the interaction of its participants with the society through which they are ‘moving.’” (1997: 51). Csordas draws on Fernandez (1979) who points to the fact that the concept of movement is itself highly metaphorical (movements move things), and that the creativity inherent to the notion of movement is often elided by studies of religious movements in favor of questions of causality (what explains the existence of the movement?), treating movements as “something that happens to people rather than something they accomplish” (1997: 52). Not discounting sociological inquiries into the mechanisms of movement creation and dynamics, Csordas suggests that “a different sense of what a movement must be begins to emerge with the shift from concern with the social mechanisms that account for it to the phenomenon as a formulation of meaning in its cultural milieu.” (1997: 52). It is in this sense that Emmanuel as a part of the broader Charismatic Renewal is represented here.

The need to understand movements as moving things is made quite explicit in another metaphor given to me by Pierre-Marie, one he invoked when I pushed him to explain to me the apparent decline of the Renewal and the cooling down of charismatic fervor in Emmanuel - what we might interpret as the “routinization of charisma” in Weber’s terms (1947, 1958), or the ending of the life cycle of the “revitalization movement” in Anthony Wallace’s (1957). Not so for Pierre-Marie. “The Renewal,” he

explained to me, invoking the words of yet another Cardinal, the Charismatic-friendly Cardinal Suenens¹⁶, “is like the Gulf Stream in the Atlantic Ocean. The Gulf Stream is just a part of the ocean. It’s an important part. It passes through and heats everything. And then it disappears.”

The notion of the Renewal as an effervescent phenomenon, as the Gulf stream heating the ocean and then passing on fits well with patterns of decline Pierre-Marie himself was now observing in the movement, but also aptly describes how many within Emmanuel viewed their place and role as Charismatics within the Catholic Church, as a *renewing* force, a movement of the Spirit, blowing a new breath of life into the greater body of the Church. That this movement of the Spirit was for my interlocutors one which always expands concentrically from them onwards, is mirrored in the portrayal of Emmanuel throughout this text as selves-in-a-relation to a community in a movement in a church in a society in the world.

CHAPTER TWO

Making Community, Making Selves

Some time during my first few months of working as a volunteer for the Rocher something about the way I felt myself inhabiting the world had dramatically changed. I had occasional glimpses of such odd moments, times when my experience of the world around me seemed foreign, altered, disorienting, but it was one day in particular that I go back to now, one when my own unfamiliar reactions to the world were foreign and impactful enough to compel me to log the experience in my field notes.

We were rushing, myself, my co-workers and volunteers, accompanying an elderly parishioner in her wheelchair to the Toulon cathedral on our way for Easter mass after a long day of work at the Rocher center. As we were passing through the bustling streets, passing by shops, restaurants, people smoking, chatting, going their way, I had the distinct and startling feeling that I did not belong to the same world inhabited by these people. I felt that I belonged to a different world, a Catholic world, a cleaner and more self-aware world, where one reflected on one's life and one's obligations to others, and one's place in the world. I felt I belonged to a world where people cared, and did something about it.

Working full time as a volunteer for the Rocher, my days were filled by much more than simply attending to or documenting the NGO's activities and interactions with the population inhabiting the *cité* in which it operated. During the months of my

work I was living in the cité itself, sharing my home with two other volunteers, attended mass daily and spent one hour a day in prayer, praise and eucharistic adoration alongside my fellow volunteers. Like them, I also shared fully in the ritual life of the Emmanuel community. Weekly evening prayer groups and community weekends punctuated my year, alongside various sacred days and holidays, becoming an integral part of my living routine. Gradually but surely, the world “outside” seemed to diminish, to dull down. It became, at times, baffling in its superficial preoccupations and in what increasingly seemed to me to be a sad emptiness. Recognizing the foreignness of this perspective, however, did little to diminish it. As we were walking the streets of Toulon, people rushing or chatting about the streets seemed to me as if they were living an almost mindless, meaningless existence. As I shared this experience with my friends and co-workers they seemed familiar with it themselves. I was experiencing what it felt like to be, it seemed, “*in* the world, but not *of* the world”.

Being in the world but not of the world, or what some Christians refer to as the “spiritual battle”, is often used to reference the difficulties inherent to living in a fallen world, where one must endeavor to always avoid the temptation of sin - the difficulties of dwelling in the world, but not partaking of its nature. This notion resonates with a familiar image of Christianity, one of an ascetic religion of transcendence where the valuation of the spirit and contempt for the material corresponds with a disembedding of the individual from the social. For my interlocutors, however, not being *of* the world was only the beginning of the story. The real challenge was not to avoid the world. The real challenge was to truly and fully be *in* it.



While Christianity has long featured in anthropological texts, it is only in the past 15 years or so that an anthropology of Christianity, as a self-conscious intellectual project, has coalesced around Christianity as its main object of study (see Bialecki et al. 2008, Cannell 2006). Although relatively nascent, this literature has now reached the point where certain claims about Christianity and the ways in which it is taken up by local communities have gained a relative consensus among researchers. One such claim is that individualism is a key characteristic of Christianity, and as such, that Christianity introduces individualism into the lives of its converts. This suggestion is largely based on the repeated ethnographic observation that conversion to Christianity seems to push believers to disembed from social ties and obligations. This social disembedding takes various forms across cultural settings, such as the severing of ties with kin (Meyer 2004), withdrawal from social relations as a means of avoiding sin and achieving personal salvation (Robbins 2004), or engagement in communicative practices that do not adhere to social norms and fetters (Errington and Gewertz 1995, see also Keane 2007).

The argument for Christianity's individualizing effect held as consensual until 2010, when Mark Mosko, in his Curl prize winning article "partible penitent", made a forceful argument to the contrary. The emphasis given to individualism within the anthropology of Christianity, claimed Mosko, was erroneous and based on a slanted interpretation of ethnographic data. Drawing on his own ethnography of the Mekeo of Papua New Guinea and a rereading of several ethnographic texts on Melanesian

Christianity, Mosko makes the argument that Christianity, in Melanesia and elsewhere, is best understood not as a religion of individualism, but a religion of dividualism.

The term dividual was first introduced to anthropology by McKim Marriott (1976) in his work on Hinduism. Inspired by Mauss's writings on reciprocity and gift exchange ([1950] 1990), the term was further developed in the writings of Marilyn Strathern (1988), Roy Wagner (1991), Alfred Gell (1998), and the broader body of literature Mosko terms the New Melanesian Ethnography (NME), suggesting that persons, at least in Melanesia, are best understood not as bounded individuals but as "dividual", "partible", "composite" or "distributed"¹⁷. Contrasted with the Western concept of the *individual*, the single bounded entity inherently separated from those with whom it interacts, the Melanesian dividual is a composite being constituted in the process of exchange of "partible bits of the self" with others. This exchange of partible bits occurs through actual exchange and circulation of objects, which in Melanesia cannot be understood as we would an economic exchange of goods in Western terms, but rather must be conceived as a circulation of aspects or essences of the persons engaged in that exchange. The exchange of objects, in other words, is a means of establishing sociality through the gifting and circulation of detachable aspects of the selves, an action that marks and produces persons not as bounded and autonomous, but as shared, dividual, relational.

Christianity, claims Mosko, constitutes dividual persons through similar kinds of exchange relations, which are established in the course of Christian worship between converts, God and other members of the trinity, and it is exactly this

commensurability between Melanesian and Christian models of the person that accounts for Christianity's rapid uptake throughout the region. Mosko does not limit his argument to Melanesia, arguing that since these modes of exchange between believers and divine beings is a general characteristic of Christianity across cultural contexts, we would be better served to consider Christianity's effect upon converts as one of dividualization regardless of the particular sociocultural context in which it operates, and should then regard all Christians as "dividuals". The argument for Christianity's dividualism found purchase outside of Melanesian ethnography, as several scholars of Christianity working in Amazonia (Vilaça 2011) and west Africa (Daswani 2011, Werbner 2011), echoing Mosko's argument that anthropologists have neglected to attend to dividual aspects in their study of Christian communities, have since taken up the task of tracing elements of dividualism or other relational formations in the lives of born-again Christians (see also Bialecki 2015). What these ethnographic accounts collectively point to is that, albeit in diverse manners, dividualism is, at least at times, a characteristic of Christian ethical and ritual life.

Responding to this, Robbins (2015), in a recent installment of this debate, argues that evidence presented by Mosko and other ethnographers who argue for the presence of dividual elements in Christianity does not foreclose his own argument that Christianity introduces individualism to the lives of converts in significant ways. He does so by drawing on the work of Dumont (1994) who argues that individualism, as a value, can never be completely realized in all social domains in any given society. Supporting this argument is the observation that since "all human life grows out of

social relations” it must then be “grounded in holist configurations in order to exist” (2015: 173). Given this, Robbins argues, “the implementation of individualism, when it is implemented at all, is always selective, restricted to only some domains of social life (Dumont 1994: 8–9). Put differently, because human life is in reality social, individualism must always be found in combination with holism” (2015: 173). Robbins argues, then, that evidence of a certain degree of dividuality or “some emphasis on social relatedness” among any social group must always be taken for granted. It therefore follows that among Christian converts, dividual formations would likewise continue to exist, to some degree, alongside individual formations, and that merely demonstrating that *some* dividuality is present in the lives of Christians, as Mosko and others do, is insufficient to make the argument that Christianity is primarily about dividuality.

Making these observations, Robbins suggests we shift the debate away from the question of whether Christianity creates individuals or dividuals, and instead treat individualism as a value, or “something that persons can seek to realize in various social domains” (2015:180). This means that rather than focusing on the question of whether Christianity brings about the actual realization of an individualistic sociality, rendering arguments about Christianity and individualism compelling would require anthropologists to demonstrate that “in social formations where Christianity has become important, individualism often emerges as a prominent value” (2015:180). Robbins positions the term “relationality” and not dividualism as the opposite value to individualism, a distinction I adopt here as well, considering the culture specificity of

the term individual to Melanesia and the fact that as a non-individual formation, individualism does not resonate with the ethnographic case I present here. Robbins's suggestion shifts the terms of the initial debate as formulated by Mosko, namely that Christianity in itself or the manners in which it is taken up locally produce actual social orientations towards either individualism or individualism, to the question of whether Christianity produces one or the other as prominent values, values understood here as ethical aspirations that persons attempt to realize within their sociality.

Of course, these two lines of analyses cannot be completely separated from each other. To say that Christianity advances individualism as a value means that, incomplete as it may be, this ethical project will shape configurations of sociality and of the person within a given society. What this does allow for is the observation that relational and individual formations may exist side by side even as one is valued over the other. Demonstrating that individuality or relationality still exist within Christian social formations, as do Mosko and others, would thus be insufficient to make the argument that Christianity promotes relationality over individualism as a value. What would be necessary is to demonstrate, to paraphrase Robbins, that in social formations where Christianity is important, relationality emerges as a prominent value. Certainly, the ethnographic case I present here would make a strong argument to that effect. In the case of Emmanuel, relationality and not individualism emerges as a prominent value, shaping configurations of sociality and of the person in significant ways, and it is, in part, the aim of this chapter to establish that.

However, by making the case for Emmanuel's relationality I do not seek to

enter into the discussion I have outlined so far by making an argument that Christianity in itself promotes relationality rather than individualism. First, the ethnographic accounts arguing for one position or the other, along with my own data, lead me to the conclusion that in certain contexts Christianity may inspire more individually oriented social formation and in others, more relational ones, rather than that Christianity per se is either about individualism or relationality. I would argue that in accounting for some of the differences observed by Robbins and Mosko it is significant, for example, that Robbins's interlocutors converted to a Protestant Pentecostal type of Christianity, while Mosko's converted to Catholicism and eventually Charismatic Catholicism. Accordingly, I suggest that we abandon the either/or position on Christianity and individualism and instead focus on a comparative understanding of the reasons and conditions under which one formation or the other emerge as a more meaningful and prominent in the lives of Christian persons. Second, and perhaps more importantly, I would argue that in treating the key issues arising from this debate we would be well served to address them not exclusively within the analytical framework of the anthropology of Christianity – as a question about Christianity per se - but in the context of the broader anthropology of religion and the anthropology of the self and person.

The Anthropology of Christianity Per Se?

The question of whether the anthropology of Christianity as an intellectual project in its own right or a sub-sub-field of anthropology is a justified or fruitful

venture seems to be plaguing this growing field since the early days of its conception. In a 2008 piece titled *The Anthropology of Christianity Per Se?* Chris Hann examines three defining texts of the anthropology of Christianity (Robbins 2003, Cannell 2006a, and Engelke and Tomlinson 2006), to make the argument that an anthropology of Christianity is a problematic and perhaps even intellectually unjustified intellectual project.

As I read it, Hann's critique touches on four distinct but interrelated points. First, drawing on an essay by historian Tamar Frankiel (2003: 283), Hann questions whether "traditional anthropological concerns" would be served by the creation of a comparative project centered exclusively on Christianity. Citing Frankiel's observations that characteristics which contributors to an edited volume on Christianity treat as uniquely Christian can be found in other world religions, Hann suggests that while contributors to the volume make the case that there are "insights to be gained from the comparative study of contemporary Pentecostalism, the case made in this collection for a more general 'anthropology of Christianity' is less convincing" (Hann 2008: 395), and so that "If transcendence, asceticism, the dialectics of orthodox versus heretical, mediating institutions etc are not peculiar to Christianity after all, then what is left to justify demarcating the anthropology of Christianity as a field of study?" (2008: 402). Furthermore, considering the significant variation in Christian denominations and traditions, the distinct historical and cultural contexts in which these various forms of Christianity have taken root, as well as anthropologists' apparent inability to clearly demarcate their object of study (e.g. Cannell 2006b), Hann

questions whether defining Christianity as a single object of study is even possible.

More than that, in delineating their intellectual agenda, Hann's critique goes on, anthropologists of Christianity have failed to properly contextualize Christianity in its broader historical context, review existing anthropological texts on Christianity, as well as include in their comparative project any perspectives from Eastern Christianities, focusing disproportionately on Western and particularly Protestant Pentecostalism and Evangelical Christianity (see also Howell 2003). All this has shaped the intellectual agenda of the anthropology of Christianity in a manner that led to certain analytic biases, such as the stress on individualism as well as rupture as a model of Christian change, as opposed to continuity and "collectivist understandings of personhood and intentionality" (Hann 2008: 404) characteristic of Eastern Christianities.

Hann (2008: 406) concludes his essay by suggesting that in light of such difficulties the project of the anthropology of Christianity might better be abandoned:

Given these difficulties, would it not make more sense to proceed on the basis of *problems*, rather than treat the major traditions as the key entities? For example, one might compare Christian and non-Christian ideas about transcendence, or Catholic ideas and institutions of mediation to the divine to those of Islam (see Wolf 1984), or Orthodox ideas about the accommodation of the world and the body with those of Buddhism, or Catholic, Orthodox, Islamic and Buddhist pilgrimage practices. The comparisons need not be limited to the so called world religions: Protestant notions of the person might fruitfully be compared and contrasted with those of eastern Christian traditions on the one hand and those of African religious systems on the other.

In the seven years since the publication of Hann's essay, much of the critique he

raises has been addressed to varying degrees by anthropologists who remain committed to the idea of maintaining an anthropology of Christianity as a distinct intellectual project. Bialecki (2012), for example, addresses what he sees as the anthropology of Christianity's refusal or inability to clearly define its own object of study, which he roots in an anthropological commitment to nominalist ontology¹⁸. Drawing on Deleuze's concept of the virtual, Bialecki argues for the ontological basis of Christianity, in spite of its many manifestations (see also Bialecki 2015). Likewise, in recent years, anthropologists working with Catholics, Orthodox and other non-Pentecostal or Evangelical Christians have begun shifting debates and conversations within the anthropology of Christianity (cf. Robbins 2014).

Within that, Hann's and others' (e.g. Scott 2005) concerns that rather than demarcating a single religion as a domain for comparison we would be better served to concern ourselves with problems or questions which span across religious traditions as the core of our comparative project, I believe, remains valid. This, however, does not in itself void the anthropology of Christianity of any value as an intellectual endeavor. Rather than becoming invested in an argument about whether or not the anthropology of Christianity is a worthwhile or justified intellectual project we might take the pragmatic position and note that, critique notwithstanding, the anthropology of Christianity has been going on for a while now and has created the opportunity for scholars studying Christian communities to be in fruitful conversation with each other, just as has the anthropology of Islam, oddly without garnering any calls for its dissolution by anthropologists of religion or otherwise. Moreover, it has not yet been

ascertained that there is nothing new or worthwhile for us to learn from an intra-Christian comparative project.

As such, this project is at once benefitting from recent debates taking place within the anthropology of Christianity, aims to contribute to this body of literature by providing an ethnographic case that would further aid in extending its comparative breadth, while at the same time engaging with concepts or problems which transcend the boundaries of Christianity per se, ultimately aiming at positioning the debate on Christianity in the broader project of the anthropology of religion, as well as in dialogue with the anthropology of the self and person. Before getting on with our argument, however, we must first clarify what exactly we are talking about when referring here to individual, dividual or relational formations of the self or person.

Value, Person, and Self Process

As the reader familiar with the anthropology of the self will have noted by now, but for its particular focus on Christianity, the debate on individualism and dividualism is reminiscent of the older anthropological debate on sociocentrism and egocentrism. Dominating much of the literature on self and person in the 1980s and early 1990s, the debate on the sociocentric and egocentric self grew out of an anthropological preoccupation with establishing the particularity and culture-boundedness of the Western concepts of the self and person, specifically by demonstrating that they were not shared across cultures. The Western self, to invoke Clifford Geertz's often quoted passage, is characterized in this literature as a "bounded, unique, more or less

integrated motivational and cognitive universe, a dynamic center of awareness, emotion, judgment and action organized into a distinctive whole and set contrastively against other such wholes and against its social and natural background” (Geertz 1984[1974] :126) and, far from being a universally shared construct, this Western self, according to Geertz, was “a rather *peculiar* idea within the context of the world's cultures”.

Contrasted with the egocentric, bounded and independent Western self, the non-Western self, it was argued, was relational, interdependent or sociocentric (see Shweder and Bourne 1984, Markus and Kitayama 1991). The non-Western self is characterized in this literature as oriented to, and primarily preoccupied with societal demands, norms and conventions, where individual interests come second to collective ones (Kondo 1990), as “unindividuated” as opposed to “individuated” (Marsella 1985: 209), as less differentiated from others and the world and characterized by fluid self-other boundary (Sampson 1988), or as “interdependent” rather than “independent”, a “self-in-relation-to-other” (Markus and Kitayama 1991: 4-5). Strathern’s argument about the dividuality of Pacific people (see also Becker 1995, Kirkpatrick and White 1985; Lutz 1988) on which much of the current debate about dividuality and individuality in Christianity draws features squarely within this broader debate.

As is often the case with such binary arguments, the sociocentric/egocentric dichotomy soon collapsed. Anthropologists began to note that sociocentric selves were to be found in supposedly egocentric societies and vice versa (Hollan 1992, Holland and Kipnis 1994, Kusserow 1999, Jenkins 1991), while others were arguing that data

used to make a case for either sociocentrism or egocentrism could be used to reach the opposite conclusion (Lindholm 1997). One of the more important result of this debate, other than in simply pointing out that the sharp dichotomies drawn in the literature (made particularly prevalent even outside of anthropology by Marcus and Kitayama's influential 1991 essay) were "wildly overdrawn" (Spiro 1993: 116), was in pointing to the prevalent confusion about the concept of the self and the apparent conflation in the literature between cultural conceptions of the self and the self as an existential locus of experience. As Spiro (1993) demonstrate in his review of the literature, when talking about the "self" or "person", anthropologists have been variously referring to either cultural conceptions of the self, the person's own conceptions of the self, the person's representations of their own self, and the person's actual experience of oneself, without making a clear distinctions between these categories or acknowledging that they need not overlap.

Going back to the debate on the Christian person, we observe the same failure to clearly define the terms of the discussion insofar as what the actual object of study is when we refer to Christian persons or selves (both terms are used by different authors) as dividual or individual. Mosko and Robbins themselves, for example, seem to be preoccupied with slightly different phenomena or questions - Mosko, with actual formations of the self or person (although he does not seem to draw a line between cultural concepts of the person and actual experience of the self), and Robbins with ethical value systems pertaining to personhood and sociality. To avoid further confusion and conflation, before proceeding with any kind of argument, we must first

then clarify the exact terms of our discussion and further contextualize it in the anthropology of self and person.

Much of the Anthropological literature on the self and person can be broadly framed in terms of two classical essays, Marcel Mauss's *The Category of the Person: the notion of person, the notion of self* (1985 [1938]), and Irving Hallowell's *The Self and its Behavioral Environment* (1955). Mauss's essay is primarily concerned with investigating the cultural construction and historical trajectory of the concept or category of the person/self, something which he does by tracing the evolution of the category of the person throughout human history. Starting his analysis with notions of the "role" (*personnage*) as represented in names or masks in tribal societies, Mauss moves on to the concept of the *persona* in India and ancient China, and then in Rome, at which point the *persona* becomes not simply a general role, but is tied with notions of citizenship, kinship and character (slaves, for example, had no *persona*), and on to modern times, where the juridic entity of the *persona* is transformed into the moral entity of the person vis-à-vis the Christian concept of the unity of the person of God. The Christian "moral person" (*personne morale*) is a "rational substance, indivisible and individual" (1985: 20) and is later transformed, Mauss suggests, under the influence of various sectarian movements in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, into a psychological being, the point at which the concept of the person becomes equal with that of the self: "the 'person' (*personne*) equals the 'self' (*moi*); the 'self' (*moi*) equals consciousness, and is its primordial category." (1985: 21). Anthropology's

continued preoccupation with different cultural iterations of concepts of personhood, then, can be read as continuing this earlier agenda set by Mauss.

Alongside studies focused on cultural concepts of the person, an anthropology concerned with what Hollan (1992) termed the “experiential self” began to develop, produced primarily by psychological anthropologists. This body of literature tends to draw on phenomenologically-oriented or psychologically-sensitive approaches to the study of the self and person. The need for anthropologists to go beyond an examination of cultural representations of the person grew with mounting data that cultural models “may not coincide neatly with personal experience and may ignore, obscure, and even misrepresent aspects of experience” (Wellenkamp 1988a: 488, also Levy 1984: 218-228, Hollan 1992). Hollan (1992), for example, demonstrates boundedness of the self among the Toraja, who hold a sociocentric model of the person, and evidence for relationality among Euro-Americans who hold an egocentric model of the person, while Howard (1985) argues that in spite of the fact that Western concepts of the self define it as bounded, experientially it reveals itself to be relational. Noting this, Hollan suggests anthropologists move beyond a focus on cultural models of the self/person, a focus he argues blinds us to what goes on at the experiential level of the self, and attend to the manners in which certain experiential aspects of the self become more or less developed (hypocognized or hypercognized in Levy’s [1973] terms) in a given cultural context.

It is largely this tradition, specifically a cultural phenomenological approach (Csordas 1994a, 1994b) based on the work of Irving Hallowell (1955, 1960) that I

draw on in my discussion of self and person throughout this text. For Hallowell, the self is equivalent to self-awareness, or one's recognition of oneself as an "object in a world of objects". The self, Hallowell argues, takes shape within a "culturally constituted behavioral environment" (1955: 86) which provides selves with basic orientations to others, to objects, to spatial and temporal frameworks, and to values or ideals, which "serve as conditions for self-awareness" (Csordas 1994c: 334). Importantly, as Csordas notes, objects within this behavioral environment include not only natural objects, but "culturally reified objects" including supernatural beings. The concept of behavioral environment, then, as Csordas puts it, "did more than place the individual in culture, linking behavior to the objective world, but also linked perceptual processes with social constraints and cultural meanings." (1997: 64).

Drawing on Hallowell's notion of self as orientational, but taking into account the collective interactional processes through which selves are reconstituted, Csordas offers us a definition of self and of person which can account for both processes of routinization and of transformation. The self, Csordas (1994a: 5) suggests, "is neither substance nor entity, but an indeterminate capacity to engage or become oriented in the world, and it is characterized by effort and reflexivity," a process of attunement and orientation to the environment that is enacted through the bodily processes of perception. Personhood within this framework is the result of such processes of attunement, which Csordas refers to as self-processes, or "orientational processes in which aspects of the world are thematized, with the result that the self is objectified, most often as a 'person' having a cultural identity or set of identities." The person,

then, is an already “cultural constituted *representation* of self.” (Csordas 1994a: 5).

Importantly, the self is treated throughout this text not only as constituted through orientational processes but also as inherently intersubjective. As Csordas notes, the self in Hallowell’s account emerges as an isolated cogito, acting and orienting in its behavioral environment, with the intersubjective or interactional element involved in the constitution of selfhood largely ignored. The concept of self as it is used throughout this text, however, always already presupposes the other, the self never a constant thing, but a relation, defined by its position to, and interaction with others. This approach draws on symbolic interactionist conceptions of the self, as articulated in the work of G.H. Mead (1972[1934]) who formulates the constitution the reconstitution of the self through processes of self-objectification rooted in the quasi-dissociative or reorienting move of ‘taking the role of the other’¹⁹, as well as on more radical formulations of intersubjectivity such as the one articulated in Buber’s notion of the self as a relation, in the sense that human subjectivity is always already oriented and is remade in light of its orientation to otherness, locating the locus of the self in the ‘in between’²⁰.

In characterizing the self as orientational and relational, however, I do not mean to suggest that it is, as much of current anthropological lore would have us believe, fragmentary, illusory, or purely situational (e.g. Battaglia 1995, Dissanayake 1996, Ewing 1990, Rosaldo 1984). This “over-commitment to a contemporary anthropological view of the self as fragmentary, shifting, and inconsistent”, as Quinn (2006: 363) puts it, is due to a large degree to the fact that the preferred working

definition of the self favored by most cultural anthropologists is that of the self as self-representation, or “the individual’s mental representation of his own person” (Spiro 1993: 109). Katherine Ewing (1990: 255), for example, in her influential and oft-cited article *The Illusion of Wholeness: Culture, Self, and the Experience of Inconsistency*, makes an explicit argument that due to the anthropological interest in symbols which are “collective representations”, it should follow that “the culturally shaped ‘self’ that is the object of anthropological study ... be understood in this sense, that of self-representation.” Any other aspects of the self or of self-experience, according to Ewing, should be left outside of anthropological inquiry. Since people have various and shifting self-representations, it follows in Ewing’s analysis that the self as a unitary entity is an illusion, a notion broadly shared by many cultural anthropologists today. This illusion, the very notion of “the ‘transcendent self’ of ego psychology and some psychological anthropology, a self perduring, continuous, impermeable, unitary, and universally sought after” (Battaglia 1995: 2-3), is nothing but a particular, ethnocentric, “Western” (read: suspect) notion. Referring us to the work of D.W. Murray (1993) and Marcus (1991: 16), however, Quinn (2006: 365) makes the point that “a concept of the self as fragmentary and self-integration as illusory has just as long and venerable tradition in western thought,” making Battaglia’s “vanishing act” on the self no less “ethnocentric” as would the treatment of the self as “transcendent” and continuous.

From a phenomenological perspective, such as the one we are taking here in defining our concept of self, although the self is not a thing or an entity, it is

nonetheless characterized by a degree of underlying experiential coherence that is, at least partially, anchored in our very experience of inhabiting a physical body that is distinct from those of others (see Mauss 1985) and supported by the “flow of embodied, self-related information to the brain and self-regulatory mechanisms that organize this information into a consisted, integrated experience of self at the cognitive level” (Seligman 2010: 300, see also Damasio 1995, LeDoux 2002). When I speak of the self or of self process throughout this text, then, I am referencing this implicit, un-cognized, embodied sense of self, and differentiate this from both cultural concept of the person (in the Maussian sense), as well as the person’s own representations of their own self. Making these distinctions is important not only for the sake of clarity of analysis and comparison, but also since this particular phenomenologically-informed definition of self is at the base of processes of self-transformation I identify throughout the text, processes the locus of which, I argue, originates in a disruption of this implicit, un-cognized sense of self (see also Itzhak 2015).

RELATIONALITY AND SELF PROCESS IN EMMANUEL

Having delineated the differences between cultural concepts of the person, representations of the self, and experience of self, we can now establish the manners in which relationality, which I argue here emerges in the case of Emmanuel as what Robbins (2015) calls a prominent value, shapes configuration of sociality and of the person and as well as orients self-process in significant ways. We continue from here on, then, to attend to two levels of analysis – that of value shaping sociality and

personhood, and that of process shaping selfhood, with the understanding that although these two processes are distinct they do feed into and orient each other. The argument I wish to advance here, then, engages both debates developed within the anthropology of Christianity on the question of individuality and relationality as values, and with the anthropology of the self on the question of self formation and transformation. In making my argument, analysis in this chapter centers on three broad relational contexts: the personal relationship Emmanuel members form with God, the relationship with other community members and finally the relationship with the wider Catholic or non-Christian society as expressed in members' conception of conversion and evangelization.

The Personal in the Social - finding God in Social Relations

In his 1985 essay, *A modified view of our origins: the Christian beginnings of modern individualism*, Louis Dumont argues that the concept of the individual developed in Christianity is anchored in a replacement of the person's obligatory ties to society with those to God. Like the figure of the Indian ascetic renouncer, the Christian individual is primarily devoted to his own salvation, detached from the social world, his gaze fixed not inwardly but outwardly, not to this earthly life, but to the promise of eternal life in communion with God. It is the renunciation of lateral social obligations, the creation of the "individual-in-relation-to-God" that Dumont, following Protestant theologian Ernst Troeltsch, considers to be the concept of the person derived from the teaching of Christ.

Indeed, much of the evidence of Christianity's individualizing effect on converts within the anthropology of Christianity is measured as a function of a withdrawal from this-world sociality and a reorientation towards God. In the context of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity, where God is often conceived of not as a distant and punitive figure, but as a close and loving companion with whom believers seek to establish a direct and personal relationship, this reorientation to God is often achieved through cultivating believers' capacities to imaginably experience and interact with the divine, often through the exercising of Charisms (e.g. Luhrmann 2012, Csordas 1994a, Bialecki 2015).

As charismatics, members of Emmanuel are likewise committed to establishing a close and personal relationship with God. They, too, speak and sing in tongues, utter words of prophecy and words of knowledge, engage in spiritual healing, and cast out demons - spiritual gifts which they believe are a direct form of communication from a loving God. On occasion, they too would receive a direct message from God in the course of prayer, a message they experience as a thought or a sensation, a presence, a voice or an image that forms in the eyes of their mind. However, more often and to a much greater degree, my interlocutors experienced God not directly, through image, sound, thought or sensation, but indirectly, as immanent in their social relations with others. Rather than abandoning social ties in favor of a relation with the divine, then, in Emmanuel, the personal, vertical relationship with God is itself transposed into and expressed through the establishment of lateral social relations with others.

I examine here how this process of transposition takes place in three different

domains: in the context of daily life, through interaction with spouses, parents, children, friends or even complete strangers; in the work of Emmanuel's emergency prayer phone service, *SOS Prière*; and finally, through one of the community's institutions, *la Croix Glorieuse* (the Glorious Cross), created by the community to address the suffering of members who live with chronic and debilitating illness. Examining the relation established between believers and God and the manners in which this relation is repositioned and read through real social relations with others, I argue two things: first, that the transposition of the divine into social relations serves both to affirm sociality, highlighting the centrality of relationality as a value in Emmanuel, as well as to imbue the social itself with a sense of the divine; and second, that this positions the locus of self-process, and hence of self-transformation also in the social, or in the establishment of real social relations. This is the case, I suggest, since the locus of self-transformation is in moments where the presence of the divine is experienced as disrupting one's habitual and implicit sense of self in a manner that reorients one's perceptual perspective. The transposition of the divine into social relations also means that on a practical level, these transformative processes don't take place exclusively (or even primarily) in the course of ritual, but extend into daily life, resulting in at least a potential sacralization of social interaction.

I then examine the work of community-making, pointing to the fact that, unlike the tendency observed elsewhere to retreat from sociality, for members of Emmanuel, the act of purposefully enacting a community is in itself an ethical project and an approximation to the divine, facilitated not through the avoidance of social friction,

observed in such ethnographic cases such as Robbins's (2004) but by plunging purposefully into it, the establishment of sociality construed not as a conduit towards sin, but a safeguard against it. Finally, I examine the community's attitudes and efforts towards conversion and evangelization, pointing to the fact that these efforts which are supposedly concerned primarily with the individual transformation of non-believers into believers are likewise defined and enacted by Emmanuel by means of creating relations rather than attempting to effect change directly. A detailed examination of how evangelization as well as NGO development efforts, projects which are concerned with global scale salvation, are actually lived by members of Emmanuel and the Catholic volunteers they recruit is taken up in chapters three and four.

Meeting God in the Everyday

Inspired by those ethnographic cases where persons imaginably interacted with God, heard, felt and saw God, I often asked people whether and how they spoke with God in their daily lives. The great majority of my interlocutors asserted that they indeed received messages from God. When asked to provide examples, however, they would invariably recount to me a social interaction they had with another person. This was the case of Clement, who felt he had received a life-changing message from God in the early days of his career as a special-needs teacher, a profession he disliked and felt he had been coerced into through parental pressure:

... and one day, I had crossed paths with a friend of my father's. He had studied philosophy at a very, very high level. Yes, at a serious level. And all his life he worked in commerce, he was selling tires for Michelin. That's what he did. And one day I met him and he asked

me, how is it going, you work? It's going well? And so I told him, I'm working with disabled people and I find it very difficult, because it's not what I should be doing. He told me, what should you be doing? And I said, I would like to create art, I love to paint and design, or if not, to study geography, since that's also my passion. And he told me, you know? Me neither, I wasn't made to sell tires. What interests me is to read philosophy and teach philosophy, all the time. And he said, we don't always do what we love, but we can always love what we do. Voila. And through him, the Lord spoke to me. Because I brought myself to love what I was doing. And this had changed everything in my life. It helped me to look at the world differently. This was good. It was illuminating. The lord spoke to me through this man. And in the same way, when I am in the silence of adoration, I look at the world through very different eyes. And this is what adoration has allowed me. To see things in their reality. To look at the cup half full and not half empty. What is empty is not the reality. The reality is what is full.

What was it that made Clement interpret the tire salesman's words to him as a message from God? The key lies in the effect the words had. Not only was the exchange with the man transformational, in the sense that it positively impacted Clement's life, helping him to accept his profession and find fulfillment in his job; it was also a moment of disorientation, surprise, a moment of "illumination", in Clement's words, through which he was able to see his reality through "different eyes", an experience he likens to the manner in which the silent adoration and contemplation of God incarnate in the Eucharist allows him to look at the world "through very different eyes." Divine presence is identified here by its strangeness, its experiential foreignness to the self, and experienced as a disruption of Clement's habitual sense of perception to such a degree that it results in a reframing of an aspect of his life. Both the encounter with God incarnate in the Eucharist, and the interaction with the tire salesman become, in other words, the locus of a self process of

reconfiguration and reobjectification of Clement's personhood. What we see here, then, rather than a separation between the social and the divine, is a transposition of the locus of divine presence into the social, evident in Clement's openness to hearing God speak to him from the lips of his father's friend.

God made himself evident through relations in other ways as well. Not unlike Clement, Gilles also felt that his interaction with God was made possible primarily through others, but for him those experiences of the divine were not evident primarily in such moments of perceptual disorientation, illumination or realization, but in the very substance of everyday life:

...often, the manner of being loved by God passes through someone else. I receive, I understand, I live the love of God because you love me, and you love me, and you love me. And you look at me with a *bienveillance* (goodwill) that touches me. And this *bienveillance* comes from God. So this is the economy of the Lord, it works like that, the love is redistributed [...] And so, in order to live our mission, which is a mission of comforting, that is a mission of a gaze of hope (*regard d'espérance*), you need to have the gaze of hope staring at you, you need to have another person look at you with that gaze of hope. I receive the gaze of hope from God through the eyes of Claire, or Jean Paul, or others. They look at me, they know me, from the beginning, they know my weakness, and they forgive me. They accept me as I am. And so through their manner of being with me, they demonstrate that God has a tenderness for me, that he admires my qualities, and he forgives my weakness and my sin. My brothers do the same with me. And it's like that that I capture, that I receive the love of God. This love of God, later I can re-give it, I can pass it on in my mission.

God, for Gilles, reveals himself in the love he experiences from other community members. God's goodwill is evident in that of others, and it is this love and acceptance, the warm gaze of hope, that he feels allow him to love others in turn. God

was embodied in others, however, not only as a loving, benevolent presence, or as a means of helping one see one's life from a different, positive perspective. For some of my interlocutors, God was immanent in others in instances where social interaction revealed itself to be taxing and unpleasant, when the presence of the other was something one wished to avoid. It was those times that Jeanne recounted to me when talking to me about the presence of God in the social.

“It wasn't just the class difference. It was also because, well... our family has *problems* that Caroline's parents didn't want her to marry Alain.” By “problems” Jeanne was referring to the fact that of her five sons, the firstborn, Antoine, had Down syndrome, and the second, Patrice, was suffering from a rare degenerative disease that progressively deprived him of his physical capacities. When Alain and Caroline declared to their families they wished to marry, Caroline's parents were clearly not in favor of the union. Having “two handicapped children” in Alain's family was good enough reason for her to not marry him. The latest reminder of the difficulties of disability, this was certainly not the hardest moment in Jeanne and her husband's lives. “Raising handicapped children”, Jeanne once told me, “was the harshest thing. It's like a light, a strong light of truth that shines on you all the time, showing you the hardness of your heart, showing you that you don't love your children, that you love your other, normal children better. You can't escape it, there is nowhere to go.” But the judgment of God did not descend on Jeanne from above. It was in her youngest son's eyes that she could see God's light shining on her, it was through his reproachful words – “mother, don't yell at them, they do not know what they are doing”²¹ – that she could

hear God speaking to her, exposing to her the hardness of her heart, reminding her of her inability to love her disabled children.

Jeanne's tearful confession took me by surprise. This was not only because of her previous assertion that it was her experience of God's love that allowed her to love her children, but also since in the course of my fieldwork and the months I had lodged at her home I had observed what seemed to me like the endless care she had for both her disabled sons. When Patrice fell into a coma shortly before Christmas of 2012, Jeanne spent an hour each day for three weeks singing by his bedside. Having been told that people in comas could hear, she refused, in her words, "to let him stay in that silence." I knew how terribly difficult this was for her, sitting at the university hospital, singing praise songs to God by her son's bed, as doctors and nurses walked by and stared, their thoughts evident in furtive, embarrassed glances - "not only a Catholic," they seemed to say, "but one of those crazy ones who sing." Two days after he woke from his coma, Patrice expressed his bafflement that while he slept, in the next room, a woman kept singing praise songs to God.

I often accompanied Jeanne on her weekly visits to her sons as well as to her mother, who was suffering from Parkinson's disease and lived in a nursing home close by. One day, following a visit to her mother, as we were sipping tea in the kitchen, she told me:

I was thinking about the Gospel today, about Jesus telling his followers, 'I was hungry and thirsty, sick and alone, and you did not care for me'. When his followers said they didn't remember ever not caring for him in this way, he said to them 'every time you denied care for others who were sick or in need, you denied it to me, you turned me away'²². This is what I remind myself when I'm with my mother, when she just sits there and she can't talk, and I just sit there

next to her, or with Antoine, or Patrice, when they make me angry, and I feel I have no patience. I look at them and I remember that when I am with them, I am with God. My mother, she can't talk much, and I don't talk much when I'm with her. But I try to be present. To sit with her, not to do other things, just like during Eucharistic Adoration. And every once in a while, she raises her eyes and looks at me, to see that I am there. We don't talk. But she knows I am there.

For Jeanne, then, the transposition of God into social relations appears to be purposeful and active, the invocation of the divine aimed at facilitating social interactions she finds difficult and taxing. The experience of God as immanent in social relations, however, is not limited to his presence in others. Members of Emmanuel also feel themselves, at times, as imbued with divine substance. This is evident, for example, in the manners in which particular prayer practices are lived in Emmanuel. Eucharistic adoration is a meditative-like prayer practice which all members of the community commit to practicing regularly, preferably for one hour a day. Adoration is simple, consisting of sitting silently in front of the exposed sacrament, believed by Catholics to embody the real presence of Christ, incarnate in the bread host through transubstantiation. Unlike kataphatic prayer practices that are centered on augmenting God's "realness" by actively engaging him through imaginal interaction (Luhmann 2012), or Buddhist meditative practices that are aimed at training the mind into a state of unattachment (Varela et al 1992), adoration is primarily a process of establishing a state of co-presence with Jesus, one of observing and being observed by a caring deity. It is an exercise of faith that is founded on the willingness to acknowledge Jesus's real presence in the Eucharist even when such presence is not imaginally evident. The time passed in prayer is not primarily geared

towards establishing an active, verbal communication with God, asking for help, advice or direction, but rather is aimed at “keeping God company”, observing God and being observed by God in return. My interlocutors often likened adoration to sitting in silence with a friend or loved one.

Adoration was necessary, I was told, not merely or primarily to establish a relationship with God, however, but in order to facilitate love in one’s social relations. Christ, as a presence of absolute unconditional love, in this instance, is thought to radiate forth from the Eucharist and enter those who are seated in front of him, likewise filling them with love for their fellow human beings. Emmanuel’s self-definition in terms of the three Charisms or spiritual gifts of Adoration, Compassion, and Evangelization, clearly outlines this supposed process. It is through the practice of *Adoration* that one is filled with an unbound divine love, which, translated into a *Compassion* for all mankind finally motivates community members to *Evangelize* the world. Adoration, then, is ultimately geared towards the enactment of a communal, social and ultimately global project of salvation, rather than merely a personal one. What is enfolded in this process, then, again, is not a withdrawal from the social in favor of the divine, but a pulling in of the divine into the social, in this case through the bodies of believers who become, through prayer, imbued with the real presence of God.

Having reviewed the various manners in which believers’ relationship with God is transposed into social relations with others, the argument could be made, however, that in projecting God into social relations what we are really seeing is an

effacing of the social; this, in the sense that all sociality could be seen as being reduced into instances of personal communication with the divine, coming at the expense of the agency, identity or actual alterity of the social other. This, however, would miss the true work that such a repositioning achieves. The momentary transposition of the divine into relations does not result in a consistent effacement of the identity or the agency of social actors. What it does achieve is a *reorientation* of the manners in which one perceives and engages with the other, and furthermore, one which is specifically geared towards the affirmation and facilitation of social relations. Love, understood as divine in origin, then, reveals itself here not as an emotion or an ethical call to action, but as a Charism, as a means of momentarily disrupting and then realigning or reorienting one's habitual mode of being in the world with others. Love becomes an exercise in change, real social relations a site for self process and the locus of self-transformation.

God in the Word: SOS Prière

Another way in which the relationship with God is repositioned into horizontal ties is evident in Emmanuel's prayer-come-healing practice, *SOS Prière*. Healing is not one of Emmanuel's Charisms, and the community purposefully downplays healing in its ritual life, particularly in its public engagement. Treated with ambivalence, healing is considered by members of Emmanuel to attract people to the church with the promise of miracles and wonders, but often engenders no true faith, something which can only be anchored in an authentic and profound encounter with the person of Jesus

Christ. The only two public exceptions to this general policy²³ are the annually held “day of prayer for the sick” – a day-long mass healing service attended by thousands of pilgrims each year at the site of Paray-le-Monial, and *SOS Prière* the community’s nation-wide telephone hot line service aimed at alleviating psychological suffering through prayer.

Founded as a service in 1979, the idea for *SOS Prière* occurred to a member of the community when, spending long days in the hospital where his brother lay sick, found himself in need of someone to pray with. At that moment of acute distress, he called one of his fellow community members, who prayed with him on the phone, an experience from which he drew great consolation and strength. The establishment of the service, the explicit purpose of which was “to allow those who wish it, to always find someone with whom to pray” soon followed. The service is active in France, where the community regularly employs 400 volunteer “listeners” (*écoutants*) throughout the year, as well as in the Netherlands and several other Francophone countries. The community reports an approximate number of 100,000 annual calls throughout Europe. An online service has already been initiated, and the community’s next goal is to expand the hot line’s reach to the entire francophone world.

The basic principle of the service is quite simple: specially trained community members who serve as “listeners” sit in front of the Eucharist equipped with a cellular phone, and take calls from people dialing the ‘hot line’. The typical caller seeks the service to alleviate some form of psychological distress, typically caused by what community members refer to as “the social maladies of our time” such as social

isolation, poverty, substance abuse, unemployment, and family or marital problems.

The call normally starts with the caller explaining and recounting the cause of their distress. The “listeners”, true to their name, are not to provide any form of advice or counseling, but must only listen, patiently and without judgment. This is considered to be a spiritual exercise in its own right, as some of the instructions given to listeners indicate: “listening allows us to enter into a passivity, into the Silence of the Spirit. If I reason while the other speaks, I stop listening. Listening requires me to open myself to the Holy Spirit by renouncing my own thoughts, demanding of me patience and humility.” The effort of listening is double, for the effective “listener” must reach a state of being able to both listen to the person calling, as well as be still enough to be able to hear the Holy Spirit in one’s inner state of silence.

Truly hearing the caller entails not merely listening to the content of their speech, or discerning the meaning behind their words, but rather necessitates what members of the community often refer to as “heart to heart communication”: “We listen to *the person*, to who they are, and not simply to what they say; and that we do without the filters of our beliefs or our preconceived notions. Behind what the other says, there is a heart, which is the place where thoughts are born, and therefore where words come from.” I would suggest here, briefly, that this notion, this exercise or attempt, at letting go of one’s “beliefs” or “preconceived notions”, as well as the downplaying of the reason or “the head” in favor of the (mute or wordless) wisdom of the heart is also a self process, one which is based in an attempt to relinquish one’s will or agency to that of the divine, and which I refer to throughout this text as a

displacement or decentering of the self in relation to the divine. We will examine this process in further detail in the next section.

Both listener and caller then pray together. At the end of the prayer, the caller would either be offered, or would ask to receive “a Word”. This is referring to the Word of God, meaning a word or verse from the Bible. At this point the listener would open the bible at random and read aloud a verse or passage from the text, or alternately convey to the caller a single word or verse that comes to their minds, which they discern has been communicated to them by God at that moment. This act typically concludes the conversation, though some callers would later call back to report on the success of the prayer in resolving their presenting problem.

While it is ostensibly aimed at the alleviation of psychological suffering, and as such might be categorized as a healing practice, I would argue that *SOS Prière* is not primarily aimed at the alleviation of psychological distress, but rather is better understood as an effort at community making, and that the practice itself tells us something of value about the manners in which relationality functions as a prominent value for members of Emmanuel. My analysis focuses, again, on the manners in which the relationship with God is repositioned into lateral relations with others, although this functions here in a different manner to that described in the previous section.

In arguing that *SOS Prière* is better conceived of as an effort at community making than a healing practice per se, I focus on two elements of the practice: first, the fact that the listeners must sit in front of the Eucharist – the incarnate presence of God in the Holy Sacrament, and second, the fact that whether or not the Words given to the

callers are perceived as relevant to their presenting problem is of little significance. The reason for both these emphases lies in the fact that the healing efficacy of *SOS Prière* is not conceived of as resulting from a psychodynamically-inspired process of meaning-making, but rather seen as the fruit of a genuine encounter with God. This encounter with God is facilitated through the listener in two ways: first, being present in front of the Eucharist serves not merely to inspire the listener to find the right prayer or word to give to the caller, but is a means of facilitating a connection between the caller and the Eucharist, through the mediation of the person sitting in front of it who, by reaching a state of inner silence and stillness, can serve as a channel between the divine and the caller.

The second way in which an encounter between the caller and God takes place is through the utterance of words by the listener at the time of prayer and afterwards. As is already indicated by the examples I gave above, biblical text is regularly woven into the fabric of Emmanuel daily life. But the use of text in *SOS Prière* is not merely referential. Members of Emmanuel take seriously the biblical notion that “the Word was God” or Jesus’s proclamation “I am the word”, and so, the words given in the course of prayer are understood by listeners to be themselves imbued with the presence of God, and as such they consider their communication to not merely give a message, but to facilitate a co-presence between the caller and the divine. And so, just as listeners are instructed to listen to “*the person*, to who they are, and not simply to what they say”, so in the case of the Word of God – it’s not so much *what the Word says*, as much as *who the Word is*.

This is not to say that the referential meaning of the words given to the caller is of no significance at all, as listeners will avoid reading a passage that might be interpreted as having any kind of “negative” connotation, such as passages containing warnings, condemnations, or expressions of God’s anger. However, passages are certainly not screened for containing a potential answer to, or remedy for, the caller’s plight. One of the listeners I spoke with said she refrained from searching the bible for verses altogether, and instead gave all callers the set “verse of the day” given by the Church, explaining that this practice discourages a kind of “superstitious thinking” among callers, who might search the verse for a direct sign from God or answer to their problem.

Perhaps due to a Protestant slant in this body of literature, one of the more dominant models for understanding Christian language ideologies in the anthropology of Christianity has been that of the “sincere speaker” (Keane 2002²⁴), an ideal communicator who speaks not only truthfully, but spontaneously and without formulaic constraints. The struggle to attain this communicative mode of being has been extensively documented among Christian communities. But what of cases where intentionality is not to be located within the speaker, such as those of *SOS Prière* and other forms of inspired speech, where the inspiration for speech is not of human, but of divine origin? Bielo (2012) suggests that the “sincere speaker” model is still of relevance here, if we consider that the Holy Spirit or God can also be sincere speakers. Drawing on Erving Goffman’s (1979) distinction of animator-author-principal serves here. While in cases of everyday talk, the speaker inhabits all three positions –

animator (performing the utterance), author (creating the words) and principal (ultimately responsible for their consequences) – in cases of inspired speech, the speaker is merely the animator, while God holds responsibility for authoring the words and for their consequences. The result of this is that these forms of inspired speech attain an otherwise unattainable authority.

While this can be considered to be at least partially the case of language use in the context of *SOS Prière*, the “sincere speaker” model does not exhaust the use language is put to in this context. Listeners of *SOS Prière* do not serve as either author or principal of the words they utter as animators, but neither are they merely serving as the voice of God as sincere speaker, sending forth the Words authored by him. Rather, as they see it, they are transmitting God himself through the utterance, as God not only initiated the words, but is actually immanent in them. *SOS Prière*, then, turns away from a model of healing that is geared towards the resolution of a ‘problem’ by providing the caller with divine advice or direction through providing a biblical passage that referentially corresponds to the presenting distress. By emphasizing, instead, the text not as primarily referential in character, but as almost iconic, *SOS Prière* reveals itself to be a project centered on the salvation of the soul - a salvation that would only be made possible by a genuine encounter with God. This, the listeners of *SOS Prière* offer by mediating between the caller and the divine, both by virtue of their presence in front of the exposed Sacrament and through their communication of words imbued with divine presence. Perhaps more importantly, however, in this *SOS Prière* shows itself to be not simply a project of salvation, but a project or *collective*

salvation. For if God is incarnate in the Word, and if no counseling or even consolation are offered to the callers of *SOS Prière*, why not pray alone? Why not open the bible at random in search of an inspirational word or phrase? The reasons for this, I would argue, is that for Emmanuel, salvation is not simply a matter of encountering God as a close, loving person, but rather meeting of God as a close, loving person, through another, actual one.

La Croix Glorieuse - Suffering, Exchange, Intercession

When I met Martine in her country home north of Bordeaux she had been suffering from a debilitating and painful rheumatoid arthritis for over thirty years, a disease she was first diagnosed with when she was only 40 year old. Her husband, who had passed away years earlier was the youngest man in France to have been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease at the age of 37, and so Martine lived alone now, in her beautiful house in the country. I travelled to meet her with a purpose in mind, to talk to her about the *Croix Glorieuse*, the Glorious Cross, the community project of which I heard so much from various friends. As she poured us tea, her aching, disfigured fingers clutching the pot, she tried to explain to me one of the concepts I had a difficulty making sense of during the early months of my fieldwork - the notion that one's pain could be offered to God as sacrifice.

Both Martine and her husband experienced the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in the early 1970s, when the Renewal first found its way to France, but had only joined the community in the early 1980s. They loved the community, Martine explained to

me, but they had never felt like they quite belonged. Everyone around them was young and lively, and they, only in their forties, were already crippled by debilitating illnesses. “That is, that was until the moderator came to visit us one day”, she said, casually referring to Pierre Goursat. “He took our hands in his and he told us, we will make something beautiful of this, we are going to create the *Croix Glorieuse* for people like you, so that you can help the community and the entire world with your prayer.” And so the Glorious Cross was born.

The idea behind this community institution is anchored in a basic valorization of suffering common in Catholicism and often cited with scorn, especially in cases where the apparent valorization or romanticization of such social forms of suffering as poverty is seen as contributing to their perpetuation. For Emmanuel, however, the valorization of suffering is not merely an empty romanticization, as suffering is understood and experienced as a significant point of identification with God in the figure of Jesus on the cross. The *Croix Glorieuse* is based on the notion that those who suffer - particularly so in cases where suffering is chronic and debilitating, a suffering one must metaphorically carry as a cross throughout one’s life - approximate the divine by virtue of this suffering. This proximity is not currently rooted in a glorification of suffering per se, such as in the days where mortification of the flesh was a popular Catholic practice, but in the notion that one’s suffering makes one both more understanding of the suffering of Christ, as well as closer to Jesus by virtue of actual similarity.

The notion that people’s relation to the divine is characterized by differing

degrees of proximity is central to Catholicism in general, and is perhaps most clearly expressed in the concept of the saints and the idea of intercessory prayer. Although they consider power to ultimately only reside in God, and although, as Charismatics, Emmanuel are committed to direct and unmediated communication with the person of Jesus Christ, they do (unlike their American counterparts), regularly pray to and interact with other semi-divine beings, such as the Virgin and various saints. When I once asked why one would rather pray to a saint instead of addressing God directly, as surely that would be more likely to ensure a favorable result, I was explained that the saints are more similar to us, people like us, but ones who have travelled along a considerably longer portion of the path to eternal life, a path that we all endeavor to travel, the path which ends in sainthood. This makes the saints literally closer to God, and it is by the virtue of this proximity to God, and the fact that at the same time they retain their humanness and hence proximity to humans on earth that they can serve as successful mediators or intercede on our behalf with the divine.

The Glorious Cross is based on the same intercessory logic. As a group of community members who suffer from debilitating chronic illnesses, members of the Glorious Cross form an elite prayer group within the community, referred to by Martine as “the heart of the ship” - the inner yet invisible motor located in the center of the community that propels it through continuous intercessory prayer, made possible by members’ supposed relative proximity to the divine. Of note is the fact that the prayers offered by members of the Glorious Cross do not in any way address their own suffering or petition God for the alleviation of their own pain. Rather, prayer is

conducted exclusively for the benefit of others, whether individual members of the community who are encountering specific difficulties, or new projects or organizations within the community that require sustained help through prayer. The Rocher, for example, was a permanent beneficiary of the Glorious Cross prayers as were specific children or people with whom the Rocher worked, and whom the NGO's directors deemed required particular help. And so, members of the Glorious Cross prayed daily for persons or causes specified on a list, which would change and be updated periodically. Beneficiaries of prayer would, of course, be informed by the community of the intercessory prayer undertaken on their behalf.

However, the efficacy of the Glorious Cross's prayers was not thought of as rooted simply in the fact of its members enhanced proximity to the divine, but rather in a process of exchange with the divine. The Glorious Cross, I was told, was about "offering one's pain to God", in exchange for the alleviation of suffering for others. This, the idea of exchanging one's pain and suffering in return for joy and wellbeing for others, struck me as particularly odd. After all, offering one's pain is a gesture that implies sacrifice and a sacrifice of something which one does not value, does not wish to have in the first place, must then be a meaningless gift, such a gift that is unlikely to be reciprocated by God. I must clarify that while suffering was give value by members of Emmanuel, it was not valorized to the degree that would justify treating it like a desirable or valuable part of one's existence. Indeed, none of my interlocutors valued their pain and suffering for what they were, even if they did supposedly bring them closer to God.

During my time with the Rocher, Inès, one of the NGO directors and a consecrated sister in the Emmanuel community was diagnosed with a degenerative disease which caused her significant pain and was limiting her mobility. Although not part of the Glorious Cross, she, like Martine, also cast her suffering in intercessory terms:

What I accept to suffer as an offering today gives life to a body that is bigger, and... I was very touched to see all the places where the Christians were persecuted. I told myself, there was great suffering, and the little suffering that I can live here today could be a balm, a healing for others, it might help them live there, perhaps to live longer. We are not separated from each other. We pass through each other. You see?

I did not see. After insisting to my friends that giving their pain to God was not a worthy sacrifice, their sickness being something they did not actually value or want and so could not be sacrificed, it gradually became evident that the sacrifice they were offering God was not their actual pain and suffering, the actual sickness, which none of my interlocutors actually expected would be 'taken away' through prayer anyway. Rather, what was actually being offered to God was one's resistance or refusal to accept the reality of suffering. What was being offered to God, in other words, is one's independent will. In sacrificing one's will, suffering vicariously gains a value, effectively serving community members to gain something for others through their own acceptance of the cross.

We might consider this a dividual moment in Mosko's terms, insofar as a piece of one's agency, the will to resist suffering, is being given up - not simply in submission to God's will, but in exchange for something of value from God, the

wellbeing of those on behalf of whom they intercede. However, exchange – at least in the sense of barter or gift exchange - is not quite the right concept here. One's will is given to God not quite in an exchanging gesture, but rather as an offering – one's will is relinquished, not strictly exchanged. Rather than a dividual moment, then, the offering of one's suffering to God – the offering of one's will to resist the suffering, since that suffering, too, is the will of God – is a self process aimed at a radical disruption or decentering of the self, not to say an effacement of the self, in relation to the divine.

More importantly for our discussion at this point, however, is the fact that the willful denial of will is also a gesture of sacrificial love, in the sense that it is centered not primarily or exclusively on one's salvation, but on the sustaining of one's community through prayer, through an exchange of sorts with the divine. Similarly, the institution of the Glorious Cross also puts suffering to work in a way that integrates those suffering and often excluded back into the community as valued members, tying them with the same gesture to others within and without the community, which are themselves experiencing difficulties. Intercessory prayer as it is practiced through the institution of the Glorious Cross, then, is a community-building self-process, one which effectively orients members not simply to the divine, but to social others, as members of the same collective body, into people who, to use Inès's words, "pass through each other."

The Community is a School for Love: a push for social friction

As I have stressed throughout this chapter, the argument that Christianity introduces individualism to the lives of its converts is largely supported by the observation that conversion to Christianity is often accompanied by a disembedding from social ties. In his work on the Urapmin of Papua New Guinea Joel Robbins (2015) supports this position by pointing to the fact that a great part of what Urapmin constitute as sin has to do with the establishment of sociality, the processes and the effects of relating to others. For example, the arousal of such emotions as anger, frustration and desire, which are the unavoidable results of social interaction, are understood by the Urapmin as sinful or as indicative of sinning, and the attempt to avoid such sinning is such that it drives the Urapmin to attempt and withdraw from social relations.

Interestingly, a central aspect of Emmanuel ritual life reveals to us a diametrically opposed preoccupation with sociality, not as the medium of sin, but as a conduit for salvation. Emmanuel's preoccupation with the creation of relations is such that significant parts of the community's ritual life as well as broader missionary work is built around a purposeful effort to create social friction, facilitated by encounters with social otherness or alterity, which would provide members with the opportunity to form relations across various divides of difference. The implicit logic behind this is based on the notion that relating under social conditions where conflict or friction are absent poses no real challenge for the formation of relations. I examine here how the push for social friction, and the ethical work that entails, is achieved through a central

institution of community life – the *maisonnée*, or nonresidential community household.

As they do not live together, most members of Emmanuel come into sporadic contact with each other through parish activities, as well as various activities organized by the community such as pilgrimages, teaching seminars, communal prayer sessions and other social events - either at the regional, national, or international level. These are all designed and aimed at bringing community members into regular contact with each other. However, by far the most frequent, intimate and important fashion in which community members come together are the *maisonnée* meetings. The *maisonnée* is a small sharing group, made up of less than ten people that convene once every two weeks in a different member's home. Its stated purpose is to allow community members to share their life experiences in light of God's Word and to provide a forum for spiritual support in the form of advice, group prayer, healing or laying of hands. *Maisonnée* are meant as intimate gatherings where members expose their personal concerns, experiences and insights and reflect on the manners in which God is operating in their lives. As they are meant to provide community members a safe, criticism-free space for sharing, members of the group do not comment on the content of each person's reflections, but serve primarily in a listening capacity.

Maisonnée groups are assigned each year by the regional *responsable* and include both lay and consecrated members of the community, ideally from different walks of life or socioeconomic background. It is significant that this should be the case, since the function *maisonnée* meetings fulfil beyond allowing members to

monitor their relationship with the divine is to give them the opportunity to cultivate and consolidate relationships with others whom they might otherwise avoid under normal social conditions, whether due to dislike, apprehension, or social difference.

Since they are not self-selected, meaning that one could not choose one's *maisonnée* companions, and since they demanded members to be intimately engaged with the same group of people over a duration of a year, *maisonnées* were sometimes given to me as an example of how the community served its members as a "school for love", a term often used by my interlocutors in general reference to their communitarian life. What would specifically get highlighted in relation to *maisonnées* was the way in which they forced them to interact with members of the community whom they might normally avoid or would have little natural opportunities to interact with due to various types of social or hierarchical difference. The types of social or hierarchical differences which members cited *maisonnée* meetings helped them confront most often were those between the laity and the priesthood, those resulting from socioeconomic status differences, and idiosyncratic difference stemming from personal incompatibilities.

That *maisonnée* and community life more generally served to break the hierarchy between the laity and the priesthood by positioning priests on equal footing with the lay members of the community was something that community members spoke of with pride, not only as something achieved by the work of *maisonnée*, but as a characteristic unique to their community which they saw as serving a paramount function in the Church's spiritual life more broadly: "you need to understand" I was

told one evening during a dinner with a few friends,

This is a community of lay people, but it also includes priests, and consecrated lay people, and they all share *maisonnée* together. And you need to understand that this is something incredible. It prevents the priesthood from becoming a closed-off cast, apart from the people of the Church. Becoming separate like that is what kills the evangelization of the Church, the true calling of the Church. The priests should not be made into a different cast, hierarchically better than us. What makes me any different from Jean [a community priest]? We are both men. But he lives in consecrated celibacy and I am married. My profession is a carpenter, and his profession is a priest.

Socioeconomic differences, on the other hand, created potential hierarchical tensions that were far harder for members to navigate. Although the Charismatic Renewal movement in France began in the 1970s as a largely middle-class movement, the historical links between Catholicism and the former French monarchy, and the fact that among the “new communities” in France Emmanuel is one of the more politically and socially conservative, resulted in a significant increase in upper, upper-middle class, and nobility community membership throughout the years. Although community members were often uncomfortable to outright admit that socioeconomic hierarchies created potential tensions in the community, when I asked her how she benefitted from participation in *maisonnée*, Florence, a middle class schoolteacher, raised the issue of class difference:

There is a couple in the community that I have always avoided. They live nearby us so we got to see them a lot in gatherings, but I had never spoken with them. They are both very rich, of noble descent. And they dressed like that, like they just came from Versailles, if you know what I mean. All this aristocratic air about them. I always avoided these people, because they just make me feel uncomfortable.

All this changed when we ended up in *maisonnée* together, a few years ago. I had to meet with them twice a month, for an entire year, and I had to listen to them share how the Word of God touched them and conducted their lives, and I had to share my own experiences with them. And this, it took away the distance. We have become good friends. When my daughter was ill, Claire came to the hospital to visit her every single day for nearly a month. We have since become very good friends. This is how *maisonnée* helps me, it keeps teaching me to love.

Gilles explained the importance of *maisonnée* in similar terms, albeit when referring to tensions arising from personal, idiosyncratic incompatibilities rather than social difference:

...Because perhaps there is somebody that I have some bad issues with, but then he brings up a text that touches me, or when I have need for others to pray for me, he prays for me and says a Word of God for me. This way, I receive this goodwill from him, and this makes him my brother. [...] and when I share the Word of God I touch on the intimacy of my being, and this intimacy of my being, I give it to my brothers, and so we are in a relation of confidence (*rappport de confiance*). [...] and in sharing the Word with me, a brother makes a very strong act of confidence through me. When you make such a strong act of confidence, you create a bond of friendship. And so, when I hear my brother who shares what he lives, I also develop a compassion for him. And the way I look at him is transformed. I think of somebody... he really used to aggravate me, and one day he shared something very profound about his family, of what he had lived, and that sharing stimulated a compassion within me, and he became a brother. Because he made an act of confidence, we shared intimacy.

A few important things emerge from Gilles's account about the work that the social friction resulting from the manufactured sociality of the *maisonnée* achieves. The most evident is the facilitation of empathic process, what Gilles refers to as moments where the exchange of information (sharing) in the course of meetings

allows him insight into the struggle or suffering of someone he normally finds aggravating or unlikable. Gaining this new perspective on the person's experiential reality then moves him closer to understanding and a "feeling for" the other, or compassion. Perhaps less obvious, but just as significant, however, is the manner in which *maisonnée* is experienced by Gilles as providing him the opportunity to commune with God vis-à-vis social others. In sharing the Word of God with each other – inspired text which each member receives in the course of prayer – members of the *maisonnée* are, again, interceding on behalf of each other with the divine. That one receives a message from God through a group member rather than directly from the divine does not simply mediate between the sufferer and God, but also between the person praying and God, and effectively between members praying on behalf of each other.

The examples I have presented so far of the manners in which *maisonnée* functions as a "school for love" highlight the manners in which this institution can potentially alleviate social tensions by familiarizing persons who are separated by difference from each other. However, *maisonnée* groups did not merely function to bring together members from different social backgrounds with the understanding that sharing would necessarily create understanding. On the contrary, *maisonnées* were just as often the place where social and personal friction was created in the first place. "The community is a school for love. It is a bag full of stones with sharp edges", my friend once told me, "and through our community life the bag just gets tossed and tossed, until all the stones becomes polished and smooth. Or at least that's what we would like

to happen.” Although the creation of conflict was not an outright goal of *maisonnées*, it was generally agreed that *maisonnées* afforded the opportunity for potential social friction, and hence also provided community members the occasion to overcome this relation-inhibiting friction.

As direct confrontation, criticism, complaining or blaming are not accepted or permitted in the course of meetings, and gossip about community members likewise strongly discouraged, in cases where friction was not overcome in the course of *maisonnée* work and tensions persisted or even amplified, members often turned to prayer in an attempt to overcome their inability to relate to others. They did so, however, in a very particular way. Rather than praying for the resolution of the conflict, asking to gain a better understanding of the person (an empathic move), or for the person with whom they were having difficulties to change, community members simply prayed for the person’s wellbeing. The purpose of this prayer, during which one “entrusted the person to God”, Jeanne explained to me, was not to resolve the conflict by interfering with the other person, but rather by “stretching one’s heart”:

With every prayer that I say, my heart stretches. And this happens because with each prayer, we entrust (*confie*) the person to Jesus. Sometimes there are people I meet in *maisonnée*, and there is nothing in them I find likable, there is nothing positive I can find in them. And when you pray, this is what happens: every person has something beautiful in them, even if it’s just a sliver, and God is capable of seeing that, capable of seeing that good thing that we can’t or are not seeing. And when we pray for that person, gradually, Jesus helps us see that beauty for ourselves. This is not about self-persuasion, not a method, a technique, a faceless thing we do to convince ourselves of something. We entrust that person to Jesus and every time we do it, we know that Jesus loves that person, and Jesus gradually helps us to see those aspects of that person that he loves.

When Lazarus was sick, Mary ran after Jesus and called to him, “*celui que tu aimes est malade*”, he whom you love is sick. And this is what we do when we pray for someone, we tell Jesus, he whom you love, we entrust to you “*celui que tu aimes, on lui confie en toi*”.

What work does prayer, as described by Jeanne here, achieve? Again, the move we are observing is one of reorientation, of a purposeful disruption of one’s habitual perspective through an implicit adoption of God’s supposed perspective vis-à-vis the person for whom one is praying. In this way, the “positive aspect of the person”, the sliver of beauty which Jeanne acknowledges must exist, invisible to her but not to God, is eventually made experientially real for the person praying. This does not happen, however, by directly asking God to show one this positivity in the other person, but through the indirect acknowledgment that God himself does see it. In this way, the love and care for the other are established vicariously through one’s love and care for, or rather empathic stance towards the divine, in the sense that one attempts to gain a quasi-first-person perspective of an embodied deity. Through this reorienting gesture enacted through prayer, “he whom I do not love” is transformed into “he whom you (God) love”, an act which not only redefines one’s social relationships, but one’s relationship to the divine as well.

As a self process, prayer of this kind can be considered an exercise at what Hannah Arendt (1982: 42) referred to as training the imagination to go visiting or what Michael Jackson (1996: 9), following Merleau-Ponty, termed “lateral displacement,” where understanding is achieved by seeing an event from a different vantage point, from an *elsewhere* within the world:

One may disengage from the world the better to grasp it, but this disengagement is not transcendence. Rather, it should be construed as a way of seeing one part of the world from the vantage point of another – a form of lateral displacement rather than an overarching perspective (Merleau-Ponty 1964a: 199). ... the shift from standing outside or above to situating oneself elsewhere within the field of inquiry implies a shift from an emphasis on explanatory models to lived metaphors.

The process Jeanne describes is not a simple empathic move, such as the one described by Gilles, an attempt to understand the other person or learn something new about their unique perspective, which would then hopefully lead to care. Instead, the fundamental empathic move is made towards Jesus – not in the sense of “feeling for” God, but in the sense that it is Jesus’s perspective on the world that prayer seeks to attain, a kind of “what would Jesus” do move, but without the actual question explicitly asked. The question is at most implicit in the act of entrusting another to God’s care, and the answer, if one is given, is answered not verbally, not explicitly, but in the evidence of one’s changed self-orientation in the world. I would suggest this is made possible in the first place since Jesus, for Emmanuel, as he is for other Charismatics, a very real character, not only since personal imaginal interaction with the person of Jesus Christ is part and parcel of the Charismatic experience, but also due to the Renewal’s stress on Biblicism, which effectively creates him as a real person.

The broader ethical work of *maisonnée*, then, reveals itself to be concerned not merely with the maintenance of one’s relationship with God, but with the establishment of relationality, a work that is made possible both by allowing an

opportunity to create familiarity between persons who might normally not interact with each other, as well as by instigating social friction, and as such the opportunity for overcoming it. Again, what we observe here is that rather than a withdrawal from the social in favor of the divine, or the location of the divine as exclusively transcendent to human sociality, Emmanuel ritual life identifies the divine as immanent in social life, and furthermore, as facilitating it. This happens, as I have demonstrated here, through self-processes based in a disruption and reorientation of one's perceptual perspective resulting in a realignment of one's habitual mode of being in the world with others. The transposition of the divine into relations achieve a gradual reorientation of the manners in which one perceives and engages with the other, a reorientation that is specifically geared towards the flourishing and affirmation of social relations.

Evangelization, Conversion and World Transformation

That relationality functions in Emmanuel as a prominent value is evident not only in the manners in which members' personal relationship with God is transposed into social relations with others, or the manners in which the ritual life of the community is geared towards the purposeful cultivation of relations across difference. It is also evident in the manners in which the community explicitly attempts to create social change, and their ethical project vis-a-vis society at large.

The year 2012 marked the 40 year anniversary for the establishment of the Emmanuel community, and over 6000 community members from approximately 40 countries gathered for a week of celebrations and worship at Paray-le-Monial for the

occasion. During his closing speech on the last day of the gathering, Laurent Landete, the current moderator of the community, gave a closing speech in which he addressed the future of the community and the core lessons members were to take on with them following the celebrations of the jubilee year. The talk focused to a great degree on the community's call to evangelize the world, opening by drawing a sharp distinction between evangelization and proselytism. Evangelization, Landete reminded the crowd, is not proselytism, not an act of persuasion, not about a Christian duty to persuade and convince those around us to embrace Christ, to convert to Christianity. Evangelization was simply about a living of a life that is in itself a demonstration of God's infinite love, the living in community:

We are not here to seduce, to convince. The impact of our community, for society but also for all of the Church, is to do with our way of life. This is the key for the New Evangelization. People in the world need to see this communion... and it is easy to just stay in the familiar, in what we know, in what is comfortable, but we cannot do this. The responsibility of [being the moderator of] the community has confirmed this to me, that we must all, together, accept this mission... we are not to be doing this out of our pride, but in a prophetic manner, for the Church, for our society, for all people.... St Peter didn't say look at *me*, he said, look at *us*. And he could do his miracle in the name of God because he wasn't alone. He had his brothers next to him. This is a community witness. The importance of being together. Fraternal relationship is the door to the relationship with God. And our community life, our fraternal life, our *engagement*, brothers and sisters, to live in community. We are a visible sign of the kingdom.

Conversion, mission, the ultimate transformation of society into the "kingdom of God" is posited by Landete as the result of an embodiment of a particular sociality, as the result of the cultivation of relational, fraternal ties. Rather than the Christian

individual serving as a sign of one's relation with God, it is the Christian community here, the display of fraternal love, that serves as a "visible sign of the kingdom", a living testimony of God's love, made real through one's loving relation with others. In Emmanuel's vision, then, in addition to enacting change by means of direct action in the world through its humanitarian NGOs, the community itself, by fact of its existence *as* community is in itself an enactment of social change.

The notion that social change, specifically in the form of conversion and evangelization, would be brought about through community efforts to embody a particular sociality was not merely a speech, or an idea, but a principle I had observed my interlocutors attempt to live throughout my time with them, evident also in members' personal "conversion" narratives. I use the term conversion in inverted commas here since it is not the most accurate term to use in the context of Emmanuel, whose members for the most part did not convert to Catholicism from another religion, as they were born to (albeit frequently not practicing) Catholic families.

The term conversion was apt for those few I encountered who actually converted to Catholicism from Protestantism or Judaism, but for the most, "conversion" narratives were stories of one's experience of the Charismatic baptism in the Holy Spirit, or what some referred to as their first "*personal* encounter with Jesus Christ"²⁵. "Conversion" narratives were most often stories about how one became not only a practicing, but a Charismatic Catholic, after having grown in either non-practicing families, or else traditional Catholic families where worship was experienced to be mechanical, stale, or oppressive as opposed to "alive", spontaneous

and personal. Within that, what struck me was the fact that for many of my interlocutors, the decisive moment of conversion (at times, process of conversion) into a practicing and Charismatic Catholic followed not a direct spiritual union with the person of Jesus Christ, but an experience of fraternal love. This was the case of Clement:

It was through the love of my brothers that my Christian life was illuminated. That was my conversion. It was not a sudden thing, but a very gradual thing, illuminated through the love of the brothers. And all the bible is this – God’s love for us is manifest through the gestures of others. You see, now, when they ask me for service, I say yes. I say yes. If I can’t, I can’t. But in general, I say yes. [...] This love I feel, this love comes first of all from the brothers. And now, through receiving this love from them, it has educated me, has taught me, not only how to receive this love but also how to give it. I receive but I give back as well. This is evangelization. For me, evangelization is giving back what I have received.

Conversion, both as a social and personal question, then, is cast by Emmanuel as anchored in the establishment of a particular sociality rather than resulting from a direct effort at transformation. This particular orientation to change, one anchored in the establishment of co-presence, casts transformation as epiphenomenal, the inevitable result of inhabiting the world in a particular orientation to others.

Conclusion

What we have established in this chapter is that in the case of Emmanuel, relationality rather than individualism emerges as a prominent value and that this shapes configuration of sociality and of the person and as well as orients self-process

in significant ways. This became evident in our examination of three central social domains in the lives of community members – the personal relationship members form with God, the relationship with other community members and finally the relationship with the wider Catholic or non-Christian society as expressed in members' conception of conversion and evangelization.

In all these domains, the establishment and affirmation of relationships emerge as central to the community's ethical project and ritual life, something which is facilitated through the transposition of the divine into sociality. As I have demonstrated, this transposition results not in an effacement of sociality, but in its affirmation, specifically through a reorientation or realignment of the self to others. More than that, as sociality becomes imbued with divine presence it becomes a privileged site for self process and self-transformation. As we have seen in the case of conversion, the creation of loving social relations becomes a vehicle for transformation insofar as the experience of love instigates its transmission onwards (Clement's example), or that the demonstration of a particular loving sociality may serve as inspiration for others, or even constitute in and of itself as an enactment of societal change (Landete's example). More than that, the establishment of relations across difference is explicitly posed as a site for self transformation insofar as relations are also a locus of interpersonal friction, and as such afford community members the opportunity to initiate empathic self processes of "lateral displacement". Finally, we have also ascertained that those self processes that are geared towards a decentering or displacement of the self (a relinquishing of the will) such as in the case of the Glorious

Cross – a move at the foundation of which is a hierarchical positioning of the transcendent above the mundane, as it is the acknowledgment of the transcendent beyond life that affords suffering its generative meaning – also, and perhaps paradoxically, is used to further orient members to and embed them in real social relations.

But what are we to make of this, then, in light of our opening discussion of Christianity and individualism? As I have stated already, ethnographic data already available to us indicate that individual and relational configurations of personhood and sociality coexist in various Christian contexts. Answering Robbins's (2015) suggestion that this is due to the inevitable incompleteness of any individualizing project, I have demonstrated here that in the case of Emmanuel we are not merely observing the residual or partial presence of non-individual configurations in social life, but the prominence of relationality as a value to the community's self-definition and ethical project. What we have not yet ascertained is what could account for the differences observed in different ethnographic accounts, although in our discussion of the manners in which the divine is transposed into real social relations we have already started pointing at a potential, if partial, explanation. Specifically, what I would like to propose is that the dominance of either relationality or individualism as orienting values in different religious contexts has something to do with the manners in which the divine is located in relation to the world, that is, whether and how it is positioned as wholly transcendent and far from the world or as (at least partially, or to a degree) immanent in it.

In his classical study on the relationship between Protestantism and capitalism, Max Weber (2005 [1930]: 60) identifies the Protestant Reformation, and Calvinism in particular, as having impacted sociality in a manner that instilled believers with an “unprecedented inner loneliness of the single individual”. This growing isolation and individualization of the person was a result of a reconfiguration of the manners in which Christians following the Reformation learned to relate to the figure of God, as God became “a transcendental being, beyond the reach of human understanding, who with His quite incomprehensible decrees has decided the fate of every individual and regulated the tiniest details of the cosmos from eternity.” The path to salvation was now a solitary road which each person must traverse completely alone, bereft of the aid of either Church or sacrament. This, according to Weber, was the logical and eventual outcome of disenchantment, of the removal of magic from the world (see Gauchet 1999).

What we are observing in the case of Emmanuel sociality as I have presented here is an inverse gesture, the pulling of the divine back into the world and into human sociality, a gesture aspiring and amounting to a reenchantment of the world, and alongside it, the imbuing of sociality with a sense of the divine. What this also means is that the spiritual and the material, for Emmanuel, do not relate to each other dichotomously and antagonistically. Indeed, where God is understood and experienced as incarnate, as at least partially immanent in the mundane, the material is always already imbued with the spiritual.

This orientation to the divine and the mundane was captured, to a degree, by

the notion of “being *in* the world but not *of* the world” I opened this chapter with. This notion can invoke the image of the ascetic, outworldly-oriented individual in their attempt to detach from the evils of this world by disembedding from the social - tolerating one’s presence in the material world, but endeavoring not to be of it. This is the position, in Weber’s terms, of world-rejecting asceticism, where the pursuit of salvation and communion with God turns one away from the world: “from social and psychological ties with the family, from the possession of worldly goods, and from political, economic, artistic, and erotic activities-in short, from all creaturely interests.” (1978: 542).

However, the way my interlocutors conceived of this phrase, indeed lived it, stressed the importance of the first half of the sentence as much as its second. For members of Emmanuel, not being of the world was merely the opening position of the ethical project in which they were engaged. Indeed, one’s detachment of the world was a thing already established through ritual, an experience which even I, as a nonbeliever, ended up having. The challenge confronting one, then, was not in how to remain in the world but not fall into the trap of being of it; rather, it was in bringing one’s already existing otherworldly perspective *into* the world, in fully inhabiting this mundane world, but pulling the transcendent into it by virtue of one’s presence.

In this sense, Emmanuel could be considered to embody what Weber termed a position of inner-worldly asceticism, where the path to salvation must pass through action in the world (although still in opposition to it), through the enactment of one’s charisma on the world, and serving as an instrument of God: “In this case the world is

presented to the religious virtuoso as his responsibility. He may have the obligation to transform the world in accordance with his ascetic ideals, in which case the ascetic will become a rational reformer or revolutionary” (1978: 542). Weber gives ascetic Protestantism as a prime exemplar of this form of orientation to the world, and his characterization partially fits Emmanuel, insofar as community members are bent on the systematic transformation of the world. Where the model of inner-world asceticism does not fit Emmanuel is in the manners in which they orient to the materiality of the world, to its “creatureliness” as Weber refers to it. The world, for the ascetic, “abides in the lowly state of all things of the flesh” (1978: 543), and while it is still a creation of God, God’s presence finds expression in the world *despite* its creatureliness. As we will see in more details in chapter five, for Emmanuel, the dichotomy between the spiritual and the material is not as sharp nor as hierarchically set, and it is this location of the transcendent as also immanent, to a degree, in the mundane that can at least partially account for Emmanuel’s stress on the relational.

Another point to draw from our discussion so far has to do with the work that the mediation or immanence of the divine in the world does in terms of self process and self transformation. As we have seen, self transformation in the context of Emmanuel ritual life is located or initiated in those moments when the foreign and disorienting presence of the divine is experienced as disrupting one’s implicitly coherent experiential sense of self; that the relation with the divine allows for reorientation of the self to others through gaining a perspective “from elsewhere”; and that the act of relinquishing one’s will to that of that of the divine is an act of self-

transformation insofar as it is an attempt that approximates a denial or decentering of the self in relation to an Other, while reorienting the self to real social others.

A dominant approach to the study of self-transformation in anthropology tends to identify disruptions to self-experience primarily as a source or cause of suffering, and healing or well-being as hinging on the restoration of a coherent experience of self (e.g. Bourguignon 1976, Garro 2000, Mattingly 2010, Seligman 2010). However, as I have argued elsewhere (Itzhak 2015), disruptions to self-coherence, or breaks in one's habitual sense of self can also potentiate positive self-transformation. It is exactly this transformative potential of processes of self-disruption, at times when the self is invaded by the otherness of the divine, which we have identified throughout this chapter. Importantly, in the case of Emmanuel, this disruption to one's implicit sense of self-coherence in these cases results in or is geared towards a reorientation to social others in a manner that affirms relations.

To further explicate the manners in which the relationship to the divine intervenes in and shapes human sociality in the case of Emmanuel, we must first examine how the community's ethical project of love takes shape outside the context of community and family life, a task we set out to achieve in the next two chapters. Chapters three and four, then, focus on Emmanuel's missionary and development work carried out through its two humanitarian NGOs in France and in Rwanda.

CHAPTER THREE

The Politics of Compassion, the Ethics of Love

I walked into the Rocher center in the early morning with my fellow volunteers, returning from church after mass and adoration. Everyone was milling about, tidying things and organizing schedules. As we settled down with our morning cups of coffee, however, Inès, our center's director, addressed the group with an unmistakable air of excitement in her voice:

I wanted to tell you all something that Safi had told me the other day when I was talking to him. We were talking and at some point I asked him why he continued to come to the Rocher. After all, he is in a place where everything he gets here he can get from the MSP (*Maison Service Publique*, the local social services center). And you know what he said? He told me, well, you are like a second family to me, there in the MSP I'm a nobody, I'm invisible. Here I'm somebody, here I exist.

I was just completing the first few weeks of my work with the Rocher, and the reaction of my fellow volunteers to what seemed to me a relatively casual declaration was striking in its enthusiasm and joy. "Did you tell him to tell this to the others?" "wow, that's just incredible, it's fantastic, how wonderful!". Inès had asked Safi why he doesn't tell others how he felt about the Rocher. "Well, I can't walk around the *cit * telling people that the Rocher is my second family..." I could imagine Safi's shy, incredulous smile. "Yes," everyone agreed, "of course. It would be complicated for him to do that. People would judge." The Rocher, or "the Church", as it was

commonly referred to by the young Muslims in the *cit *, was no family for a young Muslim man of the *cit *. Safi could not make his feelings public, but that he would verbalize them to us seemed to suffice. It was a good day in the Rocher. The work we were doing was obviously worthwhile.



In chapter two we established that relationality was a defining orienting value for Emmanuel and examined how this shaped both processes of self transformation and conceptions of social transformation. This chapter proceeds to examine the actual manners in which Emmanuel’s relational ethos is lived in contexts where societal change is most explicitly at stake for the community, that of its missionary/humanitarian projects. This chapter, and the following one, then, center on Emmanuel’s two humanitarian NGOs - *Le Rocher Oasis des Cit * in France, and Fidesco International in Rwanda. I open this investigation by examining how aid workers and volunteers working for both NGOs conceive of their work and their ethical obligations to those whom they seek to aid, and in what terms they conceive of their work as an ethical project vis-a-vis the society in which they live. In doing so I also seek to add to a growing, and yet limited, anthropological corpus on humanitarianism and moral sentiments, as well our understanding of empathic process and intersubjectivity in such contexts.

Before proceeding, however, a brief clarification about the term “humanitarianism” as used throughout the text. As Ticktin (2014: 2) notes in her recent review, “Humanitarianism is not easily defined, as it is, among other things, an

ethos, a cluster of sentiments, a set of laws, a moral imperative to intervene, and a form of government. In its dominant characterization, humanitarianism is one way to ‘do good’ or to improve aspects of the human condition by focusing on suffering and saving lives in times of crisis or emergency.” But while earlier anthropological works attempted to delineate the boundaries of humanitarianism by differentiating it from other forms of aid, such as development, human rights, or charity (Bornstein and Redfield 2011, Feldman and Ticktin 2010, Wilson and Brown 2009), Ticktin (2014: 10) notes that “with the overwhelming growth of the humanitarian aid industry, including new geopolitical actors, these boundaries are being further broken down: different forms of humanitarianism are being created, blurring the boundaries with older and newer political and ethical forms”.

One such area where boundaries are being reworked is in the rapidly growing field of faith-based aid, where long standing traditions of charity and relief intersect with, adopt or challenge newer humanitarian principles and forms (Benthall 2011, Bornstein 2012, De Waal 2007, Elisha 2008, Scherz 2013, 2014). In light of this, throughout this text I am using a very minimal definition of humanitarianism, when referring to humanitarianism in general and when characterizing the work of Fidesco and the Rocher as humanitarian. This definition does away with older stresses on humanitarianism as primarily concerned with the alleviation of material suffering through the lending of medical aid in cases of emergency. Instead, I draw on the first half only of Ticktin’s broad definition, treating humanitarianism here as an ethos and mode of action at the root of which is the moral imperative to intervene for the

advancement of the good and wellbeing of others.

The New Evangelization

Emmanuel's humanitarian ventures need to be understood not only in the context of the community's ethos and mission, but also against the broader backdrop of the Church's aspirations to reestablish itself as a transnational entity and moral voice in contemporary global politics, processes implicated in what Csordas (2009a) recently suggested is a reglobalization of the Catholic Church.

Moving away from his predecessor's focus on such topics as abortion, homosexuality and the use of contraceptives, pope Francis is gaining a name for himself as a champion of the poor and the oppressed, marshaling what may appear to be a surprising attack on what he terms the "new tyranny" of unfettered capitalism. In several interviews as well as in his first apostolic exhortation²⁶, *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joys of the Gospel), Francis unfolds a Catholic critique of the current evils of the capitalist global economic system, with specific references to the false notion of trickle down economy, and a call to end the "idolatry of money" by establishing a more equitable division of resources between rich and poor through the dismantling the "structural causes of inequality"²⁷. Francis's choice to shift the focus of the Church's public concerns seems tuned to the spirit of the time, and to prevailing sentiments in the aftermath of the global economic crisis. Indeed, as Muehlebach (2013) suggests, the 2008 crisis and the ensuing uncertainty that followed it may have offered the Church a particularly apt moment in which to insert itself as a potential player into

global economic debates, where the moral vision of its “third way” economics can find purchase.

This is not the first time that the Church turns its attention to social and economic concerns as part of a strategic move to reassert its global relevance. It was Pope Leo XIII, in his 1891 encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (of Revolutionary Change), who first identified the potential and need for the church to shift its primary focus to social concerns if it is to maintain its power, inaugurating with that document what is today known as the social doctrine of the church. *Rerum Novarum* was authored at the end of a decade which saw the Catholic church struggling to adapt to the rapidly changing social landscape in the aftermath of the European revolutions. Its ties with governments and the ruling classes were no longer sufficient to assure the Church’s dominance, and the masses seemed to be abandoning the faith at an alarming rate. *Rerum Novarum*, as Leo XIII’s attempt to craft a comprehensive program to address the emerging economic and social challenges of the modern era, was written in an effort to stymie the exodus of the faithful, preserve the church’s ties with the masses and renew its base of power. The move also marked the pope’s attempt to move the church’s position from one of mere antagonism and rejection of modernity, a battle which now increasingly seemed lost (see Camp 1969: 1-24).

This social project was developed in a more significant way in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council in the late 1960s and early 1970s – again, a time of both societal and Church crisis. Two council documents - *Gaudium et Spes* and *Dignitatis Humanae* in particular, delineated some of the contours for the new public role of the

church, and served to bolster the church's social teaching with "ecclesiological grounding", casting its newfound role as the ultimate safeguard of the dignity of the person, positioning its social doctrine as essential to the very fulfillment of its spiritual mission, and calling Christians to embrace their earthly duties and not limit their religious aspirations to otherworldly concerns (Heyer 2005: 103).

The development of the church's social doctrine went hand in hand with its attempts to reestablish its authority as a transnational entity transcending the boundaries of the nation-state. Casanova (1997: 122) identifies this process as the gradual reconstruction of the transnational characteristics of medieval Christendom, consisting of but not limited to the assertion of papal supremacy, the increase of missionary activity, establishment of shrines as centers of pilgrimage, and the proliferation of transnational religious movements. I pause here on Casanova's discussion of what he terms the "globalization of the modern papacy", a process he characterizes through three developments: the increasing frequency in publication of papal encyclicals whose topics go beyond those of the Catholic faith and engage universal issues concerning the secular world; the increasing papal involvement in world politics; and the increasing media presence and transformation of the figure of the pope into "the high priest of a new universal civil religion of humanity and as the first citizen of a global civil society" (1997:125). These trends, accelerated particularly following the Second Vatican Council, highlight the Church's attempt to establish itself as an alternative moral authority to that produced by secular modernity, one which could also speak to the interests and concerns of those outside its cadre of believers²⁸.

The pope which perhaps most exemplifies these trends was the media-savvy Jean Paul II, in whose footsteps Francis is now so masterfully walking. It is Jean Paul II that is also most commonly identified with the call to “build the Civilization of Love”, although the term was first introduced by Pope Paul VI in his 1970 Pentecost Sunday speech, addressing the crowd in Saint Peter’s square. In his speech Paul VI first invokes the Civilization of Love as a social project encompassing the secular world:

Although to some it may seem strange Pentecost is an event that also involves the secular world. For it gave rise to a new sociology - one which penetrates the values of the spirit, which forms our hierarchy of values, and which confronts us with the truth, and with the ultimate destiny of humanity. It is this which has given us our belief in the dignity of the human person, and our civil customs, and which above all leads us to resolutely rise above all divisions and conflicts between humans, and to form humanity into a single family of the children of God, free and fraternal. We recall the symbolism at the beginning of this amazing story, of the miracle of many different languages being made comprehensible to everyone by the Spirit. It is the civilization of love and of peace which Pentecost has inaugurated— and we are all aware how much today the world still needs love and peace!

Since then, the phrase has appeared in over 200 papal documents, most written by John Paul II, who used the phrase in his very first public address as pope and was the one to couple it with the now hugely popular notion of “the New Evangelization”. In its narrow sense, the New Evangelization refers to evangelization efforts that must be directed at non-practicing Catholics with the aim of rekindling their faith, but in its broader use the term is frequently tied in with the relatively new imperative directed at the laity to actively evangelize and transform their own societies. The new emphasis

on what I would call here lay evangelization goes hand in hand with the church's development of its social doctrine, and it is no accident that Francis's exhortation focuses, alongside its critique of capitalism, on the supreme importance of lay evangelization²⁹.

Christian relief, development, and humanitarian NGOs, the presence of which is becoming increasingly felt in the aid world (see Allahyari 2000, Beaumont 2008, Beaumont & Dias 2008, Beaumont & Noordegraaf 2007, Benthall 1999, Benthall & Bellion-Jourdan 2003, Bornstein 2005, 2007, 2012, Bornstein & Redfield 2011, Bode 2003, Copeman 2009, Elisha 2008, 2011, Muehelebach 2011, 2012, Olson 2008, Sziarto 2008, Wuthnow 2004, Wuthnow & Evans 2002), must always be considered, then, through the double lens of the social and the spiritual. The exponential growth in the number of Christian relief organizations, representing today the fastest growing segment of the aid world (Wuthnow 2009), cannot be understood exclusively as resulting from neoliberalization processes such as structural adjustment in the global south or the systematic dismantling of welfare in the global north, as has been suggested by some scholars (see Muehelebach 2011, 2012, Elisha 2008, 2011). Rather, in evaluating these trends we must take into consideration broader historical processes spanning beyond the supposed current neoliberal moment, which are tied to global processes of religious revival and renewal as well as the long-standing religious traditions of charity and relief. From a global system perspective, for example, processes of religious revival and renewal, expressed in the proliferation of new religious movements, as well as the current turn to the moral that marks a renewed

interest in universalist fellow feelings such as compassion or empathy – two processes that powerfully meet in the context of faith-based humanitarianism - can be read as a reaction to the “fragmentation of the hegemonic structure of the world system” (Friedman 1994: 167) and the decline of the modernist identity. As such, what is highlighted by this perspective is that the exponential growth in faith-based humanitarian outreach needs to be understood not simply as a reaction to, a filling of a gap created by the withdrawal of resources by the state, but as a response to a crisis of identity in the context of hegemonic decline.

Engagement in aid, development, charity and humanitarian outreach ventures are manners in which religious movements and institutions today carve and shape a particular space for the religious in the public sphere, often as a moral or even political alternative to the state (see Davis and Robinson 2012, also Muehlebach 2013). It is in the context of such efforts to enact social change on a global scale, specifically by offering a moral alternative to a world in crisis, that these processes need to be understood, particularly so in the case of the Catholic Church, and it is in this light that the role such movements as the Charismatic Renewal play in mobilizing such change on the ground need to be read.

Renewal, Movement, and the New Religious Orders

Historian Patricia Wittberg (1994: 6) notes that “social movement theorists have traditionally seen religion as a pillar of the status quo, a conservative institution that counseled its adherents to accept their lot and await a heavenly reward,” often

positioned in opposition to “true”, political social movements that fought for change. Wittberg wishes to contest such notions in her study of religious orders in the Catholic Church, an institution, one might add, not famed for its love of revolutionary change (Wilde 2007). She argues that these orders have historically played a major role in enacting change both within the Church and in society more broadly, and more so, that “waves of religious fervor such as the periodic foundation of Roman Catholic religious communities *are* social movements. Individuals have participated in them for the same sorts of reasons that activists participate in other types of movements; they grow and decay subject to the same cyclic dynamics” (1994: 6). Understanding the place of religious orders within the Church is relevant to our discussion of the Renewal as a movement not only since charismatic communities explicitly model themselves after religious orders but because from a historical perspective that tracks the cyclical decline and growth of such movements within the Catholic Church, the flourishing of the Renewal and other “New Communities” in the aftermath of the Second Vatican Council could be seen as the next phase or era in this history.

Wittberg draws in her characterization of religious orders on Weber’s concept of “heroic” or “virtuoso” religiosity, which he opposes to the concept of mass religiosity. The virtuoso religious, according to Weber, is the member of a religion who aspires to and is capable of developing their spiritual abilities beyond the minimal required participation in the church. Religious institutions such as the Catholic Church, Wittberg notes, must then contend with the existence of religious virtuosos and frame the conditions under which, if at all, they can be included and incorporated into its

structure. Within the Catholic Church, religious virtuosos are organized into religious orders and movements, normally defined by a common Charism (e.g. prayer and common life for the Benedictines, the spirit of poverty for the Franciscans), or the particular works the order commits to, such as engagement in healthcare or catechetical work. The organization of the order around a particular Charism, style or spiritual vocation serves the important role of separating members of the order from other such orders *within* the church, something which also underscores each group's position as a member of a single, greater, united body. Wittberg notes that "both historically and currently, those orders that have retained distinctive Charisms based on some particular spiritual emphasis have been the most successful in avoiding the periodic extinction that have afflicted religious communities" (1994: 49).

Through the collective contribution of spiritual virtuosity, religious orders become in themselves a source of change and renewal within the Church, revitalization movements bent on the "deliberate, organized, conscious effort[s]... to construct a more satisfying culture" (Wallace 1956: 265). A brief historical review of their rise and decline would serve us to further contextualize the Renewal's position within the Church. Wittberg counts four eras in the history of religious orders: the monastic, mendicant, and apostolic eras, and the age of teaching congregations, the end of which she marks roughly around the late 1960s. Each era is characterized, in Weber's terms, either as primarily world-rejecting (aimed at a flight away from the world) or world-embracing (aimed at acting directly in the world).

Religious virtuosi during the Monastic era (approx. 500-1200 a.d.) were

primarily of the world-rejecting kind, withdrawn from the world and from society, and lived either alone (hermits), or in community (monks). This model was replaced during the Mendicant era (1200-1500 a.d.), with a world-embracing, evangelizing spirituality. These were the years that saw the foundation of both the Franciscan and Dominican orders, and the rise of the spiritual virtuoso model of the traveling poor man following in the footsteps of Christ, evangelizing the world. The Medicant Era ended with the Reformation, showing a strong decline in membership in religious orders, whether in predominantly Protestant or Catholic countries. During the years of the Apostolic era (1500-1800), religious orders were gradually converted into “an elite corps of devoted servants ready to aid the Church in its new apostolic needs” (1994: 36), especially in its efforts of counter-reformation. The most successful male order of that era was the Society of Jesus (the order of the Jesuits), founded by Ignatius of Loyola with the purpose of ministering to the entire world. Unlike the Franciscans or Dominicans, the Jesuits did not live communally but had to undergo a prolonged formation, including periodic spiritual retreats, creating a high level of commitment to the Church and its teachings which would be sustained while on mission in remote locations. Finally, the years between 1850s and up until the time of the second Vatican II council in the late 1960s mark the brief rise of what Wittberg calls, following Cada (1979), the age of the teaching congregations, a time during which groups such as the Sisters of Mercy marked an even greater engagement with the world, dispensing altogether of cloister and solemn vows, and framing their works or calling in strong social terms.

Wittberg does not advance her analysis much beyond the years of Vatican II, a time she marks as ushering the decline of religious orders within the Church, whose numbers have decreased at an even more dramatic rate than those of the priesthood in the four decades that followed. That it is those years that also saw the emergence of the Renewal and other revitalization movements within the Church is not accidental and I suggest we consider it the latest installment in the cyclical rise and fall of religious orders/movements within the Church. In relation to the Weberian division between world-rejecting and world-engaging, the Renewal clearly continues the movement away from reclusive monasticism and towards a greater engagement with the world, but more so in the movement's spiritual stress on evangelization than its commitment to social relief. The movement also retained the Catholic notion of religious virtuosity as serving a particular calling within the Church, the idea that the virtuoso's work – essentially the mediation of the divine to the masses – could benefit the greater body of the church and the individuals who are part of it, an idea flatly rejected by the Protestants, for whom everyone is called to holiness equally. This mediatory role of the religious virtuoso, however, is married in the Renewal to the Protestant ideal of achieving a direct and unmediated communication with the divine, and the notions that all are called to holiness and are ultimately personally responsible for their own salvation. These stresses vary across communities and could account for the greater schismatic tendencies within the Renewal than in religious orders more generally.

It is this broader backdrop against which we must understand Emmanuel's social ventures embodied in the work of the Rocher and of Fidesco. Since the

movement originated in the USA, the Catholic Charismatic Renewal is inevitably read against the backdrop of Protestantism and Pentecostal Christianity, resulting in an emphasis on the charismatic as well as individualistic elements of the movement (Csordas 1997), and especially when compared to left-leaning social Catholic movements, such as liberation theology, the Renewal emerges in anthropological scholarship as apolitical in orientation, its members concerned primarily with the cultivation of a particular self or “interiority” rather than in enacting social change directly. As scholars of the movement often note, social transformation is commonly understood by charismatics as epiphenomenal of the transformation of the self (see Csordas 1997, Fichter 1975, McGuire 1982, Neitz 1987). This, however, does not seem to be the case of Emmanuel, whose concern with the transformation of the self does not supplant, but complement the community’s concern with the transformation of society, two goals which we have observed so far to both be mediated by the establishment of a particular sociality. Compared with existing accounts of the Renewal in anthropological literature, then, the Renewal in France and the Emmanuel community in particular appear to be more committed to the marrying of evangelization efforts with projects anchored in the social doctrine of the church through the creation and operation of charities, humanitarian and development NGOs.

Going back to Pierre-Marie’s characterization of Catholics as the world’s 10%, members of Emmanuel see themselves and their mission as the leaven in the dough, as that small, determined and committed group working for the collective salvation of the world, while also serving the Church as the Gulf stream, reintroducing the warm,

renewing breath of the Holy Spirit back into it. As Pierre-Marie explained to me on a different occasion, “for us Catholics there is no ‘or’. We are a religion of ‘and’. For the Evangelicals or Pentecostals, it’s Grace *or* Works, and they choose only Grace. For us there is no such a thing as Grace or Works. It’s always Grace *and* Works.

Evangelization for Emmanuel encapsulates both, and their evangelizing is often seen, by charismatics and non-charismatics alike, as one of the distinctive features that make them charismatic, as well as one of their greater contributions to the Catholic world more broadly. Jean-Paul II’s “New Evangelization” is largely carried out today not by the religious, then, but by the lay, who in the view of the Renewal can now themselves be religious virtuosos serving the Church not from the confines of an order but while living fully in the world, a calling which is now increasingly answered through engagement in charities, development and humanitarian work commonly referred to as “mission”. Animating and driving the exponential increase of Faith-Based NGOs and the growing popularity of volunteerism among the Catholic youth, making mission into a lay business, as opposed to its previous incarnation as a project undertaken by the religious, thus serves not only to increase the numbers of the faithful, but to deepen the faith and commitment of the next generation of Catholics as well.

From Homo Economicus to Homo Relationalis?

The Church’s efforts to reinstate itself as a transnational entity are not limited to a greater emphasis on lay evangelization, facilitated by the cultivation of the Renewal and other new communities, or the increased involvement of the Church in

social outreach and relief work. Andrea Muehelebach, in her essay *The Catholicization of Neoliberalism: On Love and Welfare in Lombardy, Italy* (2013, see also 2012) suggests that the Catholic idiom of love has come to significantly shape state policies regarding welfare in Italy, and possibly globally. Love, Muehlebach argues, has become a “key element in the reorganization of Italian welfare provisioning,” the expression of a “Catholicized neoliberalism as a ‘moral style’” that “weds markets to a specific moral form, a form hinging on a core loving subject that may also ambivalently disrupt market rule” (2013: 456).

Examining the Church’s position vis-à-vis such issues as rich-poor disparity and private property, Muehelebach asserts that Church discourse about “affection” in relation to rich-poor relations aims at reproduction rather than change, a “decidedly nonrevolutionary vision” that also accompanies the Church’s sacralization of private property as a natural right (see also Camp 1969). But although the Church is hostile to state interference, Muehelebach notes, its alternative to welfare policies isn’t founded on the model of the lone individual, but on one in which persons are embedded in social groups and communities which owe each other solidarity. The state in this context is not the welfare state that intervenes directly to give to the poor, but is a facilitator that allows groups and individuals to work together for the betterment of all. The key organizing principle offered by the church is that of “subsidiarity”³⁰, which maintains government involvement should remain limited only to cases where individual or private group initiatives are not possible. This enshrines private property within a network of reciprocal, loving relations at the level of families and local

communities. Although love has an egalitarian potential, Muehlebach argues, following Jane Schneider (1991), in the case of the Catholic Church it has been entwined with social inequality from the start.

Although the bulk of her analysis focuses on the Italian case, where she claims citizens' sensibilities are actively and directly trained to align with Catholic ideas about free love (*gratuita*) and care through state initiatives, Muehlebach argues that the influence of the Catholic ethic of love (now replacing the Protestant ethic accompanying early Capitalism), applies well outside the Italian case, evident especially in the policies marshaled by the post-Washington consensus championed by American economist Joseph Stiglitz (a favorite of the Vatican who was appointed to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences in 2003)³¹. Both Catholicism and the post-Washington consensus, Muehlebach argues, emphasize in their theories of society and economy a “new culture of cooperation and benevolence”, which, although appear to position them in moral opposition to market rule, in fact work to further reinforce basic neoliberal premises such as antistatism, third-sector privatization and the intensification of *caritas*.

The Catholicization of neoliberalism, according to Muehlebach goes hand in hand with what Ananya Roy identifies as a growing global concern over poverty expressing itself through the creation of “zones of intimacy where poverty is encountered through volunteerism, philanthropy, and other acts of neoliberal benevolence” (Roy 2012: 105-106). The implication of Catholic thought in shaping humanitarianism as a field of ethical and political action runs even deeper. As Fassin

argues, although it is considered today in largely secular terms, humanitarian reason “historically, but also genealogically... is embedded in a Western sociodicy”, its ethos firmly grounded in the Christian “sacralization of life”, the notion that human life is in itself a highest good (see also Benthall 2008). As Hannah Arendt (1958: 313–320) puts it, “The reason why life asserted itself as the ultimate point of reference in the modern age and has remained the highest good of modern society is that the modern reversal operated within the fabric of a Christian society whose fundamental belief in the sacredness of life has survived, and has even remained completely unshaken by, secularization and the general decline of the Christian faith.” The humanitarian ethos also draws on the Christian valorization of suffering, the notion that suffering is a privileged path to salvation due to its transformative and redemptive potential, but in an inverse manner to the Christian ideal, Fassin suggests, (2012: 250), in the humanitarian case “salvation emanates not through the passion one endures, but through the compassion one feels.” The founding of humanitarian government on the sacralization of life and the valorization of suffering transforms it, Fassin argues, into “a form of political theology.”

The Politics of Compassion

Fassin is critical of humanitarianism as a form of governance, with much of his critique focusing on the centrality of Christian-inflected “moral sentiments” to its constitution, the idea of “feeling for” others and doing something about it. Other than pointing to the actual, pragmatic failures of humanitarianism or other forms of social

relief, other scholars have likewise been pointing to the melding of affect and politics (think of George Bush's "compassionate conservatism" or Obama's "empathy deficit" speeches), to the very introduction of "moral sentiments" as a legitimate motor for action, as inherently and uniquely problematic, particularly so when these sentiments appear to invoke or are genealogically tied with Christian notions of love or sacrificial love (see Povinelli 2009). In some accounts, such as Muehelebach's (2012), the politics of love or compassion are disparaged as "nonrevolutionary" as they do not fight societal inequalities and support the evils of neoliberalism. Miriam Ticktin (2011), in her study of what she terms the New Humanitarianism and its deployment in the case of the *sans papiers* in France, similarly argues that the moral imperative to relieve suffering, especially as employed in states of emergency, actually serves to impede and displace possibilities for structural and collective change, a true shift in the distribution of power. The New Humanitarianism, for Ticktin, then, is a form of anti-politics, a practice that, while is a form of politics (as it reproduces a particular set of power relations), is not political, insofar as it does not disrupt the established order and the power relations within which it operates, and furthermore, serves to occlude the power relations which generate the social realities that make these sentiments seem necessary in the first place.

Furthermore, Ticktin (2014) asserts, although humanitarian reason is anchored in the recognition of a shared humanity, and as such, in a recognition of fundamental equality, the politics of compassion are also a politics of benevolence and as such are predicated on the hierarchy between those who bestow benevolence and those who

must be grateful for it. In this manner, humanitarian governance actually perpetuates inequalities by casting them in moral rather than politics terms, as issues of ‘compassion’ or benevolence rather than issues of ‘justice’ or rights. That the politics of compassion are a politics of benevolence also, according to its critics, make it arbitrary, since it rests on the capacity of the sufferer to communicate their suffering in manners that would effectively raise the emotions of care in those who hold the possibilities to dispense of their benevolence as they see fit: “the experience of pain is pre-ideological, the universal sign of membership in humanity, and so we are obligated to be responsible to it; but since some pain is more compelling than some other pain, we must make judgments about which cases deserve attention” (Berlant, 2004:10, see also Boltanski 2004).

Finally, the appeal of the compassionate position, of observing ourselves being moved by scenes of suffering and telling ourselves that we are virtuous for caring runs the risk of making compassion into an end in itself (Spelman 1997). Here, the self-satisfaction and enjoyment that would be derived from observing suffering and rushing to the rescue trumps the actual need for or effectiveness of the rescue being offered. Responding to suffering, then, the causes of which are structural inequalities and injustices, with feelings of care and benevolence, inevitably moves us away from the public sphere and into the private one, away from real efficacious action and into what is ultimately a passive position anchored in sentimentality, “deliciously consumable and cruelly ineffective” (Woodward 2002:236). In this, “the ethical imperative toward social transformation is replaced by a civic-minded but passive ideal of empathy”

(Berlant 1998:641), one which may make us feel good about ourselves, but which is ineffective in actualizing real, lasting, meaningful change. The inspirational altruistic drive that seems to mobilize growing numbers of young persons from developed nations to go and “help the poor” or “make a difference in the world”, typically through short term visits to “Third World” countries, as the critics of humanitarianism claim, then, may be more about narcissism than altruism, less about actually “doing good” and more about “feeling good.”

Setting aside the question of whether the faults scholars find with a politics of care and compassion, with the positioning of moral sentiments as legitimate drives for social action, are unique to this form of governance, and in spite of their supposed-anchoring in Christian theology or a Catholic ethics of love, it is intriguing to note that Emmanuel aid workers themselves reject and are highly critical of liberal iterations of compassion that highlight “fellow feelings” or emotions of care for the other as legitimate motivations for aid. Rather than defining their ethical commitment to those they seek to aid in affective terms, as a “feeling for” which motivates a desire to help, the question of aid, for my interlocutors was primarily defined vis-à-vis one’s relationship with God and in a manner that inserted God as a quasi-agent into the relational dynamic of the humanitarian encounter.

This insertion of God into the humanitarian relation, even as this was done using the idiom of love, I found, served to empty the humanitarian relation, indeed the entire humanitarian venture, of emotion and feeling as motivational anchors for action (this is not to say that actual social interactions were devoid of emotions, however).

Specifically, I argue in this chapter that the transformation of the dyadic humanitarian relation (*I give you because I feel for you*) into a kind of triadic relationship where giving is always mediated in one form or another by the person of God, removes benevolence, and hence affect from the *relational structure* of the humanitarian encounter, and that furthermore, this introduction of a third into the dyad serves to open up possibilities for intimacy in relationships themselves. This, in turn, raises questions about the role of mediation in empathic process and intersubjectivity, which are commonly conceived of in dyadic terms.

Fidesco International: Faith as Sustainable Development

Fidesco International, Emmanuel's first independently operating development NGO was established by the community in 1981 at the request of several bishops who participated in a synod on the family being held in Rome that year. The bishops, primarily from Africa, reportedly approached the representatives of Emmanuel and asked them to "come help us". The first volunteers, at this point all physicians, left on missions to Zaire, India and Morocco even before the official establishment of Fidesco, at the end of 1979. Not before long, requests for help from many dioceses, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, started coming in and teams were sent to Rwanda, the Ivory Coast, Senegal, Guinea, Gabon, Cameroon, Egypt, Nicaragua, and Brazil. The first official Fidesco missions were established in India, DR Congo, Cameroon and Rwanda in 1982. The organization's outreach has since expanded significantly and Fidesco is currently running projects in Africa, Asia, Oceania, North and Latin

America.

In 1987, Jean-Loup Dherse, vice-president of the world bank was appointed president of Fidesco and local branches of the NGO were founded in Germany and Belgium. Four years later, in 1991, Fidesco was granted official status as an “*association de bienfaisance*” in France, and by 2006 the organization was granted the status of “Volunteer Organization of International Solidarity” by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, an accreditation which allows the organization to send volunteers abroad (*volontaires de solidarité internationale*, or VSI). In 2010, Fidesco USA was officially launched at the top floor of the Mutual of America building on Park Avenue in New York, with Nobel prize laureate Elie Wiesel as keynote speaker.

Fidesco is officially registered as a faith-based organization (FBO), and almost all Fidesco volunteers are practicing Catholics themselves. Its name, Fidesco, is derived from the Latin “fides” meaning “faith” and “co” standing for co-operation, and it defines itself as a Catholic organization of international solidarity (*organisation catholique de solidarite internationale*). The NGO’s official mission is “to support local development of third world countries through human and financial aid” and it bases its mission on three core “values”: development, faith, and “school of life”.

Development of “countries in the global south” is Fidesco’s primary stated mission. The organization works primarily in collaboration with local partners on the ground rather than initiating projects of its own, although several independent missions of Fidesco’s were initiated throughout the years, one of the most important of which in Rwanda. Once an independent mission is established, however, it is no longer run by

Fidesco International or the original Fidesco France, but becomes the responsibility of a local Fidesco branch in the country, which operates independently as a local NGO. Fidesco International makes a point of not sending in volunteers whose expertise are available locally, only sends in volunteers to work with partner organizations who have approached Fidesco with a specific request for aid, and only where volunteers are to some degree embedded in or supported by the local Catholic church, at the level of diocese, parish, or congregation.

While development is Fidesco's stated practical mission, the organization considers the act of volunteering to be itself an exercise of faith. Thus, Fidesco volunteers must commit to put themselves at the service of others, "without distinction of race, culture or religion", and not merely provide material or professional aid, but to live and offer a "specifically Christian development", by "taking into account the wellbeing of people in its integrity - material, human and spiritual." Fidesco's mission operates in accordance with the principles of the social doctrine of the church - a commitment to the "common good" (*bien commun*), putting into action the principles of subsidiarity, taking into account the "preferential status of the poor", and finally, striving to form a "heart to heart" encounter with others, "without which the reciprocity of exchange cannot be realized."

Finally, Fidesco mission is ultimately also conceived of as a "School of life", in the sense that all Fidesco volunteers must commit themselves, by the act of going on mission, to "a path of self abandon." Mission must not be viewed as one's choice, as a thing one seeks to give others, but rather as "something given" to the volunteer, an

opportunity to live in poverty, and above all, to learn how to “enter with suppleness and patience into the life story of other persons, other cultures, and to serve them in an adapted manner.” In accordance with this principle, all volunteers commit to go on mission for a minimal duration of one year (often two), and do not choose the geographical location nor the professional nature of their mission. They live in modest accommodations and receive a salary that allows them to maintain approximately the same standards of living enjoyed by the people with whom they work. Volunteers are requested not to travel or go on vacations during their missions, and to live modestly, in the same neighborhoods where they conduct their volunteer work. While some of the funds used to support the volunteers during their mission comes from a small salary or money recruited by Fidesco, much of it must be recruited by the volunteers themselves in the period prior to their departing on mission.

Fidesco International currently collaborates with approximately 150 local projects around the world and has dispatched approximately 1500 volunteers since its inception. In early 2015 Fidesco had 170 volunteers working in 28 countries. Other than its collaborative projects, Fidesco also maintains its own independent projects, such as the St Gabriel Hospital in Conakry, Guinea, the St Joseph vocational school in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, and the Daphrose and Cyprien Rugamba street children’s center in Kigali, Rwanda.

Due to its status as a “Volunteer Organization of International Solidarity” Fidesco is also entitled to public funding from the ministry for foreign affairs, although currently only approximately 20% of its funding is public, the rest coming from

various private donations. According to the Fidesco website, it is today one of the top five NGO volunteer organizations recognized by the French ministry of foreign affairs. It is recognized as a charity and an association of public utility (association d'utilité publique), is a member of several major French NGO committees and organizations, it is an associate member of the National Council of Solidarity of the Church of France. The president of Fidesco International serves as a member of the pontifical council "Cor Unum" in Rome³².

The process of selection and training for volunteers lasts between 4 and 8 months prior to going on mission. Typically, of the total initial candidates (217 candidates in 2013), about half continue to participate in two-week long discernment session (93 candidates in 2013), a retreat-like session aimed to help volunteers discern and decide whether going on mission with Fidesco is the right choice for them to make. At the end of this session candidates must make their final decision and commitment as to whether to go on mission or not. The decision must be reached before being told where in the world they would be sent if they accepted. After committing themselves and receiving the specific details of their mission - where in the world and in what capacity they would be serving - the would-be volunteers undergo a week of pre-departure preparation session, typically held in Paray-le-Monial (93 volunteers in total were sent on mission in 2013).

Almost all of Fidesco's volunteers have some form of higher education, with approximately half of the volunteers at the educational level of Bac+5 (the approximate French equivalent of a master's degree). Approximately 70% of Fidesco's

volunteers typically hold professional qualifications in the fields of medicine, engineering and technology, management and education. The remaining 30% have professional qualifications in the fields of the humanities and social sciences. During 2013, Fidesco had 195 French volunteers working around the world, and 50 non-French volunteers of 11 different nationalities. The average age of volunteers was 33, with 21 being the youngest and 68 the oldest, with 94 children accompanying their parents on mission. Of the total of volunteers working in 2013, about half were single and half married, with approximately 60% women and 40% men. 70% of the volunteers were sent for a mission of 2 years, and the rest for a duration of a year to 18 months. Approximately 50% of volunteers were sent to Africa, 30% to the Americas and 20% to Asia and Oceania, in a total of 28 countries.

Fidesco Rwanda

Fidesco's children's center in Kigali was established in 1995, when the scattered members of the Rwandan Emmanuel community who survived the genocide regrouped in the country's capital and began rebuilding their lives and remaking the community. The center was named after the two founders of the Emmanuel community, Daphrose and Cyprien Rugamba, who in April 1994 were killed during the first days of the genocide along with six of their children. The center was seen as a homage particularly to Daphrose's memory, who in 1992, shortly after founding the community with her husband, began working with the street children in the Rwandan capital.

The story goes that as she was selling milk in the market in Kigali, Daphrose noticed several street children stealing potatoes. The children were very organized and resourceful in their operation, and it occurred to Daphrose that they were intelligent and capable. She was touched by the fact they had to steal food to survive, and decided to do something to better their lives. Both her and Cyprien began to frequent the market for the purpose of interacting with the children and learning more about their lives. They finally decided, with a personal investment of 1000 franks, to dedicate a small space, a room with a tap and a sink to provide the children a place where they could wash, clean their clothes, and be cared for, with the ultimate goal of helping them to leave the streets. So Fidesco Rwanda was first conceived. In 1995, when the community decided to build what is today the Rugamba children's center, the problem of street children in Rwanda was considerably worse than prior to the genocide, due to a large degree to increased economic and material deprivation as well as the psychological after-effects of the genocide.

The fully residential center accommodates around 200 children annually. Conceived originally as a place where children could live and be reeducated over a period of several years, following changes in state legislation, children today can only reside in the center for up to 6 months before center staff must attempt to reunite them with their families. The children in the center are all boys between the ages of 7 and 16 and their residence at the center is supposed to provide them with material, educational and psychological aid, with the eventual desired result of family reunification. Due to the short period of time that children are now allowed to remain in the custody of the

center, and due to economic hardships of the families, both reeducation and family reunification are only very partially successful. In some cases, children might be fostered by members of the Emmanuel community for a period of several years, if no family reunification is possible. The staff numbers approximately 25 people, mostly members of the Emmanuel community in Rwanda, and hosts 2-3 non-Rwandan volunteers each year, sent by Fidesco International. While the children's center is the only current project of Fidesco Rwanda, Fidesco International sends more volunteers to the country to collaborate with projects run by other local organizations.

Le Rocher - a Sign of Hope in the Cités

Le Rocher Oasis des Cités - The Rock, Oasis of the Cités - was created by the Emmanuel community in the year 2000 to address what the community viewed to be a growing crisis of the French *cités*, the inner cities or housing projects located in the outskirts of the large French cities. Often referred to as *zones urbaines sensibles* (ZUS) or sensitive urban zones, approximately 4.5 million people resided in the *cités* throughout France according to the 2012 ONZUS (*observatoire national des zones urbaines sensibles* - national report on vulnerable urban zones) report. Data for the same year indicates that 36% of *cité* residents live below the poverty line (as opposed to approximately 10% in the general population), with unemployment rates of 23% among those of wage earning age, and of approximately 40% among youth. Data also indicates that academic delay of schoolchildren is persistent. The same trends have been observed in the 2013 ONZUS.

The great majority of *cit * residents are second and third generation North African Muslims, but also typically includes Roma, immigrants from the former Yugoslavia, Francophone sub-sahara Africa as well as small numbers of extremely poor “native” French (commonly referred to in France by the somewhat charged term of *Fran ais de souche*, as opposed to those of immigrant descent). Crime rates, especially drug trafficking, are high in the ZUS, but police enforcement is often minimal, out of fear of sparking riots. Loic Wacquant (2007: 7) characterizes the French public’s response to the ZUS as one of “moral panic”, a sentiment that has been growing in intensity since the late 1980s, when riots first erupted in the suburbs of Paris and Lyon, and peaked in 2005, when riots raged across France for a full three weeks. The periodic outbursts of violence, combined with a fear of the Islamic fundamentalism that had been growing in France since the 1995 bombing in the Paris M tro, have resulted in the ZUS becoming associated in the minds of the French public, not only with issues of ethnicity, social inequality, and minority integration, but with a threat of fundamental Islam growing in their midst³³. However, as the Rocher website highlights, the 2013 ONZUS report affirms that contrary to public opinion in France, young people in the *cit s* uphold the “values of the Republic”, their conviction that work is a major means of social inclusion and their confidence in schools as vectors for upward mobility and success.

The Rocher considers the “social crisis of the *cit s*” as its solution to be primarily an educational one. As the children of the *cit s* spend the majority of their time in the streets, the organization asserts, without adult supervision, they are

inevitably exposed to trafficking and violence, and often under the influence of young adults already involved in crime, find themselves socialized into a life of crime with little hope of becoming integrated in society later on. Families are often helpless to act against such trends, even when they attempt to. The Rocher's mission, then, in its broader terms, is centered on breaking this cycle of crime and the primary population it targets for this are young children and parents of the *cit  *. This mission is anchored in a specific philosophy and convictions about the ultimate nature of the good society, as well as the means through which a vision of such a society could be realized.

Specifically, the Rocher considers its ultimate goal to be one of creating a "real social mixture" of people who originate from different "social horizons", something which is facilitated by the organization's strict policy of what many of my interlocutors referred to as the idea of *vivre avec*, or "living with".

All Rocher volunteers and employees, including center directors who commit to their post for a minimum duration of five years, relocate to the *cit  *, where they live alongside *cit  * residents in an HLM (Habitation    Loyer Mod  r  , or rent-controlled housing). This, the Rocher insists, not only facilitates the creation of a "social mix", but also a greater understanding of the living conditions in the *cit  s*, facilitating the creation of the conditions for sympathy, as volunteers must face themselves some of the daily realities faced by people living in the *cit  *. It is through this proximity that the trust (*confiance*) required for development is made possible, and so it is by "being neighbors" that the Rocher considers its actions to be realized.

Much of the ills of the *cit  * were conceived by members of the Rocher in terms

of isolation and lack of relations and communication between inhabitants of the *cit  *. The isolation of Muslim women who rarely left their homes, the lack of community cohesion and solidarity, the strong divisions and at times animosity between different ethnic groups in the *cit  *, and parents' inability to keep their children from joining gangs and becoming involved in trafficking were cited to me as the core issues of the *cit  * the Rocher wished to address in its work. Since it saw the core of the problem facing the organization in relational terms - isolation and the inhibition of the creation of social ties - the Rocher's solution is likewise defined in these terms:

The Rocher wants to contribute to the building of an audacious and hopeful society that is founded on men and women who are capable of putting themselves at the services of each other: of neighbors, colleagues, their neighborhood, city... families often feel fragile and isolated within the quarter. Due to unemployment, both personal and familial hurts, and difficulties of life, their loss of confidence in themselves and the lack of hope does not allow them to advance.

The Rocher seeks to address this by providing residents of the *cit  s* the opportunity to create relationships with others. From the NGO's website:

The Rocher center is a welcoming place, a place of listening, a meeting place to celebrate together. It is thus that the social bond is woven gradually... The different communities in the quarters often live amongst themselves, cloistered, in fear and in incomprehension of others. Children only meet each other in the school and adults only cross paths. On the other hand, for a person to be able to open up to others, they must feel well and have confidence in life, something which begins with the quality of welcome and listening that we can offer them. People open themselves and give of themselves through their relations with the volunteers of the Rocher, their involvement in the organization of celebrations [initiated by the Rocher], participation in such as *flavors of the world* meals [organized by the Rocher], animation activities in the streets and engagement in civil

service... the connection created with the habitants of the *cit * allows us to give them service or responsibilities that help them grow in confidence. Slowly, they become increasingly engaged in actions for the benefit of their neighborhood and city.

The organization also sees its mission as one of mediation and integration of *cit * residents into French society at large, something which it seeks to achieve through helping young adults to “realize themselves professionally”, providing them with help writing their CVs and seeking employment, as well as initiating projects to reduce adult illiteracy. The Rocher likewise considers its project as one of instilling children with certain values, such as an aspiration to excellence, community service and responsibility, developing children’s talents and nurturing their aspirations as well as providing extensive scholastic help and extracurricular activities. Of particular importance to the organization are activities that take children outside of the *cit *: “Many of these young people very rarely leave the *cit *. This form of isolation gives rise to a certain fear of the outside world. To overcome these fears, open to the world and deepen the educative work of the year, the Rocher takes children outside the *cit * of various excursions, activities and camps, to teach them skills and also to open them up to the world outside the *cit *.”

Of equal importance is the support the Rocher seeks to lend parents:

Families are isolated, disconnected from their immediate social milieu, and women frequently do not have the resources needed to reach out and meet with others in order to aid them in their educative goals. By meeting parents during home visits and creating trust and familiarity, the Rocher wants to try to become a link between the

domain of the school, the home and the street, supporting parents and assisting them in their educative role. By bringing women together in workshops they will form relationships and social connections with others, educate themselves, have an opportunity to be listened to and be the motor of change in the *cit *.

Ultimately, Rocher volunteers end up interacting primarily with children and their mothers - with children, during scholastic and extracurricular enrichment activities carried out in the center and in the streets of the *cit * (during bi-weekly street animation), and with mothers during family home visits and occasional workshops. Once a month, the Rocher would also organize *repas saveurs du monde*, “flavors of the world meals”, where neighbors and member of the Rocher get together to traditional ethnic dishes prepared by residents of the *cit * and Rocher volunteers to share with each other. In the summer, camps and excursions are organized. Otherwise, each Rocher project has its own special projects and emphases to match the community’s need.

The Rocher runs projects in eight different locations around France, and in 2015 had a total of 73 full-time volunteers and employees living in *cit s* around the country, with their families. In addition to its full-time workers the Rocher engages approximately 300 part-time volunteers (*b n voles*) that dedicate several hours a week to working with children, primarily for scholastic aid. Between 20 and 30 volunteers leave on one to two year missions each year. Although the organization is not legally classified as a religious or faith-based organization, almost all of the Rocher volunteers are practicing Catholics. Since up to a third of the Rocher’s funding comes from the state, it is considered to be a publicly-financed association. This also means that the

organization is subject of state regulations and inspections, and that in the context of French Laïcité it is expected as a public association not to engage in any overt religious activity.

The volunteers for the Rocher tend to be younger on average than those of Fidesco and more of them are single. The mission is seen as less “professional” and more “social” and so while most volunteers have some sort of higher education the mission’s emphasis is less so on the implementation of volunteers’ professional skills in the context of development, and more so on their social capacities. All volunteers of the Rocher undergo a similar discernment process as the Fidesco volunteers and go through a three-week training session to prepare them for their mission. The conditions of their mission are somewhat different to those of Fidesco’s volunteers and involve a greater degree of integration into the Emmanuel community whose local members are also normally involved in Rocher projects to a degree. Rocher volunteers are obligated to live the Emmanuel community life - they attend *maisonnée*, have an *accompagneur*, go to prayer groups, community weekends, and are all obligated to attend daily mass, an hour of Adoration and praise.

Une présence qui dépasse: from dyad to triad in the humanitarian relation

I turn now to examine the manners in which volunteers and personnel of both the Rocher and Fidesco understand the terms of their mission and conceive of their ethical obligation to those they seek to aid. Two central themes emerge from the narratives presented here: first, that compassion, or the notion of *feeling for* the

suffering other does not play in role in volunteers' decisions to want to go on mission, their ethical motivation to engage in aid, or indeed in their volunteering experiences. Instead, a stronger emphasis is given to the task of creating relationships of fellowship with those they aid. Second, that this shift away from what we might call an ethics of compassion, documented by the anthropological literature as characteristic of secular forms of humanitarianism, in favor of what we might call an ethics of love, is anchored in and facilitated by a transposition of the vertical relationship volunteers have with God into horizontal relationships with social others, in a manner which redefines the dyadic humanitarian relation (*I give you*), into a triadic one (composed of self, other, and God).

I first realized that Catholic ventures of aid and giving may be driven by vastly different motivations than do secular forms of aid only shortly before I began my fieldwork with the Rocher, as I was discussing politics with several friends, members of the Emmanuel community one evening. We were discussing the welfare policies in France, which my (admittedly rather wealthy) friends found to be too generous, anchored in what they considered to be a destructive and naïve leftist perspective on various social matters. Knowing that one of them, Élise, had been volunteering regularly at a local hospital, however, I asked, “well, it seems to me like you are quite against all the *‘faire du social’* on a state level, but then why are you then volunteering at the hospital? Isn't that to better the social conditions of others? To care for those less fortunate?” “well, of course not,” my friend replied. “I don't do it for that reason at all, to ‘do the social’, *‘faire du social’*. I volunteer to demonstrate to people who might be

close to death a certain interiority, a certain relationship with God. If they can see that, the love that exists between me and God, then they would be inspired, it would lighten their load, their fear of what's to come.”

For Élise, then, volunteering was not cast in social terms, but in spiritual ones, and for her the act of volunteering facilitated what we might argue is a very mild form of evangelizing - not a proselytism anchored in an attempt to convince or convert, but a demonstration of an alternative way of being-in-the-world – a being in the world with God - which is supposed to inspire or reorient, to serve as a locus for potential transformative self-process. For Inès, one of the directors of the Rocher and a consecrated sister in the Emmanuel community, the decision to work for the Rocher and relocate to the *cit * for a minimal duration of 5 years was likewise cast in terms of establishing a relationship with the divine:

I= I came to the Rocher to experience poverty. I chose to become a consecrated sister to follow Christ, so I chose a life of poverty. And for me, to accept to live in the *cit * is a concrete act of putting myself in poverty. Because I am used to the good, and for me the *cit * is not a place where I would choose to live. The second reason is the cadre of the mission and the call of the church, which is to prioritize the poor. And there are many kinds of poverty. Here, in the *cit * we have a kind of precariousness of living, material, physical, psychological, spiritual poverty. And poverty invites us to touch the essential. Often, the essential is the relationship with the person. The essential for me is this relation of love with the brothers, and this is something concrete. In the *cit * it is concrete. Because I am looking for people to show them the love of God, it is true. But for the affection that I can give them, without expecting a return. Often, we are, in our relationships with others, we are in a place of exchange... well, at the same time I won't say that I don't expect a return, because I know that if I came here it's for that. And at the same time, we become attached to people. My mission at the Rocher, concretely, is this – it's to be a sign in the *cit * of the presence of God, through my life, and

the choice of poverty, through living beside the poor. And by *being with* (*être avec*). I am not here to save them. Let's be clear. I don't have a pretension to save them."

N= save them in what way?

I= in any way whatsoever. In the sense that I am not better than them. Yes, I have certain richness that I am sharing with them. But they have likewise things to share. It's an exchange. Living with is exactly that. Because living with creates relations with people, relations of confidence, of simplicity, of equal to equal, and not an institution that is here to help disadvantaged people. You see? This is the difference. We are an institution, but not just an institution.

Like Élise, Inès does not consider her work in social, but in spiritual terms. But while we may say that for Élise volunteering was significantly motivated by the potential spiritual salvation the demonstration of her relationship with God might bring about in those with whom she worked, Inès refuses "saving" of any form. Her work, as she sees it, is not primarily or directly about spiritual change (religious conversion, salvation) nor social change (bettering the social conditions of the *cités*), but about the relational or dialogical transformation of the self. By refusing "saving" Inès is denying the affectivity as well as hierarchy that shapes the structure of the humanitarian relation, something which is equally emphasized in her initial insistence that she does not expect a return, an exchange. Her initial insistence on not expecting an exchange, which she then withdraws, admitting that she does expect something in return touches on something fundamental about the humanitarian, compassionate relation.

As a hierarchical, unequal relation by definition, the humanitarian relation is supposedly based on an idea of free giving. One cannot realistically expect reciprocity from those whose reasons to enter into the relationship in the first place are extreme

lack and distress. Where an expectation for exchange does seem to powerfully enter into humanitarian contexts, however, is in givers' expectations of change, in their expectation to see their considerable efforts bear fruit. The fact that this often does not happen, or does not happen to one's specifications, often results in disillusionment and emotional exhaustion on the part of aid workers, commonly referred to by both people on the ground and the professional literature as "compassion fatigue". Omri Elisha (2008: 155-156), for example, writing on social outreach initiatives among American Evangelicals in Knoxville, Tennessee tells us that compassion fatigue – a condition his interlocutors attributed to "frustrating experiences of being resisted or manipulated by irresponsible and unrepentant beneficiaries of charitable aid" - was cited by them as one of the greatest challenges to social outreach, and often as the reason for withdrawal from aid work altogether. Ticktin (2011) and Fassin (2012) similarly note how such cases of "compassion fatigue", the disillusionment that seems to follow the initial fervor to do good, to save the poor, quickly turns on the supposed beneficiaries of aid when they fail to display the appropriate, expected behavior, when the romantic dream of saving the poor goes up in smoke. Inès's acknowledgment that she does expect a return while simultaneously refusing the idea of change does much, I would suggest, to keep the perils of compassion fatigue at bay.

While she begins by denying any expectation for exchange, Inès quickly corrects herself and admits she does expect to gain something from her experience and then goes on to actually characterize her mission as a whole as aimed at creating relations of "exchange" with the residents of the *cit *, specifically contrasting that goal

with the rejected position of “savior” to the poor. Exchange here for Inès, however, is not the exchange of transaction or of gift exchange in the Maussian sense. Rather, I would suggest, it is exchange in the conversational sense, in the sense of the creation of a “fusion of horizons” in Gadamer’s (1997) terms. It is an exchange that is aimed, in other words, at the dialogical transformation of the self.

What I would like to argue here is that this is made possible for Inès by the insertion of God into the humanitarian relationship as an agent of sorts. Becoming a “a sign in the *cit * of the presence of God” in this sense amounts to a partial removal of one’s will or agency from the humanitarian relation. One is not acting on behalf of oneself, but rather “standing in” for God, mediating the presence of the divine with the ultimate, but rather simple and rather static goal of facilitating a co-presence between recipients of aid and the divine. It is in this sense that Inès sees her mission as defined by the notion of *living with*, or *being with*.

What is curious here is the fact that it is this decentering of the self in relation to God that seems to clear the way for the establishment of sociality that goes beyond the transactional and hierarchical dynamic of the humanitarian relation. Almost paradoxically, then, it is the introduction of God into the dyadic humanitarian relation that seems to, at least potentially, clear the way or facilitate the creation of relations of mutuality, of true intimacy. The potential “fusion of horizons” – what we might call the transformative potential of intimacy – which eludes the dyadic humanitarian relation based on compassion, is made possible by an introduction and mediation of a third.

Not all Rocher and Fidesco volunteers chose to go on mission to follow in the footsteps of Christ as did Inès. Initial reasons for going on mission varied greatly. Some volunteers highlighted professional aspirations as a reason for wanting to work for a year with an NGO, while others simply felt a persistent spiritual call to serve the poor. A few of my interlocutors felt that going on mission would be a way of displacing themselves from their daily routines and comforts, something which would contribute to their own spiritual growth and help them better realize themselves by becoming closer to God, while others framed their mission in terms of cultivating the options for inter-religious or inter-cultural dialogue. What they all had in common, however, was a complete lack of emphasis on compassion or any other fellow feelings in framing their mission and mission experience, and the introduction of God as a mediatory presence into their relationships with those they sought to aid.

Benjamin's decision to become a volunteer for the Rocher was primarily motivated by his desire to "know the world of the *cit * firsthand", something he wished to do since the *cit s*, in his opinion, "represented one of the most pressing political and social issues in France today." Benjamin, who had been involved in politics before and after his term at the Rocher, believed that an overtly Christian presence in the largely Muslim *cit s* had the potential to transform something about the conflicted social realities in France. Not by converting the Muslim population to Christianity, but by creating a proximity between Muslims and Christians by virtue of their joint belief in God:

I wanted to go and be a witness of a presence that goes beyond, that

exceeds (*une présence qui dépasse*). A witness of the message of love of Christ. And I told myself, I don't have the answer to the problem of the *cité*. This needs to be addressed by the state, but for the moment, nothing is done. . . . but I told myself, at least, the people who live in the *cité*, often they have a devalued view of the West, that we dress like you know what, a world that has lost the sense of the sacred, and maybe they can change their image that the West is not only what you see in the media, that there are also the Christians. And I think that this presence is very important. Because we can't really do much, really, we are very few, but the fact that we are living here in the *cité*, calls us to go beyond this kind of opposition, dichotomy, that is being created, between Muslims-believers, and Western-secularists, with opposition that crystallizes around such issues as the veil, etc, resulting in what I think will be an irreconcilable block. . . . and I said to myself, the visibility of the Christian faith can move the secularists to modify their perception of religion – if they see that look, that Christianity is a religion that is first of all about the interiority resting in the heart of the human being, it's not something ritualistic, superficial. So that can touch people. They realize you don't need to be superstitious and fanatic to be a believer. And the second thing, among the Muslims, there, this can show them something else to what they already know about the French.

Like Inès, Benjamin is also downplaying the “actual” social change that the Rocher can achieve. This is, however, not because he rejects a “saving” position but because of practicality, as he says, “we are few”. Like Inès, however, Benjamin also implicitly rejects the compassionate dyadic position, conceiving of his position vis-à-vis the residents of the *cité* as mediatory rather than directly dialogical, a desire to stand as a sign for a “presence” that exceeds him, to stand as a sign for the transcendent that exceeds or goes beyond life. Benjamin's rejection of the compassionate position does not lead him to formulate his mission in more intimate, intersubjective terms, as does Inès. Instead he goes a level higher, positioning himself as a representative of a particular social group and his mission as a conduit for the

amelioration of interreligious and intercultural tensions in France.

God is inserted into social relations here in a manner that is aimed at creating a commonality between practicing Muslims and practicing Catholics, while at the same time establishing an affinity between secular (humanist) French and Catholic French, by demonstrating those elements in Catholic faith and practice that correspond with humanist values, rather than with a view of religion as empty, ritualistic and authoritarian. It is a kind of empathic process based on similarity that Benjamin aspires to, a move of making the strange familiar by creating bridges of similarity between normally antagonistic groups. The transcendent God serves here as a third through whom French society is supposed to be transformed in the eyes of Muslim believers, while the witnessing of one's relationship with Jesus as personal, close and loving, the results of which are displayed in social outreach, serves to transform Catholicism in the eyes of French secularists. Rather than feeling for the poor and doing something to help them, then, Benjamin considers his mission to be a way of reframing current public debates about immigrant integration and Islam in France vis-à-vis the question of religion's place in the public sphere.

Unlike Benjamin, For Jean-Pierre, a volunteer in a neighboring *cit *, the Rocher mission was defined in clearly evangelical, salvific terms, as a desire to bring to message of Christ to the Muslim inhabitants of the *cit *, a goal he ultimately found to be unrealistic:

... I will tell you why I wanted to go on mission in the *cit *. It was because since I was 14 year old I have kept up with politics, I read magazines and I saw the conditions in the *cit *, and one of the reasons

I wanted to go to the cite was that I said to myself, perhaps one day it would be impossible to go anymore. Maybe it's a radical vision that I have, but... the Christians are called to act in the world and to transform the world, so ultimately I think that the Rocher is useful, that it changes things, that the Rocher needs to continue. And at the same time I think that we have small arms, small hands, and that we are not going to save the *cit  *. I think that the Rocher is not going to be the solution for the *cit  *. I think it's not the vision of the Rocher, because that would be a very human vision. I think that there is effectively a more prophetic vision for the Rocher, of being a Christian presence, being a sign, which Jesus gives some of us, the capability to welcome.

For Jean-Pierre, the transformation of the world is a question of salvation, not one of ameliorating the social conditions of persons living in the *cit  *. Likewise, the issue of integration, implied in his assertion that perhaps one day it would be impossible to enter the *cit  *, is to be resolved, ultimately, by the eventual conversion to Christianity of the Muslims in France rather than by achieving a multicultural or interreligious co-existence. Several months into his mission Jean-Pierre reached the conclusion that the Muslim population of the *cit  * would not convert to Christianity in his lifetime. His attempt to effect change directly, to convert the Muslim residents of the *cit  * to Christianity was then abandoned as a "human vision". Replacing this human perspective with a "prophetic vision", Jean-Pierre effectively cancelled his own agency and will from the relational equation, reframing his relationship with residents of the *cit  * as wholly mediatory.

In his famous discussion of the relational dynamic of dyads and triads, Georg Simmel (1950: 123) argues that the dyad "has a different relation to each of its two elements than have larger groups to their members." This is because although the dyad

requires two members to exist, its death is brought about by only one of these members leaving, unlike the case of a group of three or more that can continue to exist even when one of its members leaves. This makes the dyad, Simmel (1950: 123-124) concludes, a uniquely fragile relationship, one which is always already colored by its potential demise:

This dependence of the dyad upon its two individual members causes the thought of its existence to be accompanied by the thought of its termination much more closely and impressively than in any other group, where every member knows that even after his retirement or death, the group can continue to exist. Both the lives of the individual and that of the sociation are somehow colored by the imagination of their respective deaths...This fact is bound to influence the inner attitude of the individual toward the dyad, even though not always consciously nor in the same way. It makes the dyad into a group that feels itself both endangered and irreplaceable, and thus into the real locus not only of authentic sociological tragedy, but also of sentimentalism and elegiac problems.

By introducing God into the humanitarian relation, Jean-Pierre, like Inès, is able to avoid the effects of “compassion fatigue” which in light of Simmel’s discussion we might now consider to be not merely a reaction to one’s efforts not being reciprocated by the appropriate attitudes or by the desired transformation, but also as the anxiety that is the result of the implicit demise of the relation such a failure predicts, indeed, the inherent anxiety that the fragility of the dyadic relation implies. More so, positioning himself in a mediatory role as a facilitator or announcer of the divine, rather than in a dyadic relation of giver-receiver, or in his case evangelizer-converted, Jean-Pierre can successfully position his relation with those he seeks to aid in the much broader temporal context of divine action, where he, a member of a triadic

relation, plays but a small part, contextualizing his mission it in a divine or “prophetic” timeframe which discounted his own actions as merely a small step in a much larger path that Muslims of the *cit * would be taking in discovering the person of Jesus Christ.

The efficacy of this small, mediatory role, however, was invariably measured by Jean-Pierre and the rest of my interlocutors as a function of the creation of successful relational ties with those whom they aided. When I asked him to give me an example of a successful action of the Rocher, or an event in the course of his time with the Rocher that stuck out as particularly positive for him, Jean-Pierre gave me the example of accompanying a child, Yassin, back home and meeting with his mother. Initially approaching the mother in order to speak to her about the possibility of Yassin attending the Rocher summer camp, the conversation quickly turned more personal, as Jean-Pierre asked Yassin’s mother how long she and her family have been living in the *cit *, an act he felt communicated his genuine interest and care for her:

This woman, Samira, it wasn’t just her son’s camp that interested me, it was her that interested me, to get to know who she is, how she lives, to really know her. It’s not obligatory, but at the moment you do it, people feel it. When I asked her, gently, politely, “and you, has it been a long time that you have been living here?”, it was not intrusive, she could keep her freedom not to reveal anything, but at the same time she felt that I was genuinely interested in her. And so she told me, still with politeness and a bit guarded, that she came to France when she was 16, and she didn’t know her parents, that her father came to Algeria once every three years for vacation, and one time he proposed her to go to France for vacation and so after that she never returned to Algeria. So she didn’t have a chance to say goodbye to her aunt, to her grandmother, who raised her, and they died. And I continued, really with a lot of gentleness, to ask her questions, and she at some point started to cry, and I felt yes, it was a very painful history. And I thought to myself, this woman, I have only known her, really, for half an hour, I only came up to talk about

her son, I only presented myself generally, and really just through the small questions, the gentleness of my attitude, the holy spirit opened my heart and she confided in me, even though she didn't know me.

Jean-Pierre attributed Yassin's mother's willingness to open up to him to be the action of the Holy Spirit, working through him:

If you like, it's something that goes beyond me... it was like having a trust with a person that has known you for many years, like people that after years you say hello to them and it's like you saw the other day... it's there that you see it's mysterious, that it's not simply that the person just had a need to be listened to, but that the Holy Spirit has been working there, so that in that moment she opened her heart and cried and all that. You say, this is where I see that this goes beyond me. And it's there that you see, that you see the profundity of the mission of the Rocher that is not just to educate the children, to love them, to do things for them, but then you go see their parents, you encourage them, you greet them, and you don't only propose to them a service, a camp for the summer, but you offer them a listening ear, friendship. And so she told me at the end, thank you, this has helped me. You could see it wasn't someone that just talks about her problems to anyone. She was troubled. And there you see that this mission... it's more than.... The limits of this mission are hard to define.

The intimacy which is the hallmark of a dyadic love relation, Simmel (1950) tells us, is ultimately a function of information exchange that is simultaneously dependent on both exposure and secrecy – intimacy is created not only by a sharing of information, but by the implication that this sharing is somewhat exclusive, given to the other person but not to others outside the dyad (see also Gell 2011). It was this establishment of intimacy in such a short period of time and across such cultural divides that led Jean-Pierre to conclude that his interaction with Samira was made possible by the mysterious intervention of the Holy Spirit. It is the surprise, the

unexpected or uncharacteristic that marks the presence and operation of the divine in social interaction in Jean-Pierre's account, as was the case, we might be reminded, in Clement's account of conversing with the tire salesman. And as is the case with Inès, empathic process or intersubjectivity are experienced by Jean-Pierre as facilitated by the introduction of the presence of God into human interaction.

In this sense, Jean-Pierre sees his ability to create significant relational interactions with those he seeks to aid as a function of his ability to successfully relate to the divine – opening himself up to the touch of the Holy Spirit, which would then allow him to effectively relate to others. Again, then, perhaps paradoxically, it is the displacement of the self from the humanitarian relation – the removal of one's will to change, to give, to the other – that is experienced as allowing relations to flourish. What also becomes evident from Jean-Pierre's account is the fact that the introduction of the divine into sociality not only works to facilitate empathic process, but that the establishment of real social relations mediates the Charismatic encounter with the divine in the course of daily life. The humanitarian encounter for Emmanuel, then, becomes the locus for self process and self transformation insofar as the encounter with the difference of the other achieves intimacy and intimacy achieves a potential "fusion of horizons."

Volunteers for Fidesco likewise had varied reasons for going on mission, although the idea of helping the poor seemed to feature more prominently in their case. Hannah, an American volunteer who worked in one of Fidesco's collaborative missions in the south of Rwanda was motivated to go on mission by a combination of

a desire to change her own life, and to help the poor:

I guess the adventure, for one. To live simply, to live in a new country, wow, what an experience. But also to serve... I mean, I was anxious, depressed, even, and selfish. So part of my desire on going on mission was to live for other people. Or have a year where I am praying for their needs and not my own... And I do see, I don't think I'm changing the world, but I do make a difference in students' lives. [...] Because with Fidesco, the idea is to serve the poor, and I was inspired a lot by a book called *Kisses from Katy*. She went to Uganda for one year to teach young children, and the short story, she just never left. She's taken in tons of poor children, and she was describing the plight of the children that she was teaching... And I just said to myself, yes, Jesus is homeless in the States, Jesus is hungry, but Jesus is not starving to death in the US. There is enough food to go around. But in Africa, in other places, children, Jesus in the form of children, and other people, is really starving, really orphaned... and then that children are having to carry such heavy burdens and loads, as children. When they should have this joyful childhood. So for me this idea of serving poor children was so present in my mind.

The fact that the notion of going on mission to “help the poor” was more central for volunteers of Fidesco, than for those of the Rocher could be explained by the fact that volunteers for both organizations related to the Others with whom they interacted in distinctly different ways. The African Other was more likely to be viewed by French (or American) volunteers as impoverished, vulnerable and in need of assistance than would the Maghrebin, Muslim Other living in France, an Other that was often also viewed as threatening, hostile, and not necessarily altogether poor.

What is of note in Hannah's account, however, is the fact that although she came to Rwanda with the ideal of helping the poor, the manner in which God is inserted into this relationship, again empties, to a degree, the agency or identity of one

of the persons in the relation, although this time it is the receiving part whose identity is displaced or decentered in favor of the divine. *Serving*, not saving the poor, is Hannah's way of giving something to those in need, as much as caring for the poor is effectively caring for the suffering person of Christ embodied in them. Although the humanitarian dynamic of giver and receiver is preserved here, the exchange, in principle, empties the relation of the hierarchy implied in such nonreciprocal exchange, as one cannot presume to maintain a position of superiority or benevolence towards one's God. Exchange here is not a gift-giving, but an offering anchored in one's ethical duty, indeed obligation, to the divine.

For Jerome, a French volunteer working on the Fidesco mission in Kigali, going on mission was cast more clearly in such terms, as the fulfillment of what he considered to be his ethical and Christian obligation to God, his duty to go and serve the poor: "it is very simple", he told me, "I am a Christian, and so we are obligated to justice, to charity, to change the world for the better, to help those who most need our help. This is the example that Jesus set for us and I wanted my Christian faith to mean something other than just going to mass. I didn't want to be just a Sunday Christian, I wanted to live my faith, and this is how we must live it."

Helping the poor, charity, justice, the transformation of the world – all these were not motivated for Jerome by a feeling for the other, a call to alleviate suffering or any kind of empathic or compassionate sentiment, but out of a rather straightforward ethical obligation to God, to doing God's will on earth. Here, the true identity of the Other is nearly cancelled out of the relationship altogether, but at the same time it is

exactly this displacing of the Other in relation to God, the experience of the Other vis-à-vis the third presence of God, that pushes Jerome to invest himself into the social.

Unlike Jerome, for Thierry, a young French seminarian, mission was articulated purely in spiritual terms:

T= it was my decision as a seminarian... I felt in me that I had need for time, to do this, because I needed god to inhabit all the zones of my life. [...] I realized that if I want God to inhabit all the places in my life, to take all the space, I must detach myself from many things, and that I needed to go far away, to let go of my richness.

N= ok, so it was for a personal reason, to grow in the faith

T= yes. It was to understand the poorest, to put myself in the service of the poor...so it was really the self impoverishment that I was looking for, and I knew that if I wanted to impoverish myself, then I must go away very far, because for me, my greatest richness was my family and friends, and the hardest was to cut it.... and you see, it's not primarily for the others. It's not really... I do it primarily for Jesus, to serve Jesus better. And today it's funny, because at the beginning of my mission, my letters that I sent to my sponsors, I say I have given up everything to serve the poor in order to serve and follow Jesus better. And today I changed a bit. I say, I left everything to love better. In this mission I really discovered the vocation of love. So it has changed... in my personal vocation as priest, today I realize how much we must love and love more. So the children, I don't give them anything of value, professionally. Other than who I am. Maybe I do some activities with them, etc, but the only thing I really do for them is to love them. And I realize that what the lord has called me to do is really to love. And in concrete acts. This vocation of love... seminarians often talk about St Thérèse of Lisieux and the vocation of love, but I have only really understood it here.

Thierry explicitly rejects the humanitarian position, stating clearly that the sole reason for his mission is his desire to come closer to God, which he opts to achieve by forcing himself into a state of poverty. Poverty here is not simply material, but

psychological, emotional, relational – the state of being stripped of what defines the relational, dialogical self. The goal of mission for Thierry, then, is the transformation of the self through the reorientation to the divine, specifically through a relinquishing of one’s will, a radical displacement or decentering of the self in relation to the divine. Serving the poor, for Thierry, is equivalent of serving God, doing God’s will at any cost. What, again, emerges from his narrative, is the manner in which this decentering of the self is a locus for self-process insofar as it alters one’s being in the world in relation to others, a process which Thierry sees as “learning to love”.

Differences in initial motivation notwithstanding, what we see here is that for Fidesco volunteers, as for the volunteers of the Rocher, mission is ultimately defined in relational terms, specifically the establishment of relations of love with those they aid, which is facilitated or understood through the mediation and insertion of the divine into sociality.

Conclusions

The anthropological critique of humanitarianism tends to focus on the violence that practices of supposed kindness inflict on their recipients. The centrality of moral sentiments to the constitution of humanitarian governance, scholars highlight, results in an occlusion of structural and political causes of the suffering humanitarian action purports to alleviate (Ticktin 2011), and in the replacement of action with a “passive ideal” of care (Berlant 1998: 641), making these emotions of care for the other an end in themselves, helping becomes a gratification highlighting our own benevolence in

caring for the other. The result of defining the humanitarian relationship in terms of benevolence, these scholars argue, also results in an inevitable hierarchical tension between giver and receiver. In this, some have argued, the humanitarian relation is a violence since it creates, on the one hand, an indebtedness that can never be repaid (on the side of the receiver), and on the other, an implicit expectation for reciprocity in the form of change which must be frustrated (on the side of the giver). It is in this sense that Mary Douglas speaks of the violence of the gift, of the harm inherent in the act of charity.

In the case of Emmanuel, however, the casting of the humanitarian project not in the affective terms of benevolence but as a means of relating to the divine, undermines this hierarchical logic, at least potentially. In a sense, this happens by shifting the humanitarian relationship from a dyadic giver-receiver relation into a triadic relationship, where God as an agent serves as a mediator in a manner that at least potentially empties or weakens the potency of any would-be indebtedness resulting from an unequal exchange relation. What the introduction of God into the humanitarian relation, then, effectively achieves is a decentering of both self and other in relation to the divine, insofar as agency, will or even identity is displaced and located instead with the divine. It is God who speaks through one's action, or through the lips of those one comes to aid, he is the languishing poor as well as the beacon of hope come to save them.

This move, the imbuing of the social with divine presence, also marks the work of mission for volunteers as an important locus for self process and self transformation

insofar as it facilitates a reorientation to the world and to others in a manner which reaffirms relations and opens up possibilities for the creation of intimacy. What I find significant about this is the role that mediation (in this case of God) appears to be playing in facilitating this intimacy and the possibilities for empathic process within the dyad. Although he asserts that intimacy is the particular hallmark of the dyad, Simmel's (1950: 135) discussion of the triadic relational dynamic in fact highlights the same potential fruitfulness of mediation which emerges from the introduction of a third into a dyadic relation we have been observing in the case of Emmanuel:

This peculiar closeness between two is most clearly revealed if the dyad is contrasted with the triad. 11 For among three elements, each one operates as an intermediary between the other two, exhibiting the twofold function of such an organ, which is to unite and to separate. Where three elements, A, B, C, constitute a group, there is, in addition to the direct relationship between A and B, for instance, their indirect one, which is derived from their common relation to C. The fact that two elements are each connected not only by a straight line the shortest but also by a broken line, as it were, is an enrichment from a formal-sociological standpoint. Points that cannot be contacted by the straight line are connected by the third element, which offers a different side to each of the other two, and yet fuses these different sides in the unity of its own personality. Discords between two parties which they themselves cannot remedy, are accommodated by the third or by absorption in a comprehensive whole.

The "third element" in Simmel's account exhibits the twofold function of uniting and separating the other two elements. It is an enrichment in the interactional sense insofar as it offers us the potential to connect, indirectly, those elements which cannot meet by the direct, straight line. In so doing, the third element connects and fuses the two, but in a manner which also "offers a different side to each of the other

two.” The disruption to intimacy that a third party represents, then, in Simmel’s account, can also facilitate an intimacy, a knowing which might otherwise prove impossible: ”The appearance of the third party indicates transition, conciliation, and abandonment of absolute contrast” (1950: 145). Importantly, however, it achieves it by the fact of separation, the introduction of a distance into dyadic intersubjectivity.

We might be reminded here of Jeanne’s intercessory prayer on behalf of the person she had difficulties interacting with in *maisonnée* meetings, and the manner in which direct empathic process – insofar as we consider empathy an attempt at “approximating the subjective experience of another from a quasi-first-person perspective” (Hollan and Throop, 2008: 387) – was eschewed in favor of a relating to other *through* another – an empathy once removed. Empathy or understanding here is facilitated through the mediation of a third rather than a direct attempt at relating to another.

Where we also arrive at, at this point, however, is the fact that as Hollan (2008) stresses, empathy is not simply a question of understanding others, but just as much a question of whether the other wants to be understood. The introduction of God into the humanitarian relation serves to orient volunteers to their mission in particular way. The question still remains, however, what happens when ideal meets reality. For all the imbuing of human relationality with sparks of the divine, social relations remain, in and of themselves, present and real. As much as one would like to imagine God dwelling in the poor, “the poor” are not a template upon which one’s fantasies or desires can simply be inscribed. “The poor” will have their own perspective on this

relationship into which they are supposed to be entering, and in their own perspective they might not at all be poor, in need of help, or indeed in need of the relation being offered, whatever its terms may be. Likewise, the displacement of one's will or agency in favor of the divine's, the achievement of decentering or displacing the self in its relation to God, is hardly an easy thing to achieve in the midst of real social interaction and the failure to achieve this ideal meant that relational dynamic in the context of mission did not conform to volunteers' structural ideal. In the next chapter, then, we go beyond the ideal, to explore how empathic process and the intersubjective dynamic of the humanitarian encounter between volunteers and recipients of aid took shape in the course of daily interaction.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Work of Sympathy: Self-Transformation and Impasse

I was nearing the end of my visit to Rwanda, waiting for Felicien in his car on our way to Kigali city center. “Tell me” he said, as he entered the car, wearing his usual smile, “what do you think about this conversation I had yesterday? A relative of mine was visiting. He has a high ranking position in the government, and I asked him – ‘just between us, can you tell me that you really believe that we have always been the same?’ And you know what he told me? He said, ‘between us, maybe before, people have not always been the same.’ And what do you think, Nofit? You think we have always been the same?” I already knew what Felicien thought on the matter. Himself half Tutsi and half Hutu (ethnic categories which today are banned from official use in Rwanda), he did not think that all Rwandans were really the same, and it was important for him that I knew and understood that.

Felicien’s insistence on difference needs to be understood against the backdrop of current reconciliation and post-genocide reconstruction efforts in Rwanda that are centered, among other things, on reframing (or rather, effacing) ethnic difference between Hutu and Tutsi. The state’s latest campaign - *Ndi Umunyarwanda*, “I am Rwandan” – is one such effort. Through a nationwide campaign that includes workshops and training sessions, *Ndi Umunyarwanda* opts to reconcile Hutu and Tutsi and promote future stability in the country by discrediting the veracity of ethnic difference, ultimately replacing both Hutu and Tutsi categories with the single,

supposedly uniting, “Rwandan”. The rationale behind this move, as explained to me by a Catholic priest who was working with the government on the implementation of this project is that recognizing what made Hutu and Tutsi similar rather than different, what unites them rather than divides them, would serve to foster unity, trust, and prevent future violence.

There is truth behind the logic of *Ndi Umunyarwanda*, and a common-sensical intuition to the assertion that similarity and commonality breed trust and closeness, just as the accentuation of radical difference, the dehumanization of the Other was used, in Rwanda and elsewhere to prepare the ground for mass violence (Taylor 1999). It may seem particularly baffling, then, that Felicien, himself half Hutu and half Tutsi, who suffered the horrors of the genocide as a young man, should insist that a recognition of difference between Hutu and Tutsi must be preserved. But what Felicien was insisting upon did not, in his opinion, preclude reconciliation or ensured a future where violence always threatened to break. Nor was his insistence to be understood in terms of a struggle for recognition of the suffering one ethnic group or the other, a recognition that many Hutu insisted on in light of the state’s official narrative that denied any significant Hutu losses during the genocide. Felicien simply didn’t want to pretend.

Although I do not delve in this work into the politics of reconciliation in Rwanda, it was Felicien’s insistence on difference in his many conversations with me that brought more forcefully to my attention the role that the acknowledgment of difference played in the interactional dynamics of my interlocutors as they negotiated the tensions inherent to the humanitarian relation. In this chapter I explore, then, what

happens when ideal meets reality, how, in the context of mission, relations break and form, and under what conditions and terms.



As we have noted in the previous chapter, anthropological accounts of humanitarianism are highly critical. Much of this critique has centered on what I call the humanitarian relation, the unequal relation of exchange that is inevitably established between the benevolent giver and the helpless recipient of help. The common anthropological treatment of the humanitarian relation, and of non-reciprocal relations in general, is shaped by a what has become the dominant reading of Mauss's famous essay on the gift (1990 [1950]), often read as an agonistic exchange theory where giving is ultimately a selfish act aimed at securing power for the giver (see Parry 1986 for a critique of this). It is in light of this reading that Pierre Bourdieu characterizes the gift that cannot be reciprocated as a prime example of symbolic violence (1977), and in this vein that Mary Douglas (1990: vii), in her foreword to the 1990 edition of Mauss's *The Gift* writes, "Though we laud charity as a Christian virtue we know that it wounds". Likewise, the humanitarian relation is often portrayed in anthropological literature as an act of violence, a violence inherent to any form of unilateral giving, the unreciprocated gift a condemning structural fault of humanitarian reason (Fassin 2012, Bornstein 2009).

However, these structural analyses of humanitarian reason seem to be more heavily anchored in philosophical reflection than robust ethnographic data, the ethical valence of one ethical system over another already decided prior to or irrespectively of

the manners in which such ethical practices are lived and interpreted by actors on the ground³⁴. The critique of the structural faults of humanitarian logic per se, then, does not tell us much about how people actually interact with one another in the context of the humanitarian encounter. Two recent ethnographic examples, however, already question the monolithic critique of humanitarianism produced in recent years by anthropologists. China Scherz (2014), in her work on sustainable development projects and charity in Uganda demonstrates that relations of dependency, where gifts are not reciprocated, are not experienced as a form of violence, but as a viable mode of social relation, while Erica Weiss's (2015) work on conscientious objectors in Israel highlights that moral sentiments such as empathy or compassion can motivate significant political action rather than necessarily engender toothless sentimentalism.

Likewise, the picture that emerges from my ethnography of the Rocher and of Fidesco does not fit neatly in anthropological characterizations of the humanitarian relation as one defined by acute inequality and the violence of the unreciprocated gift. What I seek to achieve in this chapter, then, is an interpretive analysis of the humanitarian relation across different social and cultural contexts, without the assumption or judgment that one mode of relating to others is necessarily preferable or more just to another, but rather with the goal of better understanding such patterns of relating.

The point of departure for my analysis is the assertion that the humanitarian relation is founded on a paradox (see Fassin 2012, Feldman and Ticktin 2010, Elisha 2008, 2011), specifically, the paradox of solidarity and inequality. While

humanitarianism logic is motivated by the recognition of a shared humanity, it is also based in a politics of inequality, the argument goes, insofar as the act of humanitarian giving is a bestowing of benevolence on the vulnerable:

A remarkable paradox deserves our attention here. On the one hand, moral sentiments are focused mainly on the poorest, most unfortunate, most vulnerable individuals: the politics of compassion is a politics of inequality. On the other hand, the condition of possibility of moral sentiments is generally the recognition of others as fellows: the politics of compassion is a politics of solidarity. This tension between inequality and solidarity, between a relation of domination and a relation of assistance, is constitutive of all humanitarian government. (Fassin, 2012: 3)

According to Fassin (2012: 3), the fact that humanitarian logic is founded on this particular paradox explains several of the inherent problematic observed in humanitarian action on the ground, including the violence of the unreciprocated gift:

It explains the frequently observed ambivalence of authorities, of donors, and of agents working for the good of others, and it accounts for what has been called compassion fatigue, the wearing down of moral sentiments until they turn into indifference or even aggressiveness toward the victims of misfortune. But it also explains the shame felt by the poor, the beneficiaries of aid, all those who receive these gifts that call for no counter gift, and accounts for the resentment and even hostility sometimes expressed by the disadvantaged and the dominated toward those who think of themselves as their benefactors.

Although the ethical foundation that Catholic aid workers and volunteers at the Rocher and Fidesco draw on is distinct from the that of secular humanitarianism, the structural characterization of the humanitarian relation suggested by Fassin holds for the Catholic case as well insofar as it is, to a degree, interactionally defined within a

tension between forms of solidarity and of inequality. However, the particular character of these tensions, the relational dynamics as well as the subsequent consequences of these tensions were more varied than the formula suggested by Fassin. For this reason I abandon in my analysis here the characterization of the humanitarian relation as one frozen in a supposedly paradoxical tension between equality and hierarchy, and instead, drawing on Goffman's dramaturgical approach to social interaction, treat it like a particular form of performance. Within this performance, I note, one in which both givers and receivers of aid simultaneously serve as performers and audience for each other, the contours of supposed relationships are negotiated and tentatively drawn, erased, and redrawn. What this analysis indicates is, among other things, that as fragile as these relations reveal themselves to be, their integrity is dependent not simply, or even primarily, on the establishment of similarity, but on the recognition and experience of profound difference.

Performing Relations

I draw in my analysis on Erving Goffman's dramaturgic approach to social interaction, as developed in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956). In this seminal study, Goffman suggests we consider social interaction in theatrical terms where roles and scripted performances are carried out on stage by actors who seek to project and manage particular impressions of their selves to their audience.

Performance is broadly defined as "all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers

which has some influence on the observers” (1956: 13).

Goffman opens his study with a discussion of the two poles between which a performance may be positioned in relation to the self – that of complete sincerity and that of complete cynicism. The first refers to situations where the self is completely identified with the role performed and the latter to a conscious deployment of performance as manipulative strategy to influence one’s audience without an identification with the role performed. Between these two extremes, however, he locates movement, where one can either move from a state of relative identification with one’s performed role and into a state of disillusionment, or the other way around, where one begins as a conscious performer and ends in identity. These are the kind of situations of “fake it to make it”, where performing a role consistently enough in the presence of others results in an actual reorientation of the self, and the reshaping of the person. I highlight this point here since I refer to performance throughout this text not in its cynical sense, but as one that fluctuates closer to the ‘sincere’ end of the continuum described by Goffman.

Another important distinction in this regard is the differentiation between what Goffman calls the front and back regions of one’s performance or of the stage. The “front region” refers to the place where the performance is given, the front parts of the performance consisting in what the actor wittingly or unwittingly presents to the audience. This is contrasted with the “back region” or backstage, “where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course” (1956: 69), where the actor can go out of character, relax, act more “naturally”.

The relation between the backstage and front stage, however, is at times unstable, such as in cases where performers do not have sufficient control over their backstage and risk the backstage being invaded by others, or where the backstage and front stage are extremely close (for example, such as in the case of television presenters), and so actors need to be very adept at juggling between them. In cases such as these, impression management achieved through front stage performance is jeopardized, the invasion of the back stage to the front risks discrediting the whole performance and revealing the lie behind it.

Goffman is primarily concerned with the establishment of the self through the performance of particular roles or personae, and as such his study focuses on such situations where one is maintaining or failing to establish “face” or a certain impression or roles one wishes to uphold in the course of interaction. For a single performer, maintaining a performance (what Goffman also refers to as “defining reality”) is a relatively straightforward affair insofar as the performer is the one choosing how to carry out the performance and its characteristics. Things become more tricky when a performance needs to be carried out by what Goffman refers to as “teams”, such as a case where husband and wife are hosting a dinner party, as teammates are obviously dependent on each other for the performance to be successful. If members of a team disagree about the definition of reality or what the performance should convey, tensions and disagreements would arise, putting the performance itself at risk. I approach the humanitarian relation here as a type of team performance, one which requires the collaboration of two parties in order for the performance to succeed.

However, unlike the situations typically analyzed by Goffman, where an individual or team perform in front of an audience, in the relational interactions I analyze here, performers and their audience are one and the same.

Before moving forward with analysis, allow me to make a small detour in further explaining my characterization here of the humanitarian relation. Having an extensive experience of the world of therapy, I have found throughout the years that quite a few therapists find it at least slightly difficult to personally charge their fee at the end of the therapy session. This was mainly the case of therapists whose work was based on establishing a close personal relationship with their clients. In other words, in cases where the establishment of the relationship itself with the therapist is a conduit for healing. If we think of the relationship which the therapist establishes with the client in the course of therapy as a kind of performance, then the awkwardness in charging money for the session is explained by the fact that the exchange of money constitutes a small moment of rupture in the performance of a relationship that is the therapy as a whole. What the exchange of money does is remind both therapist and client that the relationship is in fact a transaction, that the time, the care, the listening ear, were paid for. The source of the discomfort that the payment for the relationship creates, in other words, is in bringing what Goffman calls the backstage into the front stage of the performance, the invasion of one version of reality into another.

Like the therapy session, the Catholic humanitarian relation is a joint performance of a relationship. Unlike the brief, impersonal humanitarian encounter of the state of emergency which is centered on the alleviation of immediate physical

suffering after which aid workers move on, Catholic missions are premised on long-term interaction between aid givers and receivers. Furthermore, motivated as they are by the desire to form meaningful relations with the persons whom they aid, volunteers invest much of their energy into building social ties, an effort which evoked much anxiety in my interlocutors. These efforts are not always reciprocated by the supposed recipients of their aid, and when they are, they are reciprocated from a different position, carrying different terms, goals and notions about what the relationship should look like.

Like the therapeutic relation, the humanitarian relation is also temporary. At the end of their mission, volunteers will return to their (affluent, far, and white) homes, and while some few relations may extend beyond the duration of mission, most of them would not. Finally, like the therapeutic relation, the humanitarian relation is also a fragile relation, always facing the constant threat of being exposed for nothing but an empty performance, yet constantly striving to become more.

The Humanitarian Relation: Negotiating Similarity and Difference

Members of Emmanuel and many of the volunteers of the Rocher and of Fidesco often stressed the importance of an encounter with alterity for one's spiritual development. As we have seen in chapter three, many volunteers framed their desire to go on mission in particular spiritual terms, as an exercise in relinquishing the comfort of the familiar and coming into contact with difference. The spiritual importance given to an encounter with difference was at the heart of the philosophical rationale of the

NGOs themselves, a rationale that went beyond the organizations' stated goal of development and aid, as evident in one of the Rocher's official recruitment videos:

I think that in the Rocher there is a specific intuition that might not exist in other associations, that we must cherish. And that is the question of the good heart. The presence at the heart of the *cités*. What we try to do in the Rocher every day is to efface the boundaries in order to facilitate an encounter. Every time you allow an encounter between people who are very different, I think we advance things, we meet each other. [...] When I talk about the word recognition (*reconnaissance*), I am referring to it in two senses - the first is that I know you as you are, with your history, your origins, your culture, etc. The second sense of the term is that I recognize what you give me by your difference.

Indeed, if the volunteers of the Rocher and of Fidesco wanted to encounter difference, their mission provided them with ample opportunity to come face to face with it. However, as they also understood their mission in strong relational terms, as a project of crafting relations of love with those whom they aided, volunteers also strove to create true fellowship with their interlocutors. In trying to create such fellowship, however, most volunteers attempted to efface the difference they supposedly wished to encounter in favor of foregrounding actual or supposed similarities between themselves and those they sought to aid. These attempts were frequently unreciprocated or challenged - and it is those interactions, moments when two differing notions of what constituted a genuine performance of the relation come to be that are at the core of my analysis here.

I present here four cases of multi-person relationships and interactions, two in France and two in Rwanda. The relationships I investigate in France focus on two

different residents of the *cit * in which I worked, Amira, a French woman of Tunisian descent in her mid-forties whose parents immigrated to France in the 1960s, and Safi, a twenty year old French born man of Algerian descent. The relationships I explore in the Rwandan context focus on two pairs of Fidesco volunteers working on different projects in the country, Thierry and Jerome, and Hannah and Rosa, all four in their early twenties and on a one to two year mission in Rwanda.

Amira

I met Amira on my very first week of working with the Rocher, when she came to visit the volunteers in the center for a Friday morning coffee and chat. Unlike some women of the *cit * that would only venture to the Rocher center when needing to discuss their child's scholastic progress or for practical reasons, Amira obviously enjoyed the social interaction with the volunteers and her association with the Rocher more generally. Although she was Muslim, Amira did not wear a head cover and had occasional conflicts with her Islamist neighbors, who disapproved of her way of living, which they considered to be not pious enough. She often commented to me and the other volunteers at the Rocher that not all residents of the *cit * welcomed or even accepted the presence of a Catholic organization in their midst, that those folk who frequented our center were not the typical Muslims who now lived in her neighborhood, but people who were more open to inter-religious interaction. Amira regarded with concern what she considered was the growing Islamization and radicalization of the *cit *, and often emphasized her acceptance of members of other

religions in spite of the fact of her being a believing Muslim. She was one of the only persons in the *cit * who also knew I was Israeli and Jewish.

On that Friday morning when I first met her, myself and several of the Rocher volunteers were seated in the center, having a coffee with Amira and a friend of hers who came to visit. The conversation was casual and enjoyable, until Amira raised an issue that she said had been bothering her. "Why is it," she said, "that the Rocher does not have any volunteers from the *cit * itself? I think it's important for you to not just have people come here from Paris and such, but to have someone from the *cit *, from here." Her statement was followed by a slightly awkward silence, following which several of the volunteers pointed to the fact that the Rocher in fact had not one but two young people from the *cit * working at the center. "No" Amira insisted, "they are just *b n voles* (part time, not contracted volunteers), not volunteers like you. They are not contracted. The Rocher needs to have someone totally contracted, just like you, that works full time and is being paid expenses for their time. At least I think so." To this, one of the volunteers replied that it would have been difficult, since volunteers for the Rocher need to go away from their homes, they could not just stay here. The atmosphere gradually grew awkward, as the volunteers struggled to explain the impossibility of contracting a resident of the *cit * as a volunteer for the Rocher. This, in fact, I later learned, was not impossible, as the Rocher did employ *cit * residents as volunteers in other branches, although all volunteers did need to serve in different geographical location than their home cities. The volunteers present at the talk did not seem to know that, however. Amira eventually withdraw her suggestion, stating it was

only made to facilitate the Rocher's work in the *cit * by including a local representative in their ranks.

I had witnessed Amira repeatedly make the same suggestion to various members of the Rocher, however, and she had repeated the same point when I interviewed her several months later. Her other comments to me on that occasion clarified that at the heart of her insistence was the question of equality and a demand for the authenticity of the relationship she had with members of the Rocher be validated. In telling me her life story she showcased the years she had spent herself as a volunteer, working with NGOs outside of France. She knew the problems of these organizations, she explained to me, and those problems had to do with what she referred to as lack of "*mixit *", or what we might call diversity. The same problem she identifies at the Rocher, whose volunteers, she added, "would do well to open themselves to the possibility that they can take something of value from their stay in the *cit *," could learn something from the people they interacted with. "And they should try to learn," she told me "more than just how to make Moroccan cookies," referring to the frequent habit of volunteers to visit with women of the *cit * in order to learn how to cook north African foods.

In referring mockingly to this, Amira was pointing to the use that food and cooking were put to in defining relations of exchange and equality between volunteers and members of the *cit *. Female volunteers would frequently visit the homes of families we interacted with, learning from women how to cook a variety of north African dishes. Some women, whose family's relationship with the Rocher were closer

than others would also on occasion send down large portions of couscous or various delicacies and cookies by means of pampering the volunteers, and the whole team would sometimes be invited to lunch or dine with a family in the *cité*. Food was established, to a degree, as a coin with which residents of the *cité* could reciprocate all they received from the Rocher, could contribute something unique, or teach volunteers, all of whom were relatively educated and coming from affluent homes, something new. But food, Amira highlighted in her mockery, was a cheap coin, establishing the exchange between volunteers and the women of the *cité* as a grossly unequal one. Not because volunteers had so much more to give, but because they did not appreciate enough what they could receive in exchange.

Going back to Goffman's front stage/backstage distinction, Amira's demand that a volunteer for the Rocher be recruited from the *cité* itself is an instance when the backstage impinges, from the volunteers' perspective, on the performance of an equal relationality taking place in the front stage, a fact that is evident in the particular discomfort this request evoked. Within the careful performance of a relationship that is based on fellowship, mutual appreciation, similarity and equality, Amira's suggestion brings to the fore the reality of hierarchy that threatens to break these, from the perspective of the volunteers. This is not to say that the relationship of fellowship enacted by both Amira and the members of the Rocher is a false one, or one in which either one of the parties is consciously putting on a show. I know, from numerous conversations with both volunteers and Amira herself that a true relationship of friendship had been built between herself and several people from the Rocher team.

However, her insistence on an inclusion of a *cit * resident in the Rocher team, as was her mocking of the food exchange insistently brought back the question of difference and hierarchy into her relationship, to the chagrin of the volunteers.

Amira's struggle to define her relationship with members of the Rocher was shared by others and the issue itself was preoccupying the volunteers themselves, who struggled in defining themselves the boundaries and character of those relationships they sought to establish in the course of their mission. I observed such a struggle unfold over what may seem like a trifle, a visit from a resident of the *cit * to the home of three of the volunteers. Ang le was a French Catholic resident of the *cit * who maintained a significant involvement with both the *cit *'s parish life and the various activities of the Rocher. She had lived for many years in the *cit * and had seen many Rocher volunteers come and go, as she once mentioned to me in a casual conversation we had, and while volunteers arrived to the *cit * thinking that they were there to help the residents of the *cit *, to "welcome" (*accueillir*) them into French society, she said, it is the residents themselves who end up really welcoming the volunteers to the *cit *, to the life of the *cit *, giving the volunteers something which they had not expected to receive. Towards the end of my stay with the Rocher, however, some mild tensions seemed to be building between Ang le and a few of the volunteers. These tensions were building over Ang le's request or expectation to be invited over to visit three of the volunteers in their home, an invitation which was not being extended, due to volunteers' indecisiveness regarding the appropriateness of the visit.

The initial ambivalence Ang le's desire to visit created was due to the Rocher's

official policy that the volunteers' homes were their private domain, not to be frequented by the people with whom they worked. The living conditions in the Rocher already lent themselves to very little privacy for volunteers and members of the NGO, as the offices of the Rocher were located in the heart of the *cité* and were an open space into which residents could enter quite freely throughout the day. Volunteers also lived in the *cité* and so interacted with residents throughout the day. The homes were supposed to serve as a kind of safe haven, separated from the professional life of the Rocher, allowing volunteers their own privacy. The volunteers themselves found this policy necessary and helpful, but as Angèle's case indicates, it also posed certain difficulties.

As part of their work, Rocher volunteers visit many *cité* residents in their homes. These home visits are always casual matters, not normally aimed at achieving any practical goals, but rather cast as friendly neighborly visits. The idea behind this was part of the Rocher's stated purpose of combatting the "isolation of the *cité*" by bringing people into a neighborly contact with each other. This also provided residents with an opportunity to discuss with volunteers anything that concerned them about their children. Visits were always set, however, in distinctly social rather than professional terms, and on all the numerous visits I went on, volunteers would always be welcomed with cups of tea or coffee, cookies and others treats, and pass an hour or so casually chatting about different aspects of life in the *cité*.

As someone who was involved in the social life of the Rocher, volunteers frequently visited with Angèle and her family, and it is within this context that her

expectation to be invited for a visit in three of the volunteers' apartment needs to be understood. Speaking with a few of the volunteers as they debated the issue, made it clear that they were aware that ignoring Angèle's expectation would not only run the risk of offending her, but that something greater was at stake here. Angèle's challenge of the Rocher's implicit policy of keeping the volunteers' apartments off bounds was forcing the backstage to the front stage, as did Amira's insistence that a volunteer from the *cité* be contracted by the Rocher. Unlike Amira's more explicit challenge of Rocher policy, however, Angèle's was in challenging volunteers to fully follow up on the performance of the relationship, without those reservations which marked it as a performance. For if volunteers are neighbors, then surely their home visits should be, and could be, reciprocated. Angèle's was a demand for the validation of the performance's sincerity.

And it is for this reason that the volunteers themselves could not feel comfortable with a simple rejection of the request, as per Rocher guidelines, as a flat out refusal, in its incongruence with the performance of the relationship thus far, would risk unraveling the whole performance altogether. And so it was decided, after much debate, to invite Angèle for a visit. I happened to be in the girls' apartment at that time, as Angèle, obviously pleased at the invitation, arrived to almost formally *rendre visite*, to visit with the girls. We spent an hour together, drinking tea and eating cake, chatting on the balcony of the girls' apartment, as we would on any other home visit. In this, Angèle established herself to the volunteers not merely as a recipient of aid, but as a neighbor, an equal.

Safi

“*Pour moi, ils sont tous des Arabes*”, for me they are all Arab. This, from Safi, on a rainy day, as we were driving down to the Rocher center from an excursion outside of town. A twenty year old “kid of the Rocher”, one of the center’s success stories who had been frequenting the Rocher center since his childhood, Safi was born in France to a family of Algerian origins.

But in his arguments with Benjamin, one of the Rocher volunteers, he would always insist that he was not French, that he was “Arab”, a category he generally also conflated with “Muslim”. “But you are French, you were born in France, you have a French nationality, you speak the language,” Benjamin would insist, “why do you keep saying, ‘vous le française’ - you, the French - when you talk about us in the Rocher? You are one of us.” But Safi would not acquiesce. He just laughed. These exchanges would normally be made lightly. Safi was always smiling, it seemed, fooling around, joking, ridiculing others. Underneath, always, what felt like a lot of self-consciousness. But on that day, as we were driving back in the rain, and Safi, answering Benjamin’s assertion that “not everyone who lives in the *cit * is Arab,” that “some are from Yugoslavia, that some are Roma, that some are just natives of France” Safi was not joking and making fun as he was wont to do. “*Pour moi ils sont tous des Arabes*”, he said quietly, mumbling to himself, an air of resignation to his voice. The stupid Arabs, I would on occasion hear him say, the losers, with no future, all stuck here in the *cit *. Us, the Arabs.

Safi grew up with the Rocher since he was a young boy, a “kid of the Rocher”

as the center's director affectionately referred to him. Now, as a young man, he was working as a *bénévole* at the center, a part time volunteer, his volunteering work counting towards particular state apprenticeship programs that would serve him in paying for his driving lessons. This also made him a part of the Rocher team. Safi was often present at the center, working with the younger children and accompanied Rocher excursions and activities outside of the city. As such, he also held an ambivalent position in his relation to the Rocher team - he was at once an insider and outsider. A kid from the *cité*, an Arab, an outsider, and a valued member of the Rocher team.

Safi's position as half an insider in the Rocher meant that he was perhaps more invested than some in the performance of a relationship with volunteers of the Rocher. The stakes, in Safi's case, were higher, since the performance also said something profound about his identity, about who he was and what was his place in the world, in society, one in which one perhaps is an Arab, but can also be French. But the fact that the stakes were higher means that one needs to be doubly careful in allowing oneself to become genuinely engaged in one performance or the other. The more committed one became to one's character in a performance, after all, the more painful the shock when its performance is questioned.

Early in the days of my volunteering with the Rocher I was occasionally mistaken by some of the children's mothers for a resident of the *cité*, a mother among others, there to discuss her children with the Rocher volunteers. This was understandable. My middle-eastern phenotype, my accented and imperfect French, the

fact that I was older than the typical volunteer and dressed differently, made it more likely for me to be a *cit * mother than a Catholic volunteer come fresh from Paris. These mistakes in identification always amused me more than anything and I would gently explain who I was and carry on. Perhaps it was due to the fact that after several months with the Rocher I was already recognized by everyone as part of the “team” that what happened one morning at the center struck me in a particular way.

Once a month, all Rocher activities would be put on hold, as the center hosted the local Catholic food bank. Organized and operated by a small group of parish Catholics, the food bank would dispense products to needy families once a month, and although there was no official relation between the food bank and the Rocher, allowing the bank to dispense the food from the Rocher center allowed the Rocher team a greater exposure to the local community and an opportunity to create new ties with families whose children did not participate in Rocher activities. On the day the food was dispensed, volunteers stayed in the center to host those coming to collect food, serving coffee and striking conversations, inquiring about children and helping those who did not have a car to transport the food back to their homes.

The food bank always had a hectic feel to it. Perhaps due to organizational issues or the fact that the Rocher center was too small to comfortably accommodate everyone. I arrived to the center one such particular morning and proceeded to enter through a door that was reserved to the team dispensing food, as I always had. A woman passed nearby after having collected her food and I helped her to carry the baskets up the stairs. As I turned back to enter the room, I was brusquely addressed by

one of the men unloading food from the truck, telling me I can't enter the room from there, that I should go through the back to collect my food. Confused at first, I quickly corrected the man, explained I was not there to collect food, but was a member of the Rocher team and walked through. I was, however, a bit taken aback. As I mused on why his reaction rattled me to the degree it had, I realized it was not merely the rudeness of his reaction to me that was unpleasant, but the momentary disorientation of being regarded as someone I was not, a woman from the *cité* who lives on food stamps, and an involuntary offense I was feeling at being regarded as such.

It was perhaps this earlier experience that highlighted to me a small incidence that took place at the food bank a month later, when Safi came to visit the Rocher center towards the end of the day. The center was relatively empty, but food was still piled behind and on top of tables. I was sitting idly in the central room, as Safi walked about near a few of the tables. The Rocher was his home and so he was walking around with the ease of those who feel they belong in a place, when one of the women running the food bank harshly demanded what he was doing there and told him that he should not be standing there. Obviously taken aback, Safi began withdrawing without saying a word. I got up and explained to the women that he was part of the Rocher team, that he had permission to be here, and so he stayed, but obviously subdued, his regular joking bravado gone. Safi recuperated, and later was helping members of the food bank to carry large boxes back to the truck, but the reminder was there. You are the French, we are the Arabs.

Just as being mistaken for a resident of the *cité* living on food stamps was a

jolting experience for me, so being seen as an Arab intruder in a space where he was accustomed to see himself in a different light was an alienating experience for Safi. I rarely managed to get many serious words out of him at the times we conversed, but his emotions were always written so clearly on his face. It was, I would suggest, a moment highlighting the performance for what it was, a local, temporary, even false kind of thing, a performance that does not hold water outside the little universe of the Rocher. There is something deeply disorienting about this, as I had experienced myself, in suddenly seeing yourself in a different light through the eyes of the other. Just as is the case of “fake it until you make it”, performances can be very persuasive to the people who are engaged in them, persuasive to the degree that one begins to identify with the role one is playing. Perhaps, being seen as “an Arab” sticking his nose in would not have been as impactful for Safi anywhere else outside the confines of the Rocher, but being regarded as such in a context where he was not expecting it seemed like an unpleasant shock, an abrupt intrusion into who he was within the story which was the Rocher.

Safi’s difficulty to accommodate the performance of his self within and without the social context of the Rocher also became evident to me when myself and two other volunteers visited him and his family one afternoon. Safi was excited at the prospect. Two days before the visit he remarked to me that he had instructed his mother to serve us with tea and to make food. The visit was arranged in advance since he wanted to know when we were planning to come. However, although he seemed excited about the visit ahead of time, when we actually arrived he appeared awkward and

uncomfortable. We sat with Safi, his mother, sister and toddler nephew, chatting about the *cit *, religion, and life in Algeria before they immigrated to France. After some twenty minutes Safi got up and said he remembered that he had scheduled a meeting at the Rocher center with the team coordinator, and had to leave. We stayed for half an hour more, talking to his mother and sister, and then left as well. On our way back to the Rocher center we saw Safi sitting in a nearby cafe with several friends. Clearly, there had been no meeting with the team coordinator. He saw us, and acknowledged us weakly, obviously embarrassed, when we waved.

Both Amira and Safi find themselves in an ambivalent position in their relationship with the volunteers of the Rocher. Much of this ambivalence, it seems, stems from volunteers' insistence on showcasing similarity or sameness within the relationship, a performance in which both Amira and Safi simultaneously participate and yet find themselves disrupting. They do so, whether knowingly or not, by stressing difference. Safi, in his insistence on his identity as an Arab, a charged term in his use, which marks him in his eyes as not only different, but as occupying a lower hierarchical position; and Amira, older, more mature, and herself a former NGO worker, in her insistence on showcasing the backstage of the relationship with Rocher volunteers - the reality of hierarchy behind the scenes of equality - an act which challenges the sincerity of the performance in which she participates.

A similar, albeit at times more charged pattern of interaction revealed itself in the Rwandan case. Again, although they asserted that it was in search of alterity that they went on mission, Fidesco volunteers invariably attempted to assert relations of

sameness and similarity with their Rwandan counterparts, again with little success. To further our analysis, I examine here the cases of two sets of Fidesco volunteers, Thierry and Jerome, and Hannah and Rosa, who were sent to Rwanda for periods of one to two years of mission, although each pair was assigned to a different project. I choose to focus here on the points of view of the volunteers rather than of those who are at the receiving end of their aid, since unlike the case of the Rocher, it struck me that in Fidesco's case it was the volunteers, and not their Rwandan collaborators, who felt themselves most powerfully impacted when relations they attempted to cultivate seemed to fail.

Negotiating Equality and Hierarchy in Rwanda

Although in essence similar, Fidesco offered volunteers a very different experience than the work of the Rocher did. For one, Fidesco, unlike the Rocher, rarely launches independent projects, and bases most of its work on collaboration with local NGOs. This means that Fidesco volunteers rarely enjoy the type of mini-community life that the Rocher offers its volunteers. While a Rocher center will employ a minimum of five full time volunteers and often many more, alongside part-time volunteers, and is embedded in the local Catholic parish and the Emmanuel community, Fidesco volunteers (normally sent on mission in pairs or as a family) have to integrate themselves into whatever social framework is offered by the hosting organization. To this we must add the fact that Fidesco volunteers relocate to a different country, with all that implies, while Rocher volunteers, although they are

obligated to move to live in the *cit *, where life offers many unique challenges, are still living in their own country, and maintain closer contact with their families and friends.

In understanding the differences in the experiences of volunteering that Rocher and Fidesco volunteers had and the dynamics of the relations they established with the people with whom they worked we must also take into account the very different social and post-colonial contexts playing at the background of the humanitarian relation in both cases. In the French case, volunteers operate within a broader political discourse of integration and the crisis of violence and crime in the *cit s*, debates that are also colored by inter-religious conflict and the question of Islam in Europe. As such, the persons with whom they interact are, to some degree, occupying the position of the stranger, the volunteers the welcoming locals aiding integration. The threat of political Islam, at least as represented in the media, also means that on the part of Muslims, appeasing gestures clarifying that no religion-based animosity or misunderstandings come to bear on relationships create a particular dynamic that might be more accommodating or friendly than otherwise.

In the Rwandan case, volunteers are sent in a professional capacity to aid in the development of the country by offering their unique skills which supposedly are not available in the country itself. This is not only positioned in a broader aid discourse that paints Africa as a poor, backwards and miserable place which requires saving by benevolent and affluent Westerners, a discourse which Rwandans are very aware of and resent, but also in decades of both exploitation and aid projects causing more harm than good focusing heavily on the African continent. When considering the Rwandan

context vis-a-vis the presence of white volunteers sent in by a French NGO, the particular history of France and Rwanda, prior and during the 1994 genocide, also plays a significant role in the shape which relationships between volunteers and locals takes.

The role played by France in the Rwandan genocide is still a topic of controversy, and diplomatic relations between the two countries remain strained, as France is held accountable by the current Rwandan regime not only for not preventing the horrors of the genocide when it was in its power to do so, but for actively supporting, including by means of arming and military training, the Hutu-led Habyarimana regime and the *interahamwe* forces which carried out the murder of nearly one million Tutsi and moderate Hutu in April of 1994. Beyond the open tension between the two countries in light of this history - tensions which led in 2006 to the closing of the French embassy in Kigali and brought diplomatic relations into a temporary halt - many of the Rwandans tend to regard the French with ambivalence, and at times resentment. Although they had been colonized first by the Belgians, I seldom heard my interlocutors express any anti-Belgian sentiments. Much ire, however, was directed at the French, whom many Rwandans viewed as arrogant and condescending.

In the case of the Emmanuel community the relationship to the French was particularly ambivalent as Emmanuel Rwanda is an offshoot of the community in France, and both communities as well as the local Rwandan and French branches of Fidesco maintain strong ties. Funds, however, and final authority, still largely flow

from the West to Africa, and not vice versa, and so certain, if implicit and not spoken hierarchy still exists. All these, as well as a strong cultural stress on themes and questions of hierarchy, power and humiliation, combined to shape volunteers' experiences in Rwanda and their attempts to create relations of fellowship with their Rwandan interlocutors in very particular ways.

Specifically, unlike the case of the Rocher, where I found that recipients of aid were at least willing, if ambivalent, to participate in volunteers' performance of relations, Rwandan interlocutors seemed less willing to take part. Both volunteer pairs I accompanied during my fieldwork found the task exceedingly difficult and were experiencing a high degree of disillusionment, anxiety and alienation in the course of their mission, emotions at the base of which was not only their perception that their mission was not bringing about the change it was supposed to, but also what they felt was their inability to create meaningful relationships with their Rwandan counterparts.

Thierry and Jerome

The money.

The money issue seemed to bother everyone. All the volunteers in Rwanda. The tourists as well. "Yes," one of the local staff of the Fidesco children's center told me once in casual conversation, "for the children, the white volunteers are nothing but walking money purses. It's a shame, but it's true." Yes, children would follow us in the market, in the street, and after a smile or a nod would stretch out their hands and say, "you! Money! Give me money!".

It wasn't only the children, however. One of the things that bothered all the volunteers I spoke with was the fact that their local counterparts, particularly the young ones, who were more or less of an age with them, always seemed to be on the lookout to borrow or take money, cameras, computers. This was not in any way unique to the children's center or specific to the experience of Fidesco volunteers. "The first word I ever learned in Kinyarwanda," I was told once by a foreign volunteer in another organization, "was money." This dynamic was something that all volunteers cited to me as something which they found highly distressing and disturbing.

Certainly, it is distressing to lend money and never have it repaid, as it is unpleasant to be hounded by dozens of children in the streets shouting at you to give them money. However, the strong emotional response this issue seemed to evoke in volunteers struck me as going well beyond the instrumental aspect of this unequal exchange, or the bafflement that such behavior might produce in ones who are unaccustomed to it. Volunteers' anger was rooted in a disappointment, a disillusionment that their counterparts do not view them as brothers, but as "whites" - *Abazungu* in Kinyarwanda - set apart by virtue of their wealth and power, and the demand for money perceived as an instrumentalization of the relationship in a fashion that rendered it meaningless, something which they found distressing.

Going back to Goffman, then, what seemed to happen in the Rwandan case was that different parties of the performing team, so to speak, did not agree, in the first place, on what the performance should be. For the Rwandans, a different sets of behaviors were to be expected when interacting with *Abazungu*, as for the volunteers

the expectation of fellowship was particularly poignant considering the fact that their counterparts were Catholic as they were. For the Rwandans, the French were white. For the French, the Rwandans were Catholic. This difficulty with forming relationship was acutely felt by volunteers. “The greatest difficulty,” Thierry told me, when I asked him what the greatest challenge to his mission has been so far,

Is that we don't know the others. Even in France, you don't know other people, but you have some common history, something that brings you together, points in common. Here you don't have that to help you come closer to others. In France, I would meet a lot of different people, that I obviously don't know, and I am really very good at creating these social relations, everyone always characterized me as very friendly, very approachable. And in France, I always had a parachute, there would always be something in common you can draw on. Here, you have no parachute. Here, you approach the other, and you really don't know anything about what they think, about what they are going to think. You see, in France I can read people's faces, here I can't. It's hard to find the common points through which to create a relationship. You see, for example, in France, with somebody that is a believer, you have an immediate connection, ways to connect with them. Here, they are all believers, and you can't connect to them at all.

Thierry's experience was representative of sentiments expressed by all the volunteers on mission in Rwanda. In one way or another, volunteers seemed to feel they were failing at executing their mission effectively and worse, that they were not even able to form what they felt were genuine relationships with their Rwandan counterparts, something which they desperately wished to accomplish. These difficulties, for Thierry and Jerome, revolved primarily around what they felt were issues of hierarchy and inequality, issues which were, incidentally or not, intimately related to the question of money, as the supposed wealth of the *Abazungu* or “whites”

evoked not only desire, but also resentment.

In Rwanda, we have no need for people with professional qualifications to come from the outside. People that come here from Europe, they are not more qualified than people trained here. We have people here who are doubly qualified than the volunteers that are sent here to us. And I ask them, the people from Western countries who send their volunteers here, I ask them - why do you send your best people here? You need them too! Keep them there to work for you.

Felicien was explaining the situation to me in one of our many drives in his car when I asked him how he saw the contribution of the volunteers to the Fidesco center in Kigali. A longtime member of the Emmanuel community, Felicien was not directly involved in the operation of the children's center, but as one of the directors of the community's center in Kigali, had a close relationship with the center's staff and was acquainted with yearly recruits of volunteers. What the volunteers did contribute to the center, he thought, was summed up in what Felicien called the "cultural influence", the fact that they were white and from another culture, he said, exposed the children in the center to different options, to broader perspectives that existed outside their limited life on the streets, encouraging them to broaden their minds and aspire for more in life. This was a perspective which most, if not all staff at the Fidesco center seemed to share, one which diminished the value of the professional skills offered by the volunteers, and so the reason the volunteers themselves considered themselves to be spending a year in Rwanda. As the center's head told me when I asked him whether the international volunteers contribute something to the children's home:

Yes, I would say that it gives something. There is another regard, another way of seeing, that complements ours. This helps our team. And for the children, it gives them a kind of openness of spirit, that there is more than they know, that the world is not confined. It opens their curiosity, and also to see that they can be loved by someone who has a different color than them.

Yet another member of staff commented to me that, understandably, due to language barriers (the children at the center only spoke Kinyarwanda, and not French) and cultural differences, the foreign volunteers have very little to contribute to the actual work with the children, but that nevertheless their presence was a positive thing as it allowed the children to open up their horizons.

Considering the fact that at least Jerome arrived to the children's center in his capacity as an agricultural engineer, and with the explicit aim of aiding the center to develop a tract of land it owned in the hope of making the center financially independent of external donors, the insistence that volunteers bring nothing of professional value to Rwanda was interesting. Although it may very well be the case that Rwanda does not lack for local qualified professionals, it seemed to me that this insistence that foreign volunteers have very little of value to offer the center was an expression of a broader refusal on the Rwandan part to be considered the recipient of aid or even in need of receiving any such aid.

This was made amply clear to Thierry in one of the center's staff meetings. As he recounted the story to me, several months into his mission, shortly before Jerome was to join him, the center's director announced to the staff that starting from next week, a new volunteer will arrive from France to, in his words "help Thierry in his

work.” To this Thierry casually replied that Jerome was not really coming to help him (Thierry was assigned to work with the children, while Jerome would come to work with the workers employed by the center to develop the tract of land), but to “help you,” meaning the children’s center. To this, the head of the center responded, according to Thierry, with a silence and a “very cold look”, clearly communicating to him that he had transgressed in saying what he did:

The question of authority here is very important. As volunteers, we have a special statute. So we have some authority, so Baptiste [the center’s director], although he is my boss, he won’t address me as he does the others who are working in the office. In the relations with others, it requires a delicacy in how to interact, because I made a lot of stupid things in my interactions with others. I shouldn’t give authority totally to others, because I have my own power as well. Here, you have more than authority, you have the question that people are proud. They don’t like to be humiliated, to feel like someone is on top of them, and this is difficult, because you have to be really careful...

For Jerome, this dynamic proved particularly taxing. Arriving in Rwanda with an ideal of living the spirit of the Gospel by putting himself at the service of those in need, Jerome was keen to form strong relations of fraternity with staff at the center. Coming from France, where being a practicing Catholic in a secular social milieu always marked Jerome as somewhat of a stranger, he was looking forward to working alongside fellow Catholics in Rwanda. Trying to avoid being marked as a rich *muzungu*, Jerome’s strategy in trying to create common ground with his fellow workers had been to try to “lower himself”, making himself one of the working men, rather than positioning himself in any position of authority when working alongside

the workers on the land. However, rather than accepting him as an equal, Jerome found that his fellow workers were instead treating him badly. He, too, raised the issue of hierarchy when talking about his difficulties during mission:

The greatest difficulty here is the hierarchy. The fact that people look at me like a *muzungu*, a white man, like I am rich and have a high status, and so they stay away from me, keep me at arm's length, and it's hard to make friends like that, when people only look at you as someone who has lots of money. And then they ask you for money, but you can't give them money, because you don't have it, and also it's not right for a relationship to be like that. So I tried to lower myself, to make myself equal to them, for them to see me as an equal.

In trying to make himself appear equal Jerome made sure to go every day to work on the land with the rest of the workers, stressed the fact that neither he nor Thierry ever bought expensive things, or even luxury foods which people in Rwanda would avoid unless they were wealthy, and maintained a lifestyle comparable to that of the people with whom they worked. This, however, did not seem to work. "The problem with that," he told me, "that once you lower yourself, the hierarchy stays, but this time they just put themselves above you, and so they treat you like shit." Jerome was referring to several experiences he had on the land, where other workers, he felt, treated him harshly and with little respect. Unlike Europe, with its tradition of solidarity and egalitarianism, Rwanda, it seemed to him, was based on the savage rule of the mighty, where those with more power simply took all they wished to take, crushing everyone else in the process.

Jerome's disillusionment quickly turned to anger. When the staff at the children's center decided to collect money for a solidarity fund, where an employee in

a case of medical emergency could draw on the money, Thierry had agreed to a small monthly contribution but Jerome angrily refused to participate. “It’s not like I would ever use that fund. If ever I had an emergency, they’d say I shouldn’t touch the money because I’m a rich *muzungu*, and anyway I would not want to take anything, so all this would be is a way for them to get money from me as a gift, again, the *muzungu* giving them money. And I won’t do it.”

Equally disappointed with his inability to create what he felt were meaningful relations based on mutuality and fellowship, Thierry had decided to abandon his efforts to establish an egalitarian relation with his Rwandan counterparts: “I realized it would be impossible. So I will not have an equal relationship with people, but I will have some kind of relationship. It probably won’t be like a friendship that I could have with a French person, but it will be something, better than nothing.”

Rosa and Hannah

Rosa and Hannah, two Fidesco volunteers working at a school in the southern province of the country, were similarly frustrated in achieving what they felt were the goals of their mission. When I met them, six months after commencing their work, they were both disillusioned, disappointed and demoralized. When I prodded them for the reasons they were so unhappy, both cited their lack of interaction with “the poor”, and their feelings that they were not realizing their desire to give those they deemed were most needing. Neither the children nor the staff at the school seemed to be in need of their help, and both Rosa and Hannah felt as if their mission was not creating

the “change” it was meant to, an issue Rosa in particular highlighted: “So at some point I am sitting there, looking out the window and thinking, what am I doing here? I am not making a difference. Because I came to change something, to improve something. But I feel that at the end everything will be the same. That now I am here, but when I will go back, everything would be the same.”

The disappointment with things “staying the same” also extended to Rosa herself. Having gone on mission as part of a spiritual quest of sorts, an attempt to give up the familiar and comfortable in favor of the strange and difficult, both Rosa and Hannah were looking forward to the profound spiritual transformations they would undergo during their mission. For Rosa in particular, who wished to go on mission to be in more contact with people, mission proved a disappointment, since her work as an accountant for the school meant she was spending considerable amounts of time in front of the computer at the office:

At the end, I see that I am doing almost the same thing as before. I’m in the office, with the computer, I get angry about the same things as before. You try to do more and you see that that doesn’t go through. But, the director of Fidesco told me, when he came here last November, he said Rosa, you can give love even if you are in the office. It’s true.... Because there are always the office workers, and the teachers that come in, so you can be nice and welcoming and all... it’s true... but still. It’s not....

Hannah, in many ways, fared even worse. While Rosa came to work at the school as an accountant, Hannah, an American, came to the school to aid in the teaching of English, but her specific position at the school seemed less defined. Already having English teachers on staff, the school headmistress did not assign

Hannah regular classes, making her position at the school ambiguous and limiting her opportunities to interact with the school children. Furthermore, since the schedule of the school was strict, most requests from Hannah to initiate new activities that would allow her more time with the children were met with a refusal. After a series of conflictual interactions between herself and the headmistress, Hannah was eventually informed that she was in fact not needed by the school and was only given whatever position she was given there since the school needed an accountant and Fidesco refused to send out a lone volunteer. Obviously, this blatant dismissal of the value of her mission impacted Hannah profoundly.

At the heart of both Hannah's and Rosa's feelings of disillusionment and disappointment, however, was their failure to create meaningful relationships with the persons with whom they worked, either students or school staff, and the feelings of isolation this entailed. During my first visit to the school, I was walking with Rosa, exploring the expansive grounds of the school and chatting about her experiences in Rwanda so far. As we approached the dining hall, a young teenage girl crossed our way. I greeted her in Kinyarwanda, as I normally did in situations such as these, but to my surprise the girl ignored my greeting and merely stared at the both of us and walked on. Rosa seemed a bit embarrassed and made what I interpreted to be a frustrated sound, shaking her head. I commented to Rosa that this must be due to the fact that I am a new *muzungu* in the school. "Oh, no," she said, "it's just the way it is here sometimes." I was surprised but asked no further questions.

After walking a while longer, I commented to Rosa that it was an odd

experience for me in Rwanda, insofar as, being white, no matter where you went, people invariably stared at you. “Yes,” she said, “the first day I came to school, all the children here came and looked at me and touched my hair and my skin. It was a bit overwhelming. But it was okay. The thing is that after all these many months, they still treat me like that. They still treat me like an outsider, I have no real relationship with anyone here, no real closeness.” It really angered her, she told me, when the girls at the school didn’t respond when she greeted them, that after all this time they didn’t seem to accept her. And this was not even just the students, she said. Even the staff still treated her like a stranger:

Some teachers, sometimes don’t say good morning to me. They come to the office, they say good morning to the other woman, not to me. And I’m quite surprised. And these last few days, I was asking myself why this was happening. I think that maybe since I am working by the computer, they think they are disturbing me. It’s strange. They come in and say good morning to the other woman, and what, I am not there, or what?

Rosa felt that although the school clearly needed her and her expertise, neither the staff nor the headmistress had any appreciation of her presence there other than in terms of what professional benefits the school could gain from it: “for her, we are there to do what she wants, just do a job, nothing else. And even when I have initiatives for social activities with the children, the answer is always no.” Likewise, when I asked them what good experiences they had during their volunteering so far, they both cited examples of successfully creating bonds with the children. In Hannah’s words:

Before Rosa arrived I had asked the headmistress if I could eat with

the girls in the dining hall, and she was surprised, but allowed me. And when I entered, all the girls were freaking out, really excited, and were talking with me. They wanted me to eat with them every Sunday night. There was one time that one of the classes invited me to go with them to a morning run at 5:30, and I realized that this was actually a class that I never taught, because of class schedule. So I decided to go, to show that I care. So I went. It was a short run. And when we came back, I was talking with them, and someone said, she must really love us. Just because I got up and went running with them one morning. So that was a good day.

I shared the girls' struggles with my friends in Kigali, all members of Emmanuel. I said it seemed to me as if both girls were quite disillusioned with their mission, none of their expectations of working with, and helping the poor having become a reality. To my surprise, my friends seemed extremely pleased to hear of Rosa and Hannah's struggles, nodding knowingly and smiling. "Well, this is how it is. Thierry, when he first arrived here, also thought he was going to come here to save people. But very quickly they realize that they are not really needed, that they are not here to save people. And that's a lesson they need to learn." Reaching the realization that you were not needed, that your gifts were unwanted, was a positive development as far as my friends were concerned. It was a humbling and deflating experience that reminded volunteers they were not the saviors of the poor, and the very first step in beginning to realize their true mission.

The situation at the school reached such a crescendo, however, that the volunteers notified Fidesco France of their mounting difficulties, and during their visit to Rwanda, two of the NGO regional directors visited the school in an attempt to resolve the friction that was growing between the volunteers and the head of the school.

Again to my surprise, however, when discussing the situation at the school when I later met with them in Kigali, both directors, while acknowledging that it was the head of the school that bore much of the responsibility for the friction with the volunteers, and noting that in the future volunteers might no longer be sent to the school, ultimately considered the difficulty the volunteers were experiencing to be a failure on their part to carry out their mission:

...It's important to have an ideal behind you, but not idealism. But as we say, when you give, you need to know how to receive, because if not, it can be egotistical. When you speak about the gift, we have an important word in the church, which is alterity. Essentially it's the philosophy of the gift, just like in the conjugal relationship, just like in the fraternal relationship, the question is why do I give? Is it because I want to keep something? Do I want to dominate, take power for myself? Do I want to get enjoyment, for my own personal interest? All these cases, this is not love, there is no love there. So we attempt to live in the image of God, where there is a free giving, and this free-ness (*gratuité*) is the alterity – it means rejoicing in what causes rejoicing for the other. Our joy is in the joy of the other. This is quite a program. It's an entire life... the example of Hannah and Rosa is an example where they are failing to achieve that, because they are getting disappointed because things are not working according to their vision.

I will return to the directors' reaction to the Rwandan Fidesco mission's failure shortly. But for now, as a means of recapping our discussion so far, what becomes clear from all the cases we have reviewed is that at least in the case of the Rocher and of Fidesco, the interactional dynamic that defines the humanitarian relation does not conform to the simple structural analysis of the violence of the gift that cannot be reciprocated. By focusing here on moments of failure or crisis as a locus of self process in the constitution of relations between volunteers and supposed recipients of

aid, what emerges is a more complex relational dynamic, one which, I would argue, raises questions about the place of otherness in the constitution of human sociality.

The Rwandan and French cases, however, give rise to these questions in slightly different ways or from different starting points. Let us begin with the case of Fidesco's volunteers in Rwanda. As we have noted in the previous chapter, Fidesco volunteers tended more so than Rocher volunteers to define their mission in terms of "giving to the poor". Although this giving to the poor, in their minds, was performed as part of an obligation or love towards God (who is seen as either embodied in the suffering of the poor or as instructing Christians to charity), the motivational drive was still focused on a giving, aiding gesture, more so than was the case of Rocher volunteers, who prioritized more strongly the establishment of relations of fellowship with those they sought to aid.

The reaction to the giving position on the part of Fidesco's Rwandan counterparts, as we have seen, is ambivalent. On the one hand, the hierarchical position between the rich and white volunteers and the Rwandan cooperants is resented, something which is expressed in an insistence that Rwanda has no need of *professional* experts, and that volunteers' contribution was merely *cultural*. This positions volunteers and locals on par (cultural difference) rather than in a hierarchical relation (difference based in knowledge/wealth). On the other hand, volunteers' attempts at effacing hierarchy and asserting equality or similarity, such as when Jerome attempted to position himself as one of the common workers, is likewise refused, as instead of maintaining fellowship a reverse hierarchy is established. In

Hannah and Rosa's case, this dynamic is even more pronounced. Hannah's "gift" is outright rejected, as the headmistress of the school informs her that what she had to give had no value for the school, while Rosa's expertise are used and exploited, while she appears to receive very little in return in the way of social relations or acknowledgment of her fellowship. I would suggest this also amounts to gesture of gift rejection, as the gift is taken but not reciprocated, even though reciprocity is possible.

What is significant here for our discussion is the reaction to this dynamic on the part of Fidesco directors and other members of the Emmanuel community in Rwanda, who identify the relational dynamic that ensued following these rejections as a failure on the part of the volunteers themselves. But where is the failure, exactly? Rather than a failure at being able to create adequate exchange relations, Fidesco directors recognize it as a failing on the part of the volunteers to first, recognize and attain a state of true empathy for the other, and second, to then effectively decenter or displace their own selves in relation to the others with whom they were interacting. The failings here are in understanding the other in the first place, and then agreeing to relinquish one's will in favor of theirs, then. The contentment expressed by my Rwandan Emmanuel friends when they learned that the young volunteers were coming to the realization that what they had to give was not what the recipients of their aid wanted to receive was not simply about teaching volunteers a lesson in humility, then, but about teaching them how to relinquish their will, their desires, their vision of reality, in a way that would allow them to come into actual contact with the otherness of the other, an encounter that would then ideally serve them as a locus for self

transformation, a “fusion of horizons”.

In this sense, volunteering is ultimately construed in Emmanuel as an exercise in dialogical self-transformation – the decentering of one’s self or relinquishing of one’s will is understood as facilitating empathic process, the actual understanding of the other, which would ultimately facilitate a “fusion of horizons”. We could say that the true spiritual goal of volunteering as an exercise, then, is learning to effectively decenter the self in relation to the divine, to the will and vision of a radically foreign other. Alternately, we might say that it is the practice of decentering one’s self in relation to the divine that is used in Emmanuel as a locus of self process the end goal of which is the crafting of a relational, more potentially empathic self. Either way, it is the recognition of the alterity of the other that is key here, and this brings us to the relational pattern we have identified in both the Rwandan and French cases, the attempt on the part of the volunteers to establish fellowship through a denial of otherness and assertion of similarity.

Jerome’s attempt to work alongside the laborers and stress that himself and Thierry were not rich, the attempt to stress religious (common) identity over the national or cultural difference, Benjamin’s repeated arguments with Safi about being French, “just like us”, and the team’s insistence to Amira that a volunteer from the *cit * could serve in the Rocher, are such examples. The insistence on similarity was met with a forceful rejection in the Rwandan case, but even in the French case, where recipients of aid were themselves keen to build meaningful social relations with volunteers, the attempt to efface difference was met with considerable ambivalence

and doubt, and was ultimately rejected, casting doubt over the relationship as a whole. The denial of difference, then, becomes a barrier to relationality, not a facilitator of love. Both the Rwandan case of the refused gift, and volunteers' broader attempt to efface difference and manufacture similarity in their relations with those they seek to aid, then, bring us to the question of how difference or otherness – and not just similarity – constitute social relations of proximity.

Otherness in Relationality and Empathic Process

The notion that social relations of proximity are based on similarity and shared experience has a strong base in certain strands of Western thought, as in anthropology in particular. As Rupert Stasch (2009: 7) notes, “the idea of a human social relation of pure mutual identification has held considerable currency across the history of modern anthropology” (see also Gurevitch 1988 on similar trends in phenomenological sociology). Stasch traces the origins of this intellectual current in anthropology to the work of German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies, and his famous distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gessellschaft*, as two dichotomous models defining social ties. *Gemeinschaft*, or ‘community’, is a group united by “a perfect unity of wills” (1957 [1887]: 37), the automatic result of proximity, similarity, or kinship, while *Gessellschaft*, or ‘society’ is a social organization where relations are defined based on instrumentality or calculation for potential future gain. There is a value judgment here, Stasch notes, as Tönnies’s model “denigrated modern urban social conditions...by juxtaposing those conditions with an idyllic alternative possibility of communitarian

oneness.” (2009: 7). This typology influenced Durkheim’s notion of mechanical and organic solidarity, “mechanical solidarity” characterizing small tribal societies where sociality is based on identity of consciousness, and the idea of *Gemeinschaft* as a “mode of social bonds based on pure identification” (Stasch 2009: 8) continued to inform and shape anthropological studies of kinship and community more generally (e.g. Fabian 1983).

Alongside this tradition, other philosophical systems, such as the phenomenological or existential philosophy of Husserl, Sartre, or Levinas highlight the centrality of alterity to the constitution of human consciousness and sociality, and within the social sciences “routine descriptive terms such as interaction, intersubjective, or social itself (in particular, in its Durkheimian and Weberian resonances) are to some degree shorthand evocations of a theoretical vision to the effect that disparities between humans are exactly the paths of their relatedness” (Stasch 2009: 11). As Stasch argues himself in his ethnography of the “tribal” Korowai of West Papua – a society which would seem to neatly fit Tönnies’s *Gemeinschaft* model – it is otherness that emerges as the category through which Korowai define themselves as mutually close, not similarity, the points of unity between persons established through the places in which they are foreign to each other.

A subtle account of the manners in which otherness, or the recognition of otherness is critical to the establishment of sociality can also be found in Adam Smith’s *Theory of the Moral Sentiments* (1977 [1759]). In this work, Smith builds his ethical theory and moral philosophy on the basic argument that, contra to notions

which postulate the inherent selfishness of the human being, people were naturally inclined to care for others, and that the establishment of human sociality was fundamentally based in sympathetic process. Counter to the word's common usage today, sympathy for Smith, at least in the broad and important manner in which he uses the term in his text, is not an emotion, feeling, or sentiment, the spontaneous "feeling for" the Other we might feel as we identify with the suffering of another human being like us. It is, rather, a socializing process rooted in an exercise of the imagination through which, ultimately, moral communities are enacted and perpetuated. More than being an expression of emotion, sympathy is the process through which emotions are cooled and disciplined, the means through which humans learn mutuality (cf. Forman-Barzilai 2011).

Smith's use of sympathy in his text, then, is dual – that humans are not innately selfish, for him, means that we are both naturally oriented to care for others, and are actually capable of entering into the perspective of the other. However, unlike Hume, for whom sympathy consists in a more direct or spontaneous experience of what the other feels, for Smith, sympathy mandates a far more willful, purposeful exercise of the imagination – an exercise aimed at understanding the other's unique perspective. Furthermore, this imaginative exercise must not be one in which a person *imagines themselves and how they would feel* in a similar situation to that confronted by another, but imagine *what it must be like for that very other person* to experience what they are experiencing from their own particular and necessarily different position (1977: 12-13). What this insistence on sympathy as a "projective", interpretive, effortful process

highlights is that other than allowing one to supposedly enter into another's world, other than allowing a potential nearing to the other, sympathy also creates or acknowledges a space, a gap, between our world and another's.

At the base of Smith's account of sympathy, then, is the necessary acknowledgment of difference and otherness, an intersubjective vision where selves are not accessible to each other in any immediate fashion, but only through reflection and the effort of the imagination. Nor does this exercise of the imagination join us to others. It allows us a window into another's experience, while all the while maintaining our fundamental separatedness from them. This is an important point for Smith, and necessary for true sympathy, as it allows the "spectator" of suffering sufficient emotional distance to offer genuine assistance to the other in need. It is, then, this recognition of separatedness, of otherness, of the "opacity of other people's minds" (Robbins and Rumsey 2008), that allows for true sympathy as a moral act. Within anthropology, much of the empirical investigation of how such processes take place in the course of actual human interaction has been conducted in the anthropological literature on intersubjectivity (Csordas 2009b, Duranti 2010, Jackson 1998, 2005) and the relatively nascent, but growing literature on empathy (e.g. Beatty 2005, Hollan and Throop 2008, 2011, Rosaldo 1989, Shimizu 2000, Strauss 2004, Wikan 1992)³⁵.

Genealogically linked to existential-phenomenological thought, to Buber's concept of the dialogical, to Schutz's social phenomenology, and to the pragmatism of William James, John Dewey, and George Herbert Mead, intersubjectivity as the term is used in anthropology today stresses the interplay of subject and object, ego and alter

(see Jackson, 1998: 6), and used to refer to processes of “being oriented to another as another subject with experiences that affect and are affected by other such subjects” (Hollan and Throop 2008: 386). Suggesting intersubjectivity could serve as “an overall theoretical frame for thinking about the ways in which humans interpret, organize, and reproduce particular forms of social life and social cognition”(2010: 17), Duranti characterizes the intersubjective as spanning the spectrum between the most rudimentary forms of human identification and the more sophisticated understandings of others’ states entailed in more effortful empathic acts.

Much of the debate on intersubjectivity in anthropology has focused on the issue of how we come to know the other, with emphasis given to the role our very embodiment plays in our ability to gain an immediate identification with the other as another ego, ‘like myself’. Jackson (1998), drawing on the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty who conceived of intersubjectivity as “lived as intercorporeity” (1998: 11), suggests that our understanding of intersubjectivity must go beyond the level of cognition and that “even when intersubjectivity takes on its specific cultural trappings, these are often less a matter of conscious social learning than of unconscious mimetic and countermimetic processes” (1998: 11-12). Jackson is not alone in stressing the mimetic, corporeal manners in which we come to know the other (e.g. Hollan and Throop 2008, Gieser 2008), and certainly recent studies on mirror neurons (e.g. Iacoboni 2008), demonstrating the neurological underpinning of fundamental empathic process, offer a strong support to the suggestion that intersubjectivity must first and foremost be understood as intercorporeality (see Csordas 2009b).

This stress in current anthropological literature on intersubjectivity as corporeal and immediate can be read as a reaction to theories of intersubjectivity and sociality that take as their starting point the concept of the isolated cogito. Wishing to avoid the inevitable solipsism implied in this position, current anthropological theorizing on intersubjectivity thus conceptualize selves as primarily, inherently, always already dialogical, positioned in the in-between that results of our existence as corporeal beings in the world. This point that is often made in conjunction with the assertion that the knowledge of other need not be limited to reflexive or purely cognitive processes and is achieved through immediate intercorporeal modes of communication, a distinction reminiscent of one made by psychologists and philosophers studying empathy and theory of mind, between empathic mechanisms that are interpretive and cognitively mediated (“theory theory”) and those that are based in our ability to corporeally simulate the experience of the other (“simulation theory”) (cf. Decety and Ickes 2009).

The critical question in either case, however, although particularly so when posing empathic process as anchored in an understanding of the other as relatively immediate, implicit and anchored in our *shared* embodiment, is what would allow us to make the distinction between a mere projection of the self onto the other from a genuine empathic understanding of the other. When touching on the subject in their recent work on empathy, Hollan and Throop (2008, 2011) suggest that temporality might be an important element in the achievement of true empathy, which they understand, following Jodi Halpern (2001), as “a first-person-like perspective on

another that involves an emotional, embodied, or experiential aspect” or an approximation of “the subjective experience of another from a quasi-first-person perspective” (2008: 391, 387). The notion that temporality is required to achieve true empathic understanding or that empathy, in other words, is a “process that is arrayed through time” (Throop 2010: 772) takes us back to Smith’s concept of sympathy as facilitated through the recognition of a gap between two persons, a necessary break of immediacy in communication, and the acknowledgment of the profundity of our strangeness to each other. Hollan and Throop’s suggestion that temporality is necessary for the achievement of true empathy, then, is an implicit acknowledgment that it is an appreciation or recognition of the difference of the other person which is key to the realization of actual empathy.

Jason Throop (2010) engages with the question of temporal unfolding in more detail and from a different perspective in a recent essay on empathic process in the context of grief and loss. Throop frames his argument in contrast to Renato Rosaldo’s (1989) famous argument in “Grief and the Headhunter’s Rage” in which Rosaldo argues that the understanding of certain experiences is only made possible when one has had a homologous experience to draw on. In a likewise highly personal account centering on his own experience of bereavement, Throop, however, demonstrates how his own experience of loss actually impeded his understanding of a similar experience of loss experienced by his interlocutors following a death of their friend. This, he argues, indicates that homologous experiences can actually impede true empathic understanding, something he himself gained only after certain time had passed and he

was able to distance himself from his true experience of loss.

Noting this, Throop suggests that our understanding of empathy must take into consideration and pay close attention to empathy's "temporal unfolding" (Throop 2010: 772). "Once the temporality of empathy becomes the focus," he argues, "it is possible to see that, in some cases, it is precisely experiences of misunderstanding that potentiate possibilities for new horizons of mutual understanding to arise." (2010: 772). We might say that what Throop observed in his example, in other words, is the effect that time (and hence contextual knowledge) had on shifting his relation to his friends from one based on the projection of the self onto the other and empathic understanding of the other. What Throop's accounts highlights, then, is an element of effortfulness that ultimately characterizes the true empathic act, if that act is oriented at an understanding of the other, rather than a mere recognition of the other as another ego "like me".

What is important to stress at this point, however, is that this effortfulness of empathy does not render it a primarily cognitivist process or achievement. As Csordas (2013) suggests, following Linger (2010), and in a manner that echoes Smith's own distinctions, "intersubjectivity... does not allow us to answer the question 'What is it like to be someone else?' but instead allows us to ask the question 'What is it like for someone else to be?'" (2013: 240). This is an inferential process, one where one must make the effort to *imagine* not what would it be like *for me* to be someone else, but what would it be like for someone else *to be*.

However, that this is an inferential, imaginative process, does not divorce it

from the affective and corporeal. This is evident in Csordas's example of inferring immediacy in the case of depression by approaching language itself in its corporeal presence, as a thing that discloses rather than hides. The key is not whether we know the other through a "cold" exchange of information or through the "warmth" of our immediate ways of knowing the other through our senses, but is in the effort invested into the purposeful and effortful reorientation of the self to the other, anchored in the recognition of their ultimate difference. It is in the differentiation between understanding as an immediate "feeling for", and one which is anchored in an exercise of the imagination, so long as our understanding of the imagination is always anchored in the experience of the lived body in the world.

And it is this very point, according to the directors of Fidesco, that was ultimately eluding Rosa and Hannah, rendering their mission a failure. The true charitable act, the establishment of love, the act of sympathy, is only possible through the willingness to take the imaginative sympathetic leap into the lifeworld of the other – something which is only possible given the *recognition* of the other's profound otherness. It is this sympathetic effort, as an overt ethical stance and project, that my interlocutors saw as the core and ultimate goal, not only of their charitable engagement, but their religious lives more broadly. Emmanuel's concept of love, then, as is Smith's notion of sympathy, is premised on the work of the imagination over that of affect, and the recognition of real and profound difference over that of similarity or commonality. Above all, it is a form of labor, a capacity of the imagination one must cultivate rather than a spontaneous sentiment the springs from one's chest. Although, as we have

established, most volunteers did not conceive of their mission in affective terms, a feeling for the other and doing something about it, when it came to the actual work of establishing relationality, many of them turned to the affective and to similarity in their efforts to establish fellowship.

The consequences of the attempt to perform relations that stressed the similar and effaced difference - an attempt we could understand as anchored in a desire to cultivate a particular set of affective ties - however, did not prove itself as effective in the long term. The insistence, either gentle or aggressive, on stressing difference that volunteers encountered in their interlocutors - Safi's insistence on drawing a line between "you the French" and "us the Arabs", Amira's insistence that the Rocher backs its claim to similarity by contracting a volunteer from the *cit *, Jerome's repeated failure to establish equality with his fellow workers - all these breaks in performance, or an outright refusal to participate in one, were ruptures in the plot volunteers attempted to create together with their interlocutors, rude reminders that, going back to Felicien's insistence, "we are not all the same".

More than that, they were in themselves challenging the sincerity of the performance in which they were supposed to be engaged. Although throughout this chapter I have not used the dramaturgic terminology to suggest that the relations performed between volunteers and their interlocutors were patently false or insincere, I suggest that ultimately, the attempt to avoid the recognition of real difference does end up sterilizing volunteers' project of love, emptying it of its true revolutionary potential and confining the sociality they seek to craft in the temporary realm of the dramatic

make-believe. This is because the failure to acknowledge real difference is not merely a question of acknowledging inequalities, hierarchies or power relations. It also simply amounts to a failure of recognizing the other person for who they are. In this sense, the risk inherent to the stressing of the affective and immediate, rather than the imaginative and laborious, aspect of intersubjectivity runs the very real risk of emptying social relations of their real content. A love that is capable of revolutionary change, then, of bringing about the "civilization of love" is not that spontaneous thing, the emotion that leaps from one's breast, but a thing that requires constant training, a task to fail at again and again.

Conclusions

In chapter three I argued that the introduction of God into sociality resulted in a shift away from a stress on a dyadic structure of compassionate giving to a triadic one, and that this, at least potentially, worked to facilitate empathic process. In examining here the intersubjective dynamic of the humanitarian encounter in the course of daily interaction, by moving from ideal to practice, we have exposed the considerable challenges that stand in the way of such an ambitious project of love as the one aspired to by members of Emmanuel. The repeated and persistent decentering movement of the self which is required for the kind of constant sympathetic leaps of the imagination necessary for the establishment of relations across such significant difference reveals itself to be an immensely difficult task for volunteers. But this is not to say that it is an impossible one. As we have already discussed in chapter two, for members of

Emmanuel, community life itself is used as a means of training, developing their ability to love the other, perhaps not unlike how one would attempt to train and develop a muscle. What the analysis here highlights is the degree to which this task depends on the stress of both the imagination over affect, and the acknowledgment of difference alongside the recognition of similarity.

It is to stress these points that I have chosen throughout this chapter examples where relations, even if momentarily, fail. But this is not to say that they always do. I had experienced this to be true myself, on more than one occasion, in my interaction throughout fieldwork with people who were to become my friends. This was certainly the case of my relationship with Jeanne, who was, throughout my fieldwork one of my closest friends and interlocutors. Jeanne, as I recounted in the introduction to this work, had initially bonded with me over our shared Jewish identity. This identity was of course a much more charged issue for her than it was for me, and during our months of acquaintance she increasingly came to refer to it as something we both had in common. References to Jewish traits, Jewish character, to my Jewishness, her Jewishness, were increasing, and whenever I was introduced to anyone, my Jewish and Israeli identity would be showcased.

Jeanne also enjoyed talking and explaining things to me, and gradually, alongside disagreements we were beginning to have over moral questions, I had begun to feel impatient and constricted within the relationship. I began to feel that Jeanne was colonizing my time and I was becoming impatient with the constant reference to our supposed kinship, which I was starting to feel Jeanne was using perhaps as currency to

gain status within her own social milieu. I later learned that her insistence on immediately telling anyone we ever met that I was an Israeli Jew was a means of protecting me of potential racism due to my middle-eastern or Mediterranean appearance. For a while, however, everything seemed to aggravate me about Jeanne, and I have no doubt that she could feel this and was well aware of my wish to separate myself from her. All this came about during a period when I was lodging in her house and so our interaction was very frequent.

When the time came for me to leave for the annual sessions at Paray-le-Monial I was ready to go. I knew, however, that within a week, Jeanne and her husband would also be traveling to Paray for the occasion of the community's international session. I was looking forward for that session as an opportunity to talk to many different people whom I would otherwise could not meet with, and was wondering internally how I would deal with Jeanne once she arrived in the village and wanted to spend time with me in a way that would make my interaction with other people more difficult.

What happened when Jeanne finally arrived in Paray, however, took me by complete surprise. She was there, she would cross my paths occasionally, would greet me warmly and then depart. I had expected her, on the first occasion I saw her in the village, as I was having dinner with a friend and she passed us on her bike, to stop and insist on joining our conversation as she was wont to do in the past. But something radical seemed to have changed in her behavior around me. She had stopped, yes. She greeted us, exchanged a few words, and then promptly departed. What was striking, however, was not so much that she had changed her behavior so radically and

consistently, but that she had done so without attempting to make me feel in any way culpable for rejecting her company. She had seen my struggle, had understood it, and refused to take it, in any way, personally. I felt the same care, the same warmth, the same close connection as we had between us in the past, even as she gently withdrew her presence to allow me the freedom to draw away from her. There was nothing of the martyr, nothing of the angry rejected friend, no false aloofness to cover up hurt feelings. There was just a deep, thoughtful understanding, a gesture that enfolded within it an infinite care. It was love, startling in its beauty.

CHAPTER FIVE

Immanence, Change, and the Work of Co-Presence

Early on during my fieldwork with the Rocher I learned to say *bonjour*. Not the casual *bonjour* to someone I knew, but a purposeful *bonjour* to practically anyone who crossed my path. Saying *bonjour* was important. It was a statement of sorts, walking down the street and looking people in the eye, nodding and saying *bonjour*. It was part of the work of the Rocher. “Isolation” was the key term used by my interlocutors to describe the *cités*. I was often told that in the *cit * people were isolated, estranged from each other, women rarely left the house but to fetch their children from school, neighbors never knew each other. People didn’t even say hello in the street.

So members of the Rocher always said *bonjour*. There was something in that very intentional act that communicated a confidence on the one hand, communicated the fact that we were not afraid to interact with people whom the French media often portrayed as dangerous, people who were very foreign and maybe even hostile, young men who dealt drugs and scornfully called us “the Church”, and it communicated the fact that we belonged there, we lived there, we were neighbors. But more than that, saying *bonjour* was a manner of creating very concrete, small, connections with people. I look you in the eye, I smile, I say *bonjour*. We are neighbors. There is something colonizing about this simple gesture. An assertion of presence, a demand for recognition, if not reciprocation. There is also something about it that communicates something important about the way my interlocutors’ approach to the question of

change, and how they attempted to enact it during their mission.

In chapter two I made the argument that the localization of the divine as immanent in the world, and consequently in social relations, can at least partially account for the greater emphasis on relationality as opposed to individualism observed in Emmanuel. I also argued that imbuing the social with divine presence had the consequence of shifting the locus of self-process, and hence self-transformation explicitly into the intersubjective, specifically in moments where the presence of the divine is experienced as disrupting one's habitual and implicit sense of self, reorienting one's perceptual perspective.

As we then establish in chapters three and four, this particular orientation to the social, in the case of Emmanuel, also translates into a concrete investment in and effort to change the world, something which the community set to achieve through the humanitarian action of its NGOs, among other means. This vision of world transformation - the building of the Civilization of Love - is conceived simultaneously in social, cultural and spiritual terms, but its realization is anchored in the establishment of a particular sociality. What I seek to achieve in this chapter is to establish what is the actual model of change and transformation that shapes the manners in which this project of social change is carried out.

By "model of change" I am referring here not to the actual manners in which Emmanuel attempts to enact social change (either in the Church or society at large), or for that matter, to the ways in which the community in itself is a process of change within the Catholic Church, but rather, the ways in which members of Emmanuel

orient themselves to the question of change, or how they conceive of and experience change as possible, either as a question of self or social transformation. By doing so I also wish to question the dichotomous distinction made within the anthropology of Christianity between Christian orientations to change that stress rupture versus those that stress continuity. Specifically, I make the argument that the debate on change within the anthropology of Christianity would benefit from moving beyond the static dichotomy of rupture and continuity, into a more nuanced theorization of how Christians, and perhaps religious persons more broadly, orient themselves and approach the issue of change, either as a personal or social process.

In making this argument I pick up on some of the points we began developing in chapter two, suggesting that the conceptual and experiential locus of the divine in relation to the world – the manners in which religious persons experience the transcendent as relating to the mundane – impacts on the manners in which they orient themselves to change and attempt to enact it in their lives and in the world. Specifically, examining attitudes to change and transformation across social domains in the ritual life of Emmanuel and its affiliated NGOs, focusing on the broader missionary project in which the Rocher and Fidesco are engaged in, as well as change in the context of religious conversion, I make the argument that the relative stress on immanence and divine presence in Emmanuel shape orientations to change in a manner that transformation is characterized by a type of stillness, a horizontal spread within the world, one which is not a progress, but a reorientation to the network of relations which one inhabited, anchored in an establishment of a co-presence.

Catholicism, Materiality, and Transformation: Beyond Rupture and Continuity

Change is one of the central themes in the anthropology of Christianity, perhaps, as some suggest, since the question of change (in the form of conversion) is an important one for Christians themselves. In theorizing change in Christian contexts, considerable attention has been given in this literature to what anthropologists of Christianity see as a strong emphasis on rupture and discontinuity in Christian theology and practice, resulting in a conception of conversion and conversion experience primarily in these terms (e.g., Engelke 2004, 2010; Harris 2006; Meyer 1998, 1999). Much of the stress on rupture as a mode of change in Christianity draws on the work of Joel Robbins whose position on the issue is articulated most clearly in his 2007 article *Continuity Thinking and the Problem of Christian Culture*.

Robbins's central argument in this article concerns ethnographic accounts in contexts of religious conversion to Christianity in non-Western cultures. In brief, he argues that anthropologists have typically remained skeptical about their interlocutors' claims for the radical changes conversion to Christianity has supposedly brought to their lives, instead insisting that deep seated cultural structures continue to structure social life, rendering Christianity nothing but "a thin [content-less] veneer overlying deeply meaningful traditional beliefs" (2007: 6). This, Robbins further suggests, is a symptom of what he terms "continuity thinking", a prevailing problem of contemporary anthropology, which predisposes anthropologists to seek underlying continuity and discount apparent change and discontinuity. To remedy this, he continues, we must develop analytical "models of cultural discontinuity" (2007: 17),

something which will not only advance theoretical understandings of change, but also better align anthropological investigations with native exegesis.

In a recent critique of this literature, Linana Chua (2012a, 2012b) argues that in advancing this argument Robbins and others have overemphasized processes of discontinuity to the degree that processes of continuity in conversion to Christianity are categorically dismissed and ignored. Drawing on her fieldwork in a Bidayuh village in Malaysian Borneo, Chua makes the argument that for the most part, Bidayuh converts to Christianity wish to maintain continuity with their cultural and religious past, and that they do this not in spite of, but as an integral part of their process of conversion to Christianity. This assertion she bases on what she identifies as “continuity speaking” among the Bidayuh, or the “diverse ways in which Christian Bidayuh seek to forge, articulate, and enact connections with the past, the old rituals, and the elderly gawai practitioners” (2012a: 7).

She then argues that in order to better theorize Christian conversion and in the interest of developing more nuanced accounts of religious change and conversion, anthropologists must be equally concerned with discourses of continuity as with discourses of rupture. Doing this, she stresses, is not about “replicating the analytical sins of ‘continuity thinking’” or marshaling “an argument that fundamentally nothing has changed”, but would rather “ensure that we do not dismiss ethnographic manifestations of continuity thinking and speaking as figments of a misguided anthropological imagination” (2012a: 18).

Comparing the case of the Bidayuh to other cases of conversion to Christianity,

where the religion was adopted as “a new culture whole” (Robbins 2004:3), Chua notes that the Bidayuh’s conversion was gradual and piecemeal. Conversion narratives collected likewise often lacked the dramatic and sudden component often characteristic of Evangelical or Pentecostal narratives documented in the literature, marking conversion as a “noteworthy but not life-changing event” (2012b: 516). That this is the case, Chua insists, is not to diminish the deep, long-lasting and significant effects that conversion to Christianity had over time on Bidayuh’ social and personal lives, but neither does it show conversion to be a rupture-like event accompanied by an attempt to extinguish all associations to the native religious practice of adat gawai, one’s past or one’s kin. Rather, alongside their adoption of Christianity, Chua found Bidayuh persistently retained elements of their previous Gawai culture, as well as continued to assert links and connections between their current Christian faith and the old religion.

To illustrate this, Chua discusses the question of sociality and relationality in identifying Christian versus Gawai elements in Bidayuh social life and their understanding of their Christian faith. She finds, for example, that Bidayuh understanding of soteriology is based on a model of collective rather than individual salvation - all people wish to reach heaven, but to “achieve this goal not by acting on their own but by acting as one household on earth and taking care of each other.” Contrasting this with Robbins’s claim that individuals and not collectives were the salvific unit of Christianity (Robbins 2004: 293), Chua considers the fact that for her interlocutors “salvation itself is seen as a collective project to be performed on earth” as a legacy of their Gawai religious culture, which was reworked into a Christian

framework, highlighting in the process those Agapist elements in Christianity itself. Similarly, the fact that Bidayuh seem more concerned with the here and now than with the millennial and the afterlife, and that for them “being a good Christian is synonymous with being a good social person” are both read by Chua as “a continuation of the pre-Christian adat-based model of morality” (2012b: 518), again, as reworked within a Christian framework.

Unlike Robbins’s Urapmin (2004), then, Chua’s Bidayuh interlocutors do not find themselves in the aftermath of conversion to Christianity in a position where they are forced into an impossible conflict between two competing “cultures” or value systems. Christianity, in the Bidayuh case did not produce a competing model of morality, as it did in the Urapmin case, but rather formed a continuity with existing cultural models. This, Chua notes, is the result of the Anglican and Catholic conversion efforts which followed, in Bidayuh areas (as elsewhere), the Catholic principles of inculturation, creating analogues and convergences between Catholic and indigenous practices and theology rather than attempting to completely dispense with the spiritual concepts of the native religion altogether. She also notes the fact that many Christians are the younger relatives of adat gawai practitioners, and might not wish to cause social upset in shunning their own family members. The key to the differences observed by Chua, it seems, then, may be anchored in the fact that her interlocutors converted to Catholic and Anglican Christianity, rather than to Evangelical or Protestant forms of Christianity. As she herself notes, those of her interlocutors who joined the Evangelical church did in fact present conversion

narratives highlighting rupture and an insistence on severing all ties to the old animistic rituals of adat gawai.

Rebecca Lester (2003, 2005), nearly a decade before Chua, makes a similar observation when investigating the conversion narratives of Catholic novices at a Mexican nunnery. Lester notes that unlike the case of the Urapmin or other millenarian groups, her Catholic interlocutors seemed to recast and reframe experiences of discontinuity, rupture or disjuncture in terms of continuity. Specifically, she notes that “although ruptures, breaks, and discontinuity are believed to be important and necessary components of self-discovery in the convent, they are understood to be subjective reorientations to an otherwise continuous and meaningful temporal system.” (2003: 203). Lester’s ethnography highlights the fact that the stated motivations driving her interlocutors to join the convent are anchored in a desire to address societal and cultural changes underway in modern Mexico – the novices consider their project of religious formation and self transformation in the convent as a means of “reclaiming a submerged authentic femininity and then mobilizing that femininity to heal a world ravaged by violence and injustice” (2005: 4). However, analyzing the nuns’ transformation narratives of the self, what she terms following Ricoeur (1992) their narrative identity, or the “cohesive account of the self that follows a particular trajectory and that is intelligible only in retrospect” (2003: 205), Lester argues that in recounting the stories of their vocation, novice nuns retrospectively structure their life stories in a manner that takes those moments of disjuncture, rupture or discontinuity which they experienced when entering the nunnery and resituate them within a larger

story in a manner that forms a narrative of continuity, where ‘the call’ to their vocation was something always already there in their lives, only waiting to be acknowledged.

Comparing the manners by which her interlocutors reframe their life stories “across both ‘worldly’ and ‘sacred’ temporal frames” (Lester 2003: 217) to similar processes identified by Susan Harding in her study of Baptist Fundamentalists, Lester notes that Baptist and Catholic stories featured different temporal locations of conversion. In the Baptist case, conversion is future-oriented, in the sense that “the direct aim and consequence of conversion is salvation, which is predicated on being ‘born again’ through a new baptism in the Holy Spirit”, while in the Catholic case, salvation is already achieved through one’s baptism in infancy and so conversion in the convent is not oriented towards the achievement of an end goal, or “moving along the kind of predictable, linear model of development with a clear and certain end point”, but rather in “letting go of this certainty and opening the self to God” (2003: 217). Both Chua and Lester, when examining their interlocutors’ attitudes to change, characterize them as oriented towards continuity, something which they oppose to an emphasis on rupture among Evangelicals.

Taking a comparative stance, then, we might say based on the materials I have presented so far it appears that Protestant, Pentecostal or Evangelical models of change or attitudes towards change stress processes of rupture while Catholic, Anglican and perhaps also Orthodox (see Hann 2008) models of change stress continuity. As a movement that blends Catholicism with Pentecostal Christianity we would expect the Charismatic Renewal, then, to feature both elements of rupture and of continuity in its

models of change, as indeed it does. Different communities (or communities of communities) within the Renewal, however, have different orientation to change, something which I would suggest corresponds to the different manners in which they blend elements of Pentecostalism and Catholicism in their ethos and ritual practice. As Csordas notes, “Charismatic communities exist so that their members can share a collective spiritual life and a collective mission of evangelization for the sake of renewing the Church” (2014: 178), but action towards these goals is carried out differently by different communities, and these differences are anchored in the relative location of each community on the continuum between the Catholic and the Pentecostal, as well as each community’s ethos or self-conception in relation to the Church. Where an examination of these trends within the Renewal can help us in our comparative efforts here is in assessing how inclinations towards rupture or schism are stressed or muted in the case of different charismatic communities.

Comparing the Emmanuel Community to the American community The Sword of the Spirit, Csordas points to differences in the habitus and ethos of the two communities, as reflected in their names, defining Charisms and organizational characteristics. While the “Sword of the Spirit” conveys a “relatively more militant sense of divine presence” (2014: 179), “Emmanuel”, the Hebrew word for “God with us”, conveys divine presence in a “relatively more contemplative sense” (2014: 179). In terms of Charismatic contribution to the Church and society, the Emmanuel community defines itself in terms of the three Charisms of Adoration, Compassion and Evangelization, stressing a model of evangelical action as the spreading of divine love,

while the Sword of the Spirit understands itself to be a “bulwark to defend people in a time of spiritual warfare, a prophetic people proclaiming Christ, and a servant people working to stem the tide of evil and promote holiness.” (2014: 179). As Csordas notes, even community magazines are titled to reflect such differences, with Emmanuel’s chief publication titled *Il Est Vivant* (he is alive – a reference to Jesus’s continued presence in the world), and the Sword of the Spirit’s *Living Bulwark*.

Organizationally, the fact that Emmanuel branches around the world share the same name while branches of the Sword of the Spirit each have their own names also reflects these differences in ethos, with Emmanuel stressing a globally shared sense of incarnational presence of God while Sword of the Spirit branches are conceived of as the joining together of different branches “to form an impenetrable hedge that constitutes the Sword of the Spirit as a ‘living bulwark’” (2014: 179). The relative emphasis on the Charism of prophecy in the Sword of the Spirit and its de-emphasis in Emmanuel can also be understood in terms of differing models of action in the world insofar as prophecy is a “powerful rhetorical tool for militant evangelization” (2014: 179). The stress on prophecy in the Sword of the Spirit also reflects the relatively greater Pentecostal influence in the community, underscoring unmediated access to the divine as opposed to Emmanuel’s greater deference to the mediatory models of divine inspiration of the Catholic Church. Finally, apocalyptic tendencies stressing an eventual rupture in the history of the world, which are present in the Sword of the Spirit but are largely absent in Emmanuel can also be attributed to their different positioning on the Catholic-Pentecostal continuum.

The picture that emerges from our brief comparison of Emmanuel and the Sword of the Spirit indicates that each community's relative stress on either more Pentecostal or more Catholic elements in its ritual practice corresponds to certain inclinations towards either a more active, militant and direct model of change, which includes elements of rupture-like elements, or a more static, subtle and gradual model of change. Each community's ethos and self-definition feed into these different orientations to change and action in the world, as much as they are also shaped by a relative stress on Pentecostal or Catholic elements in each community. The question to raise at this point, then, is how can we explain or account for the differences we are observing between models of change characteristic of the more Pentecostal or the more Catholic oriented communities?

In her 2005 essay *The Christianity of Anthropology*, Fenella Cannell argues that Christianity is almost invariably represented in anthropological texts as an ascetic religion of transcendence, one characterized by a strict and hierarchical separation between the spiritual and material, where a transcendent God is located exclusively outside the material world, the flesh scorned and the untainted life of the spirit celebrated. More than that, she suggests, "the idea of Christianity as a universally and essentially ascetic and other-worldly religion had embedded itself, unrecognized, in aspects of anthropological theory itself" (2005: 340). Much of this, Cannell argues, can be traced to a too simplistic reading of Weber, who stresses in his account those ascetic characteristic of Christianity since "it is through the world-rejecting categories of Puritanism that, for Weber, capitalism's 'worldly asceticism' takes shape." (2005:

341). While this may be the case, Cannell asserts, Weber's work has been erroneously read as making a predictive and universal argument where "Protestantism always displaces Catholicism, aids capitalism, and precedes secularism" (2005: 341), privileging secularizing Protestantism in academic studies of Christianity within the social sciences.

Cannell takes as example for this Pina Cabral's ethnography of peasant Catholicism in Portugal (1986). Pina Cabral's analysis centers on the curious local phenomenon of the saints of "incorrupt bodies" - persons whose bodies did not decay years after burial and whose mummified corpses are displayed in glass coffins by the locals. Her analysis of this phenomenon leads Pina Cabral to conclude that the veneration of the saints of incorrupt bodies is used to overcome the chasm between the farmer's valuation of corporeality and fertility as the source of earthly life and Christianity's sharp devaluation of the material and corporeal, something which is achieved through the display of the dead bodies as holy and incorrupt.

This supposedly prevalent Christian aversion to the flesh and a conception of God as distant and transcendent, however, do not seem to resonate with Cannell's Catholic Bicol interlocutors in the Philippines: "neither the idea of the withdrawal of God from the world nor the Portuguese 'solution' to the ascetic opposition between flesh and spirit seems to have much purchase in Bicol." (2005: 340) While this might be explained away by arguing that local populations in the Philippines have in fact remained resistant to the inherent ascetic Christian logic due to Christianity only being superficially or partially adopted, Cannell does not find this to correspond with her

experience of Bicol. A more convincing explanation, she suggests, is simply that Christianity cannot be exclusively considered to be an ascetic religion³⁶.

My own observations of Emmanuel, as well as other accounts of Catholicism (e.g. Bynum 1987, Csordas, 1994a, De Abreu 2008, Greeley 2005, Lester 2005, Mitchell and Mitchell 2008) would certainly affirm Cannell's observation that neither the dichotomous division between the material and the spiritual, nor the flight of God from the world make much sense when dealing with Catholics. Rather than denigrating the material in favor of the spiritual, Catholicism's grounding in sacramental logic means that materiality, either in the form of things (relics, water, oil) or people (the Virgin, the saints), is a conduit of God's grace. In other words, God for Catholics, although still transcendent to the world, is also immanent in it, powerfully mediated in the material and corporeal.

Considering this, the veneration of the saints of incorrupt bodies comfortably sits alongside the greater Catholic preoccupation with sacred corporeality, whether that of the living saints, or their relics (which may include actual body parts, garments or objects possessed by the living saint), a veneration which should be read not as an attempt to bridge a supposedly irreconcilable chasm between the spiritual and material, but as an attempt to approximate the divine as it manifests its presence in the material. What I argue here is that this relative immanence of God in the world, evident in the Catholic sacralization of corporeality as a site of divine presence – an element of Catholicism particularly stressed, as we have seen, in the case of Emmanuel – has an impact on the manners in which believers orient themselves to change and as such, on

the manners in which they conceive of transformation and attempt to enact it in the world, and upon the self. Furthermore, in making this argument I move away from the static dichotomy of rupture and continuity, a distinction which runs the risk of reducing change only to rupture-like change and dismiss any other mode of orientation to change as its effacement or denial³⁷.

Real Presence: Change as Reorientation in Conversion Narratives

I still recall Father Antoine in one of his sermons on the week before Easter, reminding us again and again that Jesus was not simply God, was not simply divine, that Jesus was human, that he was made man, had the same emotions, the same sensations in his body, that Jesus was *chair*, he said, he was *viande*. Flesh. Meat. Jesus was not just God. He was also meat. This is the mystery of the incarnation, as my interlocutors referred to it, the fact that God chose to become flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. And Emmanuel, I was explained one day by Inés, meaning “God is with us”, is all about the mystery of the incarnation:

It's that God who is God became man. He became small to the point of taking on flesh, first in the body of Marie, because we say the Word became Flesh in Marie, and through the operation of the Holy spirit, God became man and God became flesh. And this mystery of the incarnation is the mystery of Emmanuel, which is God with us, God saves, God with us is God that really takes on the human condition, the condition of man and accepts to live everything like us, with us, to take upon himself our sins, our death, and take us to the eternal life.... The spirituality of the heart of Jesus is really about experiencing that profundity, that height, of the largeness of the heart of Jesus and it's to experience Jesus as gentle and of humble heart. And I can say that often I recognize other priests or seminarians of Emmanuel through this particular gentleness (*douceur*) and this

humility, this grace that the lord has given them.

The materiality of the divine is tied for Inés with humbleness and smallness – God’s decision to take on human form is inevitably a diminishing of his greatness. At the same time, this materiality is also the basis for the “spirituality of the heart of Jesus” in the sense that God’s love for humanity is anchored in his decision to be made flesh, to share in the human condition. It is precisely this gentleness or tenderness, what Inés refers to as *douceur*, the defining characteristic of this divine act, that she considers as the defining grace of Emmanuel, evident in the comportment of community seminarians to the degree she can often identify them in a crowd.

That the carnality of Jesus was important for Emmanuel was also expressed in community members’ preoccupation with his Real Presence transubstantiated in the bread host, or Eucharist. This was often evident in “conversion” narratives³⁸, where the initial spiritual struggle preceding conversion described to me was cast not in terms of actually believing in God – belief in God was always taken for granted – but in terms of believing in or recognizing the Real Presence of God in the world, in one’s life, or sometimes simply in the Eucharist. I remember the horror, the incredulity in Pierre-Marie’s voice, as he told me that he had once attended a church service where the priest had taken it upon himself to change the pronunciation “this is my body” with “this is a representation of my body” when conducting the sacrament of the Eucharist. Theologically, this effectively meant that the bread host was not truly transubstantiated into the body of Christ. “And so,” he told me, “you could sit in the chapel and you’d think you were sitting in front of the presence of Christ in the tabernacle, but it was

actually empty! There would be no one there!”

All this was more than just talk or a question of holding to a certain set of beliefs. As I found myself towards the end of my fieldwork, even given a complete lack of belief, there was something about this sensibility, this way of orienting oneself to the world that took over. This became viscerally evident to me towards the end of my time with the Rocher, as we were returning from a pilgrimage to Paray-le-Monial. I was sitting in the bus next to Anna, a consecrated sister of the Emmanuel community. As we were passing near *Taizé*, an immensely popular Christian pilgrimage site, Anna took the opportunity to explain the history of the place to me. Unlike Paray-le-Monial, she explained, *Taizé* was famous for attracting mainly young people, and was not Catholic, but an ecumenical site, founded by a Protestant minister (although one who may have later converted to Catholicism).

Being ecumenical, *Taizé* welcomed all Christian forms of worship and so, she explained to me, had all sort of churches - churches for Catholics, where they have the Real Presence, or churches for Protestants, where they didn't, and so on. As I was listening to her I was suddenly struck by the fact that the first reaction I had to this piece of information was a shock that churches existed where there was no Real Presence of Christ. For a second or two, the very concept of a church lacking a Eucharist seemed wholly foolish and incomprehensible. An empty church, the thought flashed through my mind, what's the point of that? Somehow, after months and months of spending an hour in front of the Eucharist once a day, sitting in front of it, even without regarding it to be an incarnation of God, I had implicitly become accustomed

to the idea that I was, after all, sitting not in front of *something*, but in front of *someone*. There was something about the thingness of it that filled the space, that had *presence*. It is this notion of presence that featured prominently in my interlocutors' accounts of their own personal encounters with Jesus, in recounting to me their own stories of self-transformation, as well as in framing their aspirations for the transformation of the world.

I begin my analysis of the manners in which divine presence was implicated in my interlocutors' orientations to change, then, with a story-within-a-story, the events of which took place 15 years prior to my first visit to France. The protagonist of the story is Gerard, the eldest son of Jeanne, the same Jeanne whom I had met on my first day in Paray-le-Monial, and who had subsequently become one of my closest interlocutors in the course of my fieldwork. The story was told to me at a dinner party in Jeanne's home, several months after our first meeting, and the events it recounts took place in Paray, when Jeanne and her family, including the then six-year-old Gerard attended the session for families organized by the community.

During these sessions, the younger children are organized into small groups and participate in various activities that take place on the grounds of the village. Each day, people attending the sessions are asked to volunteer to watch over a group of children and take them through the daily activities. Jeanne and her family attended the session, enjoyed it, but did not mark anything unusual about it. During her visit to Paray-le-Monial two years later, however, a stranger with a heavy Italian accent sat next to her and her husband, looked at them and asked, "don't you remember me"?

They did not, and so he introduced himself as Peter and reminded them that they had met two years earlier, at the session for families, when he had been assigned to look after a group of children, that included their son, Gerard. He told Jeanne that he had come to Paray-le-Monial at the prompting of a friend, after struggling with the idea of the presence of God in the Eucharist. The friend suggested that talking could not possibly convince him that the Eucharist was an embodiment of God. He would have to experience that truth for himself, and what better place to achieve this than Paray-le-Monial, a known pilgrimage site dedicated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, where Jesus himself appeared to the cloistered nun Marguerite-Marie, to reveal his heart, burning with love for all of humanity?

And so Peter went, and finding himself rather bored with the sessions, decided to volunteer to take care of a group of children. He reminded Jeanne that when putting him in charge of the group of ten children, she had warned him repeatedly to not let any of them out of his sight, as the grounds were very large. As part of the day's activities, Peter was to lead the children to the Adoration tent, where people practice Eucharistic Adoration, sitting in silence in front of the Eucharist. Upon reaching the tent, which was already teeming with children, Peter was seized with a terrible fear – what if he lost one of the children in the crowd? He was determined not to, and so kept looking around, repeatedly counting the children, restlessly turning his head here and there. It was then, he told Jeanne, that Gerard took his hand reassuringly, and, pointing to the Eucharist upon the altar said, "*Monsieur, Jésus est là*" – sir, Jesus is there.

Upon hearing those words Peter began to cry, suddenly and uncontrollably.

How could this child, he asked himself, know this? How could he know what I cannot? And then, almost immediately, he became certain – if the child has told me this is the truth, then surely, it was. It was at this moment that he had truly discovered Jesus. At the time that he met with Jeanne and her husband in Paray-le-Monial, two years after his conversion experience, Peter was preparing for his priesthood training in Rome. Several years following that meeting, Peter was ordained in the Paris Cathedral by the Cardinal Lustiger. For that occasion he had sent an invitation to Gerard and his family, who traveled to Paris to attend the service. Following the three-hour long ceremony, the newly ordained priests went on to give their first benediction. Receiving this benediction is an honor usually reserved to family members or very close friends. Peter had chosen Gerard to be among the few he blessed that day, acknowledging him, with tears in his eyes, as his teacher.

Peter's conversion narrative, as recounted by Jeanne, brings to light several elements that are of interest to us here. First, the story stresses a certain de-emphasis of belief, or a conceptualization of belief as something that cannot result from persuasion. Peter is sent to Paray-le-Monial to experience the reality of God in the Eucharist, as no words from his friend could possibly change his mind. Further, his eventual realization that the Eucharist is not *something*, but *somebody* is described to me as resulting from a sudden perception or experience of the immanence of God. It is of note, of course, that this immediate experience is mediated through the innocent (and hence clear) gaze of the child, for whom belief in the presence of God in the Eucharist is depicted as unnecessary. God, for the innocent (read: he who sees the world as it truly is), need not

be believed in – he simply is there.

Similar elements were evident also in Jeanne's own story of conversion, which also took place in Paray-le-Monial, after a crisis of faith that drove her away from the church, some thirty years earlier. While wandering in the village, she heard the singing of a choir drifting from one of the tents. There was nothing special or distinct about the singing or the music, but as she tells the story, the sound suddenly and completely filled her with emotion, an intense sense that she was loved. In her own words, from a letter she wrote to me, recounting her life history: "I was so taken by emotion: I had never felt really 'lovable' and for the first time in my life I felt 'loved' just as I was, with my family origins and my history. Loved by a close God, in the person of Jesus. It became impossible for me not to love Him or to leave Him. It was like a blessing that fell upon my life."

Stories of sudden conversion are common in evangelical or charismatic circles, but what I wish to draw our attention to is not the suddenness of the conversion, but the element of stillness or lack of motion that seems to characterize the process of transformation as depicted in these stories. Change is sudden, but it is not understood in terms of a rupture or a break. Rather, the suddenness is about discovering something which always already was there – the presence of God, the moment of shocked transformation is the moment of perceiving one's co-presence with the divine. My attention was first drawn to what I perceived to be this stand-still style or attitude, not by conversion stories, but due to my own experience with conversion efforts on the part of my interlocutors - specifically the total lack of pressure to convert that I felt

from them. To use the metaphor of movement, what I felt in my interactions with them was that rather than actively reaching out to me, attempting to persuade or convince me to change, they were instead standing still, drawing me to them.

Returning to chapter two, we might be reminded at this point of Laurent Landete's jubilee speech, where a great deal of attention was dedicated to clarifying the difference between evangelization - one of the community's collective Charisms, and proselytism. While proselytism was about actively trying to enact change, to bring about religious conversion by convincing or attempting to change someone, evangelizing was about living in a particular way, becoming a model of a particular sociality, one grounded in relations of love. It is by living a life of prayer in community - living *la vie fraternelle* - Landete's stressed, that evangelization is successfully achieved. Bringing about lasting, significant change was not about *doing* certain things, then, but more so about *being* in a certain way. This was precisely also the element in Landete's speech which my interlocutors referred to most passionately in subsequent conversations with them. Convincing people to convert was unacceptable, an empty gesture, motivated not by a love for one's God and one's society, but by a desire to increase the membership in one's club, to achieve, conquer or gain. It was living in a certain way that would bear witness to the love of God, as well as to the love between members, the love that one radiates outwards, that would ultimately enter others' hearts and call them to God.

A similar sentiment was expressed by Father Antoine as we were making our way back from Paray-le-Monial after the pilgrimage organized by the Rocher to close

the year of work. The bus drive back from Paray also marked the last few weeks that Rocher volunteers would be spending together back in the *cité*, and after several members of the team came to the front of the bus to offer some concluding remarks about their experiences, Father Antoine, one of the founding members of Emmanuel and one of the head directors of the Rocher, took the microphone. “Our time in Paray may have ended,” Antoine asserted, “and so has another year of working with the Rocher, but one part of our mission has not and will never end, the part of being missionaries ourselves. The topic was discussed during one of the sessions we attended in Paray,” he reminded us, “but what we must always remember is what being a missionaryer actually meant. It meant,” he asserted, “one and only one thing: to love one another as Christ did. Every time we treat another with love, we are doing the work of God, testifying to the love of God in our lives. And this is how we will come to change the world.”

Evangelizing, changing the world, both for Landete and for Father Antoine, is conceived of as a roundabout affair, neither directly enacted by God nor by the faithful, but a cooperation in mediation, God’s grace flowing through the works of the community. Even then, change will not be achieved by direct action, however, but only vicariously, as a side-effect, almost, of love. Taking a closer look at the three community Charisms – adoration, compassion and evangelization - could help us to further explicate these elements of passivity or stillness evident in the narratives I presented so far, and their relation to the experience and concept of God as immanent and present in the world. The practice of Eucharistic adoration itself (which is the

practical enacting of the Charism of Adoration) is a very passive one to begin with, as it entails nothing but sitting in the presence of God in the form of the Eucharist. No additional physical or mental activity is necessary. The transformation of the person is a direct result of simply being in the presence of God, as one's heart becomes filled with God's divine love. The effort, discipline, or active participation required of the devotee is limited to the will to maintain a co-presence with the Eucharist.

What is important to highlight about this is the immediacy that characterizes this process – the de-emphasizing of meaning-making (as a cognitive, hermeneutic process) as the locus of change, instead conceiving of change as ‘seeping in’ or bypassing explicit reflection – a direct result of a co-presence with God. God's love, transmitted from the Eucharist, a “heart-to-heart communication” in Jeanne's terms, is then transformed into compassion within the devotee. In this way, compassion can be conceived in this particular cultural context as a gift from God, or Charism. It is this gift that then circulates on, expressing itself in acts of Evangelization, as the divine love embodied by devotees ‘radiates on’, a testament to God's love, or in humanitarian acts, as compassion serves as a motivational force to compel devotees to change the world. “Let me explain it to you this way,” Jeanne once told me, as we were sitting and chatting in her kitchen and I was pushing her yet again to explain to me her experiences during adoration, “the word adoration, do you know where it comes from? It comes from two latin words, *ad* and *oris*, and *oris* means mouth. And when we adore,” and here she opened her mouth wide, “this is what we do. When we sing God's praise, we open our mouth and God enters into us. He flows right into your body. And

then it flows from you, when you are with people, it flows from you to them, and they feel it.”

The mode of change Emmanuel’s own ethos implies, then, is one of transformation as a still, motionless process, one where change ensues not from a rupture or a linear progress towards an end goal, but originates in a realignment of perspective to a reality that is always already there, immanent, as it were, in the world. This echoes, somewhat, Lester’s observation about the manner in which novice nuns learn to retrospectively recast their experience in a manner that identifies change as already written into their life story, a manner of identifying change as always already there, a story that only needs to be seen for what it is. Lester reads this as an orientation to the past (one’s baptism having already achieved salvation) as opposed to an orientation to the future among Harding’s Baptists (salvation as a future event facilitated by being born again), but does not further attempt to explain these differences in temporal orientation other than by reference to the event of baptism. Chua, on the other hand, considers the prevalence of “continuity speaking” among her interlocutors, to be the result of Catholic missionizing policies that emphasize inculturation as opposed to a complete denouncing of past religious practices, kinship ties between Christians and adat gawai practitioners, as well as an attempt to present a united front against Islam. What I suggest here is that, at least in the case of Emmanuel, but possibly beyond, the particular static or still orientation to change we are observing in conversion narratives is also anchored in a deep, visceral, experience of the divine as immanent in the world.

Vivre Avec, and Living With Failed Mission

That this was the case was further evident in the context of mission and NGO work, where the question of change or the transformation of the world took center stage, and where Emmanuel's stress on God's presence in the world powerfully shaped the manners in which NGO volunteers oriented themselves to their humanitarian work, understood its ultimate impact, and more than that, fruitfully reframed what might be considered its failure.

"It is possible that we might not create a huge change in people's social living conditions. It's not like we don't try, but we have very limited resources," Anna told me as we were driving together from Barcelona to Toulon, "but we are living with them. And this is what the Rocher is about, it's about living with, *vivre avec*." When questioned about the effectiveness of their mission, the great majority of my interlocutors seemed to think that mission was revealing itself to bear little fruit in either changing the social conditions they came to address, or, for those who saw their mission also in terms of evangelization, in bringing about religious conversion or even a genuine inter-religious dialogue. None of them, however, seemed strongly distressed by these facts, and none considered shortening the duration of their mission or expressed a general disappointment with the results of their mission. Having spent a year in the *cit * working with the Rocher alongside them, I confess I found this lack of despair curious, especially in the case of those members of the Rocher who had committed themselves to live in the *cit * for several years.

What I suggest here, in examining some of these "failure" narratives, is that it

was the particular way in which volunteers learned to orient themselves to change vis-a-vis their relationship with God as immanent in the world that allowed them to deal with what otherwise appeared to be a failure of their mission, and recast that failure in alternative terms. By no means am I suggesting that the process I am describing here was a psychological defense mechanism of sorts, whereby reframing their mission in alternative terms allowed volunteers to come to terms with what they actually experienced as its failure, but rather that an experience of God as immanent in social relations shaped their orientation to change in a manner that already reframed their mission in such terms as to make particular forms of failure irrelevant. More than that, not unlike the case of the refused gift for Fidesco volunteers, in the case of the Rocher, the experience of such “local” failure (zero conversions, no social change), I argue, is fruitfully used as a locus of self process to train volunteers to reorient themselves to God and others in a manner which submits one’s will to, and contextualizes one’s actions within the broader, if yet unknowable, plan of God.

“When you read the diary of Charles de Foucauld, you read, day so-and-so, number of conversions: zero. I have been here for ten years, he writes. Number of conversions: zero. He had gone on mission in the Maghreb but none of the Muslims would convert. But he still stayed. He stayed there years and years, on a mission that seemed to bear no fruit. This is why he is one of the patrons of the Rocher. Because we are also a mission in the desert, that appears to bear no fruit. There are no results. No change. But what we do is to be a sign of hope.” We were standing in the kitchen of Anna’s apartment as she was recounting to me the struggles and doubts she had

experienced during the years of her work with the Rocher. A consecrated sister in the Emmanuel community, Anna was not serving in any official role in the Rocher, but was sharing an apartment with one of its directors and was involved in the work of the NGO during the eight years she had been living in the *cité*.

Anna was not telling me this lightly. I knew that at times, she found the fact that the Rocher mission did not seem to effect any actual change - whether change of a spiritual nature (conversions) or social nature (changing the social realities of the *cité*) - extremely distressing. This distress, in Anna's case, was also the result of the broader societal reality in which she saw herself living, one of a rapidly secularizing Europe where Christianity was becoming increasingly marginalized. "I look around me," she told me once, "and all I see is the desert." And for Anna, as for Charles de Foucauld, the number of conversions always remained zero. "But then," she told me,

I was reminded by Jean Vanier³⁹ last week, when we all went on the retreat, that this is not the point, that succeeding is not the point. When people ask you, have you succeeded in your life, what does that mean? It means nothing. Jesus did not succeed in his life. He died on the cross, as an outcast, in pain and suffering. And also, what may seem like a huge success at the time may be deceiving, like the case of the Evangelicals today. They attract people now, but there is nothing profound behind it and people end up leaving at the end. He reminded me that the Rocher is not a solution, it is a sign, a sign of the presence of God in our lives. Which is exactly the case of his own foundation, *l'Arche*. *L'Arche* is not a solution for the handicapped. But it is a sign.

What is it like to be a sign? Before I started my work with the Rocher I visited with two members of the Emmanuel community who had served as volunteers for the Rocher two years earlier. When I asked them to recount to me some experiences of

their mission, Thérèse explained to me the difficulties she was having with the idea of evangelizing by going from home to home and knocking on doors with the aim of talking to people who were complete strangers. “It was very strange and uncomfortable for me, you see,” she said,

To go and knock on doors and try to strike a conversation, to form a connection with people who were strangers. And then one day I was climbing the stairs, on my way to a home, and a sentence just came to my mind, and it was ‘*sois l’hostie vivante*’, be the living host. It’s a verse from the New Testament, you see, but until that day I didn’t understand it at all, didn’t give it much attention. But I realized as I was doing that work, that this was what I was doing, that this is what this work means. To be the living host. That during adoration I was absorbing God into myself and then carrying him with me, I was bringing God over to people, helping them meet him themselves.

There is something beautifully still about this image, as much as it is simultaneously and profoundly about change. But conversion, as I had experienced myself, was not a question of persuasion. It was a question of being differently in the world and with others, of being, for my interlocutors, the living host. Change was not something that you agentively tried to make happen, but something that ensued from the way that you were, in your relationship with God and vis-a-vis social others. This still orientation to change, however, is not an effacement of change, not a denial of change, or an insistence on continuity of some kind or the other, but simply a different manner of realizing change in the world and in the self, one which is anchored in a particular way of being in the world, in an attempt to allow God to inhabit one’s body. It is the enactment of change that is enfolded in the tiny gesture of saying *bonjour* in the *cit *, the enactment of co-presence. This is not a linear, progressive, goal-oriented

change, but signified a kind of static, horizontally-spreading kind of change, one which is not a progress, but a reorientation to the network of relations which one inhabited.

Being the living host, a sign in the *cit *, was not merely an abstract theological notion for my interlocutors and they each approached the realization of this ideal in particular ways. When I asked Gilles, one of the directors of the Rocher who had relocated to the *cit * with his family two years earlier, what he meant when referring to himself as a sign, and how he considers himself being a sign makes a difference for the people with whom he works, his answer underscored the same mode of motionless change, one anchored in a nearly imperceptible, incremental, transformation of social relations:

A sign, it's a mark (*un rep re*), it's something that you see that gives you confidence. It's for this reason that the Rocher is interesting. We have to be a mark. Jesus said, 'you are the light of the world'. That can be visible. When you see a lamp, a candle, it's a mark. I see it, it shines, it's there. So one day I was driving some boys in the car somewhere, and one of them said, 'oh, fortunately the church is there, in the *cit *'. What does this mean, this statement? It means that it's a mark. It doesn't mean the boy wants to become a Christian. It means 'fortunately, the church is there in the *cit *'. That's exactly what it means. So if we do that, we have done our mission, I think. Another example, a girl, that wears the veil, she is 16 years old. She brought two friends with her, that don't wear the veil, Muslim. The girl who wears the veil comes regularly to the Rocher. And I presented to her friends the Rocher and what we do, etc. And then they asked, what is this, this is a parish, no? it's a parish. And I started to explain, and the girl stopped me and said, wait, I'll explain – this is the church, and I tell you, at the beginning it's a bit strange, but a bit later you can't stop coming. That the definition that she gave to the church – at first it's a bit strange, but then you can't stop coming. A veiled girl. And I say, this is what we do in the Rocher. We are a sign, we are marked. And it comforts to know that. They know that we don't act violently, ever. That's a sign. There are people who would never ever act violently, and they know it. They

ridicule us for that occasionally, but I think that deep down, they say, fortunately there are people, there is at least a corner in the world that is like that [...] I think that essentially, it's in our manner of creating relations with people, it's that which produces real fruit. [...] Suddenly, there was a 14 year old kid that told me 'ah, Gilles, papa.' 14 years. And after that he caught himself and said, 'well, no, you're my brother'. I tell myself, this is what they have a need for. So what is going to impact this kid, in life? He might forget these things, human memory is like that. But I think that some things are never totally without impact, there are things that are activated, in the profundity of the heart of the person that reorient the life towards the good, the true, the honest.

There is something about the temporality of being a sign – a stand stillness that stretches beyond one's own agency, that is simultaneously passive in its stance and tenacious in its presence. For Gilles, change occurs *around* him, in *relation* to him - being a sign is not about forcing change, but one's presence in itself is enough, insofar as for a child, one day, the church is “fortunately in the *cit *”, that “then you can't stop coming”, that one day one gets called “brother.” Conversion is immaterial. For now. Being a sign, standing in, temporarily and partially, for God, allows Gilles to position himself in a temporal scale that extends well beyond his own autobiographical future. In a seemingly paradoxical way, it is this stretched out of temporality that allows such tiny, incremental changes noted by Gilles to gain a meaning and significance which might have been dismissed otherwise.

When I asked him how he understood the fact that in spite of all their work in the *cit *, it did not seem like any of the Muslim residents were interested to convert to Christianity, Gilles dismissed conversion as a goal for his mission, instead insisting that true evangelization must always follow the example set by Jesus himself, an

example that underscores the same stand-still notion of change, one based not in persuasion but in demonstration:

Well, I am not stressed over the question of the conversion of Muslims, it's not my problem. [...] Never, in my mission, has God asked me to convert someone. No one. He never demands that of a Christian... When you look at Jesus who was God himself, Jesus that came to earth, this was *the* mission of conversion, it's God himself who comes. If I was in his place, I would have been stressed, I would say, I have millions to convert. And he never poses the question who he will go convert, he only revealed his identity, he said, look who I am. And I tell you the same thing – look who I am. I am Gilles. I believe. Here is my faith. And in that way he was shining out, and that functioned as an attraction.

This still model of transformation, coupled with an understanding of action as anchored in an embodiment or mediation of the divine was evident in the manners that practically all volunteers understood the terms of their mission. For Jean-Pierre, who viewed his mission in strong spiritual and evangelical terms, the announcement of the gospel was still a rather still affair, a question of embodiment, of exuding outwards an interiority, a state of being with the divine:

In my mission in Rocher.... First, I announce the gospel, first of all through my daily behaviors, the manner, through everything, all my life needs to be an announcing of the gospel, all my being needs to demonstrate that I am a disciple of Christ and that I am a son of God. If the Holy Spirit really dwells in me, it means that I don't belong to the world, but to God, and that must have consequences in my life. It has consequences for everything I do, in my work, in how I interact with people, how I will educate my children. So for me, the great work of the Rocher is that, how do I live the gospel, how do I greet the children, how do I do my work, how do I regard them, how do I touch them, all this. And so, already I hope that through the manner in which I comport myself, that touches people already, mysteriously, and that that is already an announcing of the gospel

and that that already prepares the heart to meet Jesus.

Similarly, for Éléonore, being a sign was a notion she felt herself embodying through the intentionality and directionality of her own gaze, the *regard* (if we read this word both in English and in French) that she had for the children, transformation understood as a process by which the children she works with would refashion themselves vis-a-vis her loving gaze upon them, a gaze which she thought of herself as embodying the gaze of the divine:

You see, the children that come, with some children, you get the sense like they don't really even see themselves as a person, a unique person with value that can progress, that can achieve things, they only live in the moment, react to the environment, but not centered in themselves. And for me it's really a task to try to help these children to become conscious of themselves. And this happens through the regard (look, gaze) that we have for them. And for me it's the same with the adults. You pass the time with them, you talk, sometimes there is nothing special that happens, it's not a useful use of time, you don't achieve anything concrete, finding them lodging outside the *cit *, or anything like that, you don't save them, you don't have money to give them, the problem they had before they still have it, you didn't solve their problem, but you can give me a positive regard, a regard of love, that can be a carrier of hope. You see? For me that is really the utility of the Rocher. This is what I think really helps people, to really bring to them the regard of Jesus.

      , more overtly than Gilles or Jean-Pierre, seems to also be struggling with the question of the effectiveness of change that the Rocher enacts in the world. We might say that her reference to the value that the gaze of love has as a "carrier of hope" over the enactment of actual social change (helping a family to find a home outside the *cit *) is an expression of a Catholic politics of charity that, recalling

Muehlebach's critique (2013: 456) are "decidedly nonrevolutionary", striving, in the name of love and the glorification of suffering to maintain the social status quo.

Alternately, we could say that the insistence that the framing (or reframing) of the mission of the Rocher in such spiritual or intersubjective terms rather than social and political ones is serving volunteers as a psychological defense mechanism, a way of dealing with a perceived ineffectiveness of their mission or feelings of helplessness this failure evokes. As we have observed in Anna's case, the perceived failure of the mission, either in evangelical or social terms, did negatively impact volunteers and their psychological process during their mission and it certainly is the case that reframing the criteria for the success of the mission helped them to maintain their engagement and continue their work without suffering "compassion fatigue".

Neither one of these explanations is satisfying, however. First, the fact that volunteers were distressed, to begin with, with the apparent failure of the mission is a clear indication that they were invested in the idea of creating change rather than merely seeking to maintain the status quo or revel in the loftiness of their humanitarian feelings for the suffering of the other. We might still maintain that this particularly static orientation to change – the reduction of one's activities in the world to "being a sign" of something that *exceeds* life is a renouncing or rejection of the world in its materiality, although this does not quite sit with the rest of our analysis throughout this text that highlights the potential, at least, that such an introduction of the divine into human sociality has to affirm it.

Second, as for the notion that "being a sign" might merely serve volunteers as a

defense mechanism against feelings of helplessness that a failed mission entails, while this might be the case for some, I would suggest that we would be better served to consider here the more significant work on the self that failure, and the casting of mission in the static terms volunteers cast in it, achieve. Specifically, I would argue that failure here again serves as a locus for self process insofar as it trains volunteers to relinquish their will and agency to that of God, to decenter their selves in relation to the divine. The failure of mission, in other words, helps volunteers to underscore their inability to enact change either directly or autonomously of God. It is exactly in its failure to achieve change, then, that mission becomes a locus for self transformation.

This self process, however, is not exclusively aimed at a decentering of the self in relation to the divine, but at a further embedding of the self in social relations of the greater body of the Church. As Gilles' words, as well as Jean-Pierre's hint at, by positioning mission in a broader temporal framework, they are also positioning themselves as part of a social body which surpasses them, making their actions but a tiny part of a vast history. This positioning of mission into a much broader temporality is made more overtly by Gilles when he likens the mission of the Rocher to that of John the Baptist's:

I think that the Rocher is the Jean Baptist (John the Baptist) mission. Jean Baptist was the cousin of Jesus that was the last prophet [...] and he preached in the desert. There is something of a desert here in the cite, I find. And there was something in Jean Baptist's mission that had an element of ridicule. For me he was always a prophet to whom nobody listened, maybe a little bit, but I don't know... he preached in the desert, there was a uselessness to it, and us, I think we have a bit this uselessness, us in the cite, the voice that cries in the desert. [...] In either case, we are not here to directly announce

Jesus. One day, Jesus will pass in the lives of these people. Jesus will pass here. Because we, we prepare the heart, and so when he comes they will know him. And I think that our mission is to prepare the heart, to help the fathers, the mothers, the children. And one day, one day, that concerns me not, because it's not my mission, Jesus will pass through the lives of these people, and they will know him.

In seeing their mission as one of “preparing the heart” for the eventual arrival of Jesus himself to the *cit *, Gilles and other volunteers of the Rocher are not simply decentering their selves in relation to the divine (leaving the actual eventual change in the hands of God), but also indirectly placing themselves in a larger story of collective salvation, where the accumulated efforts, the preparatory work of generations of Catholics such as themselves, working tirelessly as the “useless servants of the gospel” as some of my interlocutors spoke of themselves and their mission, would bear the eventual fruit in the second coming of Christ.

Conclusions

In this chapter I set out to establish the implicit model of change or the manners in which Emmanuel oriented themselves to the question of change in the context of their ritual practice and humanitarian outreach. In doing so I argued that rather than merely stressing continuity as opposed to rupture, Emmanuel orient themselves to change as a horizontal-spreading process, one where change ensues not from a rupture or a linear progress towards an end goal, but originates in a realignment of perspective to the world, a reorientation to the network of relations which one inhabited. This particular orientation to change, I suggest, is at least partially shaped by the manners in

which Emmanuel experience the transcendent as immanent in the world and in sociality. Finally, in the context of humanitarian outreach, I have demonstrated that this particular mode of orienting to change – learnt, to a degree, during mission itself – serves volunteers as a locus for self transformation while allowing them to reframe their mission in terms that helps them deal with what they feel is its immediate failure. Indeed, we might consider failure itself as used in the context of mission to initiate self transformation.

The notion that a relationship exists between God's relative immanence or transcendence in the world and the manners in which religious persons orient themselves to the question of change is not altogether new. Robbins (2012: 12) for example, argues that "Christianity is a religion that focuses a good deal of attention on the need for radical change and, I will argue, grounds the possibility for such change in ideas about the ways the transcendent realm can sometimes influence the mundane"⁴⁰ (see also Cannell 2006, Bialecki 2010, Keane 2007). The degree and manners in which the transcendent can at time influence the mundane, Robbins suggests, has to do with how the relationship between the two is understood or positioned, something which varies across Christian traditions and we might add, across other world religions that feature a sharp dichotomy between the transcendent and the immanent as well. For example, "one can find expressions of the Christian tradition where the transcendent is very different and far from the mundane, and others where it is more similar and close. Likewise, one can find many examples of Christians who assume the tension between the transcendent and the mundane can only be positively resolved in heaven, and those

in which believers are enjoined to do all they can to resolve it in the mundane realm by realizing heaven on earth” (Robbins 2012:10).

Jon Bialecki’s (2009) ethnography of the Vineyard, a third-wave charismatic Church in southern California, provides us with a concrete example of the manners in which this relationship between the transcendent and the mundane can impact attitudes towards change. While Bialecki’s politically left leaning interlocutors talk much about issues of social justice, they find themselves helpless to actually act to bring about those social changes they wish to see. The reason for this helplessness, Bialecki shows, is grounded in his interlocutors’ notion of change as divinely grounded, meaning that change must originate in God and be mediated on through the operation of the Holy Spirit. For these Evangelicals, then, the direct initiation of change by humans themselves would render the locus of change as non-divine in origin, something which would be highly problematic. This orientation to change, we glean from Bialecki’s ethnography, lies at least partially in the fact that the transcendent realm for his interlocutors is too distant from the mundane, with little mediation between the two vis-a-vis the Holy Spirit.

In the case of Emmanuel, as we have seen, the locus of change is divine in origin, but the transcendent is powerfully mediated through the material. God was made flesh, and Catholics are called to embody in themselves that divinity through the imitation of the person of Christ. But this action in itself is a remarkably still and motionless one. At the same time as the presence of the divine in the material is a call for action, it sets action in very static terms. In a sense, although ultimately Emmanuel

do value the “eternal life” after death more than this earthly life – meaning that the transcendent does keep its preferential hierarchical status for them – the fact that the divine is also strongly experienced as already present in the material makes the pull of the transcendent to reject the world less marked than in Protestant contexts, where sacramental logic is absent. The presence of the divine in the world, as something which is always already there, shapes the concept of change in similar terms, not as a pull outside of the world, but a reorientation within it.

CONCLUSIONS

In the midst of what can only be described as a remarkable resurgence of the religious worldwide, scholars across the human sciences are becoming increasingly concerned with assessing the place of religion in the public sphere. This includes challenging the boundaries of the public sphere as an exclusively secular domain (see Mendieta and VanAntwerpen 2011). In seeking to articulate religion's place in public life, the assumed neutrality of secularism as a political ethic, or the notion that secularism is simply the lack of religion rather than as a formation in its own right, has also come under scrutiny, laying the grounds for a reconsideration of the relationship between the religious and the secular as well as the place of religion in the public sphere (see Calhoun et al 2011, Gorski et al 2012).

One of the more surprising moves in that direction was made by Jürgen Habermas, who until recently, maintained that religious discourse had no place in public life (for example, Habermas 1984, 1987). Faced with what he considers to be the apparent derailment of the Enlightenment project, however, Habermas now looks to religion in his search for alternative ethical and political resources, in the hope that these could reorient an ailing, "contrite modernity" (Habermas 2008, see also Ratzinger and Habermas 2005). This emancipatory potential of religion to reorient social values, he suggests, could be realized through, for example, "the translation of the likeness of the human to the image of the divine into the equal and absolutely respected dignity of all human beings" (Nemuianu 2006:27). Criticizing what he now

deems to be an Enlightenment fundamentalist position, Habermas suggests a change of consciousness is called for insofar as religion is concerned, rooted in the appreciation of the valid, and even necessary, contribution religious discourse can make to public life. This move is rooted in the realization that the derailment of the Enlightenment project, which by definition excluded religious voices from the public sphere, now calls for a rethinking of this project in a manner that would be inclusive of religious voices, marking a transition into what Habermas calls the “postsecular society”. What this also effectively suggests is that religious perspectives and groups be considered legitimate participants in the public debate over such issues as abortion, immigration, or climate change. Certainly, the rapid growth of the faith-based sector within the humanitarian aid industry and the manners in which this increased involvement is reworking the boundaries of the humanitarian field is one such development reminding us that such considerations are timely and necessary.

The obvious question to ask at the closing of this work, then, is what place would anthropology or anthropological knowledge have, if at all, in such debates. The anthropological position is an interesting one. On the one hand, it is a privileged position insofar as anthropologists are uniquely positioned to produce comparative knowledge about how societal processes actually take shape on the ground rather than in the philosopher’s head. On the other hand, it is a limited position inasmuch as this also makes anthropologists, unlike perhaps fellow philosophers or political scientists, ill equipped to make substantial judgments about the supposed truth value of any particular position over another. However, at the same time, we might say that the

anthropological project writ-large is based, if not explicitly then implicitly, on the notion that the quest for truths which are not our own is a worthwhile venture. It is precisely because of that position, perhaps, that anthropology is also ill equipped to make any final proclamations about what constitutes or should constitute the good society or the good life, a concern guiding Habermas's vision of the emancipatory potential of the postsecular. It is in consideration of this somewhat ambivalent position, then, that I am writing these concluding remarks.

Christian models of change, specifically those underscoring the sudden, rupture-like change originating in the intervention of the transcendent in the mundane, have been receiving some surprising attention from post-Marxist philosophers such as Alain Badiou (2003) and Slavoj Žižek (1999, 2003). The appeal in this Christian model of change for these philosophers (often exemplified in the figure of Saint Paul) is that it "provides a model of the nature of radical change that arrives not as the result of now discredited theories of the teleological march of progress, but rather as an event that appears unexpectedly" (Robbins 2012: 13). I would suggest that orientations to change as these emerge in Emmanuel can serve to further our understand of non-linear or teleological models of change. And so I close by asking what we could take from this work to advance our understanding of processes of change and transformation, both of society and of the self.

As we have already established, it would be misleading to claim that what we are observing in Emmanuel is an effacing or denial of change, a simple emphasis on continuity. Furthermore, what becomes evident is that the same principle of rupture we

observe in other Christian contexts applies, to a degree, to the Catholic case as well. Namely, that the locus of change remains in the transcendental realm, in the divine, and that change has the same disruptive effect on the person, in the sense that its origin is wholly external to the self. However, since for Emmanuel the divine is also immanent in the mundane, the locus of change is also simultaneously anchored in real social relations. In this way, moments of rupture, rather than disembedding one from the social, are reconfigured to reorient persons to the network of relations they inhabit in a way that is eventually geared towards the flourishing of sociality.

This model of change, just like the revolutionary rupture model, is not one of linear teleological progress, but unlike the Protestant-inspired model of change as rupture, Emmanuel orientations to change are anchored not in a severing, but in a joining, in a reorientation that is made possible through a shifting of one's relation with the divine from the personal to the social, from the vertical to the horizontal. It is an orientation to change, in other words, which is anchored in a principle of love. I speak here not of love in its sentimental sense, but of love in its broader, social and ethical sense, love as the act of constituting a community. Where the term love is more adequate here than that of solidarity, relationality, or sociality is, however, in the fact that love, even in its non-sentimentality, is always a matter of passion, and so always that in which we may lose ourselves. And so, love as a model of change is at once revolutionary and intimate, that which, as it joins and binds us to each other, also opens up the startling possibilities for the new.

This, of course, is easier said than done. "Writing about love is easy," one of

my friends once amusedly commented to me early on during my fieldwork. “It’s living it that’s hard.” That this was certainly the case for members and volunteers of Emmanuel was evident, as we have seen throughout this text, in their difficulties to relate to the potential recipients of their aid as genuine others. Love was impeded not by distance or difference per se, but by the refusal or failure to acknowledge it, and it is here, perhaps, that Emmanuel’s project of love reveals its greatest potential weakness as a truly revolutionary force. For in spite of its philosophical anchoring in a longing for an encounter with alterity, its actualization often becomes an aspiration for sameness.

That this was often the case for my interlocutors struck me most forcefully, however, not in observing them in the context of aid, but as I accompanied them as they battled the legalization of same-sex marriage in France. The nation-wide mobilization against the legalization of the law which was taking full force during the year I spent as an NGO volunteer with the Rocher was directed to a large degree by the Emmanuel community. What was striking for many about these events, which lasted well over a year and rallied record numbers of protesters throughout the country, was that the demonstrations were not protesting a loss of rights, but campaigning for the denial of certain rights to a particular group of people.

What was noteworthy for me, as I was leading heated debates on the issue with my friends, was the ways in which the concept of alterity or otherness was implemented by them when marshaling their arguments that same-sex couples must not be allowed to marry, adopt children, or be entitled to assisted reproduction. The

idea of alterity was used by opponents of the law to argue against a politics of rights that emphasized the need to establish total equality of rights between heterosexual and homosexual citizens. The objection to this rested on the argument that insisting on total equality effaces and denies critical differences between gay and straight persons that cannot and should not be ignored, differences which gay persons themselves must embrace, and which would mandate a different treatment under the law. A second, more philosophically and theologically-informed argument suggested that homosexuality, due to its orientation towards the same rather than the other (otherness here defined only in reference to biological sex), is a closure to alterity that cannot be fecund, threatens the psychological wellbeing of children, and ultimately the very integrity of the social fabric – and as such, the legitimacy of homosexual unions as marriage (read: equal and the same as the heterosexual marriage) should be denied by the state.

What struck me most about this discourse, was that for all their commitment to the transformative potential of an encounter with alterity, it was extremely difficult, if not impossible, for my interlocutors to be open to the particular otherness of homosexuality. This difficulty showed itself most clearly when their ethical commitment to love clashed with what many fully realized were acts that caused considerable pain to others, such as their campaign against the legalization of gay marriage. In attempting to reconcile this tension, however, my interlocutors most commonly resorted to an effacement of homosexuality as a legitimate form of alterity. As one woman once told me when I challenged her claim that “Christians love

homosexuals, but hate homosexuality”: “You’re right. We don’t love homosexuals. We can’t love homosexuals, because they don’t exist. There is no such a thing as a homosexual. There are Henri, and Guillaume, and Marc, but there are no homosexuals. And it’s them, Henri and Guillaume and Marc, that we love.” By effacing the alterity of homosexuality as an identity and reducing it to a behavior that can be detached from the individual, my interlocutors were supposedly able to “love the person, hate the sin”; but while dissolving the true Otherness of homosexuality and stressing the sameness of a shared humanity may have allowed them to reconcile a troubled conscience, it also stripped their project of love from its deeper revolutionary promise.

I have gone on this somewhat of a tangent here, however, not to condemn my interlocutors as homophobic, to admonish them for their ultimate failure of living up to their own values, or to discredit the notion of a postsecular society tout court, but rather to shed some light on some of the greater challenges that stand in the way of the realization of such an ambitious project as love, at least insofar as it remains loyal to the formation of unity across difference, rather than across identity. It is perhaps a reminder that love is not that thing which leaps from breast, not the noble sentiment we feel as we rally for the aid of the other, that perhaps if our capacity for love is a muscle we must flex and train, then its flexing and training can only be achieved in our willingness to also lose ourselves.

It is in this sense that self-transformation was shown throughout this text to originate in moments of disruption to one’s sense of self-coherence. Going against the grain of much of the anthropology of the self and self-transformation that views

disruptions to self-experience as a cause or source of suffering, what the ethnographic case I have presented here underscores is the fruitful transformative potential that such breaks or disruptions to one's self-coherence can have. It is in moments in which the divine enters, disrupts, surprises the self in its presence that the seeds for eventual reorientation of the self are found, in one's attempt to relinquish one's will to that of the divine, to decenter or displace the self's perspective, that the wheels of transformation are set into motion. These disruptions to self, however and importantly, are not exclusively or primarily about one's relation to the divine, about one's personal salvation. They are just as importantly about reorienting one to social others in a manner that affirms relations.

That the reorientation to the divine – to that which disrupts the self – in the case of Emmanuel, ultimately affirms human relations, becomes an expression of Agape is anchored in the particular manners in which the divine, or transcendent, is experienced and conceived of as inhabiting the mundane, as immanent in human life. The stress in Emmanuel on the carnality of God, the mystery of the Incarnation as the intimate introduction of the divine into human life, results in or is the expression of the sacralization or reenchantment of the world. Christianity's orientation to the transcendent, to that which exceeds or is beyond life is often noted as a condemning feature of Christianity, insofar as it is oriented away from the world, does not love the world for what it is. In this sense, the orientation to the transcendent is a negation of the world, a turning away from (earthly) life, and from the idea of the flourishing of this life as an ultimate good, an end in itself.

However, as we have seen, is it also the orientation to the transcendent - to that which exceeds life - as an incarnate presence in the world, which takes us back to the flourishing of life, in the very real sense that it orients back to the world and to real social relations. It is evident, as we have seen, for example, in Gilles' ability to decenter his self in relation to the divine, and as such, to position his actions within the broader temporal context of divine action, that sustains his mission throughout repeated failure, but which also allows him to appreciate very small transformative gestures. The smallness of the transformation, of course, is a relative thing. Who is to say that for a child to feel loved by a certain person at a certain place at a certain time is a small or insignificant thing? Perhaps it is, but there is still something to be said for setting one's redemptive goals (whether this redemption is cast in spiritual or social terms) low. Compassion fatigue certainly makes this case for us, as a love turned to cruelty in the face of failure. When failure is a personal thing, after all, so is our reaction to it. And so the celebration of smallness in Emmanuel, of the action which is a "sign", a sign for something which exceeds, which surpasses the self, has something to it after all, more than just a placid nonrevolutionary stance, or one which refuses to take responsibility for "real" action.

Perhaps the building of the civilization of love is a project that cannot transcend the boundaries of the immediate intersubjective, perhaps it can only realize itself through small gestures and small realizations, and perhaps as a Christian or Catholic project, it fails to the degree that it remains foreclosed to certain forms of plurality, such as the case of homosexuality shows us. I would suggest that as a model

of change that is anchored in a disruption and at times decentering of the self in relation to an incarnate transcendence, to that which exceeds life but partakes of life, it allows, however, for a particular orientation to the world, to life, to transformation, that has something worthwhile in it. Whether, however, as Habermas would have us do, some of the fruit of this living-with-transcendence could be translated into a secular idiom, brought into a life lived in the immanent frame, remains to be seen.

NOTES

¹ In the Latin American case, at least, the Renewal provided a conservative alternative to the Marxist-inspired Liberation Theology.

² To date, the most systematic ethnographer of the movement is anthropologist Thomas Csordas, who has been following the Charismatic Renewal in the USA since the early 1970s.

³ This spiritual awakening was not limited to the Charismatic Renewal, as those years also saw the founding of such communities as l'Arche of Jean Vanier, the Neocatechumenate, Foyers de Charite, Focolari and the Sisters of Bethlehem.

⁴ Caffarel was the founder of the Equipes Notre-Dame (Teams of Our Lady), a “movement of married spirituality”, currently active in over 50 countries.

⁵ Xavier Le Pichon is a celebrated geophysicist who has made significant contributions to Plate Tectonics Theory. The fact that it was a scientist who was responsible for introducing the Renewal to France is stressed by the authors of *Fire and Hope*, with the aim of underscoring the commensurability between faith and scientific reason.

⁶ In reference to those defining years of the community, the authors of *Fire and Hope* stress the considerable diversity of the people who became involved in community life: “People came from everywhere, from all possible social and cultural backgrounds, Christians and non-Christians, Catholics and several from other denominations, people who had never fit in elsewhere. The participants shared a strong desire for conversion. All sorts of people came, including a former gangster and those on the margins of

society.” Members of the community still emphasize this diversity although it is, at least to my eyes, less evident today or at least among the more recent membership.

⁷ Marthe Robin (1902 - 1981) was a French Catholic mystic, recognized for heroic virtues by Pope Francis and declared venerable on November 2014. Bedridden from the age of 21 until her death, she had received over 100,000 visitors in her chamber, founded the *Foyers de Charité*, and was a great supporter of many of the new communities that sprouted in France during the 1970s.

Robin occupies an important place in Emmanuel’s history and identity. She is commonly credited by members of the community for having encouraged Pierre Goursat to head the community when he himself was doubting his calling: “You were put there, so stay. When you are no longer wanted, you will be told,” she was reported to say. She is also credited with having counseled Goursat, when he suggested to make Paray-le-Monial into the center of the Emmanuel community, to name the pilgrimage site not a center for the community, but its heart. Her often quoted statement on this, “dites le coeur,” is considered to have a revelatory and prophetic value, signifying and marking Paray not merely as a convenient gathering place for Emmanuel, but as the beating spiritual heart of the entire community.

The cause for Robin’s beatification was promoted by Father Bernard Peyrous, a historian, priest and prominent community member and author of the book *Decouvrir Marthe Robin*. For members of Emmanuel, the figure of Robin epitomizes a triumph of weakness (*triomphe de la faiblesse*), underscores the emancipatory potential of suffering and serves as proof that nothing is impossible with the grace of God. Bernard Peyrous names her “la sainte de la nouvelle evangelization,” since she evangelized as much as she did while in her bed.

⁸ Emmanuel was put in charge of the French participation in the gathering.

⁹ The prayer, printed on a small glossy paper and bearing the image of Goursat is often found in members' praise books. The text, available in several languages, reads as follows:

Prayer asking for the Beatification of the Servant of God Pierre Goursat

Lord Jesus, we pray for the beatification
of Pierre Goursat.

Inspired by a fervent desire for the salvation
of souls and a great love for the Church,
he worked with faith and hope for
the Church's spiritual and apostolic renewal.

Lord, through his intercession,
grant us the grace of trusting you fully,
serving you generously
and doing your will.

Give us a heart which is open
to evangelisation and overflowing
with compassion for all people.

Set us ablaze with fire and love for
the evangelisation of the world.

Lord, through the intercession
of the Servant of God Pierre Goursat,
we ask you with insistence
to grant many favours to all
of our brothers and sisters in humanity,
especially the poor and
those wounded by life.

Lord console the afflicted,
strengthen the weak, heal the sick !

In a particular way, we entrust to you

.....[name of person to be entered here]

Lord Jesus,
to those who are far from you
or who do not yet know you,
we ask you to reveal the infinite love
of your meek and gentle Heart.

¹⁰ This influence was quite direct and significant. In 1976, several of the community members and other members of the French Renewal visited a few American Charismatic communities including the Word of God Community and People of Praise, and incorporated, upon their return to France some of the more exuberant and affectively expressive styles of praise and worship they were exposed to in the US.

¹¹ A prevalent derogatory reference to charismatics in France is “those people who unscrew light bulbs”, referring to the raising of hands characteristic of Charismatic praise prayer, although this phrase has since been adopted by charismatics themselves and used jokingly to refer to their style of praying.

¹² Gaël Brustier (2014) also characterizes Emmanuel as a traditional-charismatic community, using the expression “tradisomatique”.

¹³ An earlier renewal of leftist and progressive Catholicism developed in France between the two world wars (see Moore 2013).

¹⁴ Only approximately 20% of practicing Catholics voted for Francois Hollande in 2012 (Brustier 2014: 114).

¹⁵ The call to become “the leaven in the dough of the world” was actually made by Pope Jean-Paul II in his address of the Cursillo movement, a Catholic lay movement

whose considerable emphasis on evangelization was taken up by the Charismatic Renewal and clearly matched in Emmanuel's ethos.

¹⁶ From the early days of the Renewal up to his death, Suenens served as supervisor of the CCR and liaison between the Renewal and the Vatican (see also Csordas 1997).

¹⁷ Or rather, what would a theory of the person would look like if it was read from Melanesia.

¹⁸ By nominalism Bialecki means "the ontological position that rejects the existence of abstract objects, of universal, or of both of them altogether", a claim that "only individuals exist" (302), and a stance usually opposed to realism.

¹⁹ Mead (1972 [1934]) centers much of his theory of self on the idea of 'taking the role of the other'. He argues that it is by taking the role of the other that communication between persons is made possible and that it is through the interaction with the Other that the Self is objectified, becomes known to itself. To clarify this he differentiates between two aspects of the Self: the *I* and the *me*. While human existence, claims Mead, is primarily habitual and non-reflexive, the formation of the *me* requires a reflexive move on the part of the self. The *me* becomes known to the self only retrospectively, and only as a result of an interaction with a generalized other. The *I*, on the other hand, is an aspect of the self that may only be known directly and not reflexively or in retrospect. The *I* can never be subject to reflection, for once we reflect on our behavior, the *I* is immediately transformed into the *me*. This means that in Mead's schema we never truly "know" the *I*. In this respect it is present in our lives only as a historical figure; it is what we were a second ago.

²⁰ Buber (1958) asserted that the world is primarily and inherently 'two fold', in the sense that human subjectivity is already, and always, oriented towards alterity. The Buberian Self or 'I' is never a constant, but a *relation*, defined by its position to an

Other. For Buber, at once an ethical and theological writer, the Other with whom the Self communes, takes one of two forms; It is either object-like, a thing to be used by the self, an 'It', or a complete subject, a 'Thou', with whom a true and total relationship is formed. It is clearly the 'I-Thou' relationship that Buber values as the only meaningful and true bond we can share with our fellow humans, a relationship he likens to one's relationship with God. Doing away with the isolated cogito altogether, Buber's ontology moves the locus of the Self into the 'interval' or the 'in between' of the 'I-Thou' relationship. The encounter between subjects, then, is not reduced to the consciousness of either one, but rather is an irreducible primordial structure in which each subject's thoughts and experiences are interwoven with the other's. This joining, according to Buber, is achieved, primarily but not exclusively, through language.

²¹ A paraphrase on the words of Jesus on the cross (Luc 23:34).

²² Matthieu 25:41-45, 'chaque fois que vous n'avez rien fait pour l'un de ces plus petits, vous n'avez rien fait pour moi non plus.'

²³ Community members do practice spiritual healing in the relative privacy of their community life. Their mistrust of healing here is in reference to the general public and the allure that the promise of a cure has in drawing people to the church but without what they consider to be a true commitment. The fact that on the day of prayer for the sick conducted in Paray once a year thousands of pilgrims arrive in buses and promptly leave on the very same day seems to support this stance.

²⁴ The anthropological literature on Christianity has had a long and fruitful engagement with questions of language use and language ideologies in Christian communities (see Bialecki & Hoenes del Pinal 2011, for a review of this).

²⁵ The idea that one's first personal encounter with the person of God is a milestone and decisive moment in one's spiritual progress, an indication that one's faith has

become more profound, “alive”, as opposed to mechanical or anchored merely in tradition, has spread now in France well beyond the cadre of the Charismatic or New Communities and I found that virtually every one of my non-Charismatic interlocutors also had a “conversion” narrative of sorts, recounting their first personal encounter with Jesus Christ as a turning point in their spiritual lives.

²⁶ An apostolic exhortation is a type of communication from the pope which encourages a community of people to undertake a particular activity but does not define Church doctrine. It is considered lower in formal authority than a papal encyclical, but higher than other ecclesiastical letters and addresses.

²⁷ The emergence of capitalism as the Church’s new economic enemy may seem surprising considering its long battle against communism and harsh suppression of liberation theology, but Francis’s critique is, in fact, congruent with recent trends in the Church insofar as its efforts concerning the implementation of its social doctrine is concerned.

Responding to interpretations of Francis’s words as endorsing liberation theology, Federico Lombardi, the Vatican spokesman, made sure to clarify that Francis was “always against the strains of liberation theology that had an ideological Marxist element.” Indeed, Francis’s relation to poverty is far more moralized and spiritualized when compared with liberation theology’s, which emphasizes the need for a strong social and political restructuring. On this, see the *Lumen Fidei* encyclical, co-authored with Benedict XVI, in which the Pope cites Francis of Assisi and Mother Teresa of Calcutta as models for work among the poor

"http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/francesco/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20130629_enciclica-lumen-fidei_en.html".

²⁸ An early attempt at this could be seen in Pope Pius XII’s 1942 speech, where he first invokes the then novel idea of universal human rights (see Moyn 2010). The church

those days was primarily committed to and concerned with the protection of Catholic lives, not those of all of humanity.

²⁹ Likewise, the call to “build the civilization of love” is invariably invoked by popes during World Youth Days alongside the call for an increase in evangelization. This was most recently done by Francis in his 2013 visit to World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, where he urged the young pilgrims to build the civilization of love through their “joyful witness and service”. World Youth Day was initiated by Pope John Paul II in 1985. For the first celebration of WYD in 1986, bishops all over the world were invited to schedule an annual youth event to be held every Palm Sunday in their dioceses. It is celebrated at the diocesan level annually, and at the international level every two to three years at different locations. The 1995 World Youth Day closing Mass in the Philippines set a world record for the Largest number of people gathered for a single religious event (with 5 million attendees)— a record surpassed when 6 million attended a Mass celebrated by Pope Francis in the Philippines 20 years later in 2015.

³⁰ The principle of subsidiarity was first formally introduced and developed in Pope Leo XIII’s encyclical *Rerum Novarum* as a supposed middle way between laissez-faire capitalism and communism. Subsidiarity emphasizes the importance of communities or institutions, like the family, the church, and other voluntary associations, as empowering individual action and a means of linking individuals to society.

³¹ Drafted to counter the Washington consensus, which made economic growth the main goal of development, the post-Washington consensus purports to move away from neoliberal market-centered approaches in favor of sustainable and democratic development. It incorporates “a more poverty-focused approach that protects and supports the poor and prioritizes social spending on education and health.” However, it has been argued that the post-Washington consensus is still anchored in a neo-liberal agenda, and that “the social safety net aspects of the new policies

are put in place as an add-on to deal with market failure” (WHO website).

³² Cor Unum is a pontifical council for Human and Christian Development, established by Pope Paul VI in 1971. The mission of the council, made clear by Paul VI in a speech given in 1972 was “the care of the Catholic Church for the needy, thereby encouraging human fellowship and making manifest the charity of Christ,” carried out through humanitarian relief, charity, and development. The council has 38 members.

³³ While Islam enjoys a greater degree of acceptance and institutional support in France than it does in other European countries (Giry 2006), and while French Muslims themselves emphasize their national French identity to a greater degree than do Muslims elsewhere (Pew 2006), the social climate in France retains “strong doses of hostility to an Islamic public presence” (Bowen 2004, 2009:440). Although much of the French ambivalence regarding Islam can be read in light of a cultural Christian heritage that views it as a threat, as well as painful memories of the colonization of North African countries and the Algerian war (MacMaster 1997, Stora 2004), negative attitudes toward Islam and its forms of public expression, such as the veil, also stem from France’s particular and institutionalized form of secularism, *laïcité* (Roy 2005).

³⁴ According to Chakrabarty (2001: 18) this is the difference between analytic social science and the hermeneutic tradition: “Analytic social science fundamentally attempts to ‘demystify’ ideology in order to produce a critique that looks toward a more just social order. . . The hermeneutic tradition, on the other hand, finds thought intimately tied to places and to particular forms of life. It is innately critical of the nihilism of that which is purely analytic.”

³⁵ The manners in which otherness in particular is implicated in the establishment of human sociality has been investigated perhaps most extensively by anthropologists of Melanesia and Amazonia.

³⁶ This is supported by ethnographic cases of European Christianity as well, where the question of an interaction between a local colonized (immanent) religion and a colonizing (transcendent) Christianity, is moot (see Mitchell and Mitchell 2008).

³⁷ This is not to say that the notion of continuity itself is not important in its own right. A whole theological debate about the “hermeneutics of continuity” following the changes the Church had undergone Vatican II. Catholic theologian Lieven Boeve suggested that the transcendent does not interfere in the mundane by means of rupturing it, but by means of “interrupting” its course, allowing for change to unfold within a general framework of continuity.

³⁸ I use the term “conversion narratives” throughout the chapter to refer to such experiences as the baptism in the Holy Spirit, or what some of my interlocutors simply referred to as “my first personal encounter with Jesus”, although the process for most did not involve a conversion from one religion to another. However, as my interlocutors themselves sometimes referred to these “born again” experiences as “conversion” and since these experiences were all a significant transformative event in their lives, as well as for the sake of narrative flow, I will continue using the term “conversion” as imprecise as it might be. See also chapter 2 for a discussion of this.

³⁹ Jean Vanier is the founder of l’Arche foundation, an international Catholic organization that works with handicapped people.

⁴⁰ Robbins’s reference to the transcendent, as is my reference to the immanent here, and for that matter anthropological debates of immanence and transcendence more broadly draw on the axial age hypothesis (Jaspers 1953). This hypothesis, developed most thoroughly by Eisenstadt (1982), suggests a series of ideal and institutional revolutions between the eighth and third centuries BCE established a sharp distinction between the transcendent and the mundane, separating the a divine and human realm both by character and value. Within this division, the transcendent is established as

both radically alien and hierarchically superior to the material, immanent world. The axial age hypothesis also has an evolutionary component and division between (developed) axial societies and (traditional) non-axial societies, which we needn't adopt in order to make the basic insight of the hypothesis, which is that "cultures that make a radical and ranked distinction between the transcendental and the mundane are different from those that do not so radically separate and differentially value these two realms"(2012: 10).

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