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Article:

The metropolis and evangelical life: coherence and fragmentation in the 'lost city of London'

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ABSTRACT *This article examines the interplay of different processes of cultural and subjective fragmentation experienced by conservative evangelical Anglicans, based on an ethnographic study of a congregation in central London. The author focuses on the evangelistic speaking practices of members of this church to explore how individuals negotiate contradictory norms of interaction as they move through different city spaces, and considers their response to tensions created by the demands of their workplace and their religious lives. Drawing on Georg Simmel's 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', the author argues that their faith provides a sense of coherence and unity that responds to experiences of cultural fragmentation characteristic of everyday life in the city, while simultaneously leading to a specific consciousness of moral fragmen- tation that is inherent to conservative evangelicalism.*

KEY WORDS evangelicalism; city; subjectivity; class; practice; Simmel; ethics

Introduction

James[1] is an investment analyst in his mid-30s, working in a large, multinational corporation in the City of London. Since starting work in the City after graduating, he set up a Christian prayer group in his office, which organises carol services for his firm. He described for me how he was aware, however, that while about 200 people

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[1] All names, including the name of the church, have been changed.

came to the carol services, there were 1500 people working in his office, and was 'wracking my brains for a way, if I couldn't get my colleagues to the gospel, how could I get the gospel to all my colleagues?' A few years before that, he told me, he'd written 'a little sort of tract', which took the six principles Warren Buffett uses before making any investment decision, and 'applied them to the claims of Jesus Christ, to see whether He was a good investment'. He got this published professionally and decided, in order to 'get the gospel to my col- leagues', to hand a copy of this and an invitation to a follow-up talk to every single person at his firm. About half his Christian group were supportive and helped him with this; 'the other half didn't want anything to do with it.' To prevent any accusation they were doing this in company time, they distributed these before 7.30 a.m. one morning. By 7.45 a.m., James had been summoned to the head of human resources, who, James told me, had said to him: '"What you have done [James]" – these were his exact words – "is no different from giving people an invitation to join a Nazi rally, or an invitation to join a jihad ..." He was absolutely furious, so I apologised for any sort of offence caused – it wasn't meant to cause offence.' The head of human resources told him to go round to all 1500 of his colleagues, take the pamphlet back and apologise in case it had caused anyone offence. James said 'it took me about thirteen minutes to realise that this was just the best possible thing that could have happened, because it took me three and a half hours to go round the whole firm, and this was a work- sponsored opportunity to have one-on-one follow-up time with every single individual in the firm.'

James' practice of evangelism in this corporate environment – meeting up with other Christians to pray about how to 'reach' the rest of the firm, planning Christmas carol services, and placing copies of a Christian pamphlet on colleagues' desks – helped shape his experience of the city as populated by 'the lost' who are in need of redemption and as a space that is hostile to Christians. When I asked why he thought the head of human resources had been so angry, James said: 'I don't know whether he felt threatened. What I do know is that Jesus promises that Christians will be opposed, and Christians will be persecuted and will be hated, so the response wasn't a surprise.' But James does not see his 'witness' to his colleagues only through distributing his tract and organising carol services: he described doing a good job for his firm as a further means through which he is a 'witness' for Jesus at work.

It is possible to discern differing logics of practice – appearing to pull in contradictory directions – running through James' evangelism: as a good evangelical,

he has internalised the desire to tell his colleagues about his faith and feels he should be a 'witness' for Christ in the workplace, but this is simultaneously bound up with a norm of reserve, which means he would not strike up conversations about his faith unprompted, and so is paradoxically grateful for the 'persecution' which allowed him to have conversations with colleagues about his faith which otherwise would not have happened.

In this article, I explore the interplay of different logics of interaction shaping the evangelistic speaking practices of members of a large conservative evangelical church in London (St John's) and consider how these function in their learning to understand themselves as 'aliens and strangers' in the city. This is part of a larger ethnographic study of the everyday religious lives of members of this church. Conservative evangelicalism has attracted increased public attention in Britain in recent years as a number of groups have become increasingly visible in arguing that Christians are being marginalised in British society as their lifestyles are threatened by universalising processes associated with modernisation. Seeking to move beyond simplistic stereotypes of evangelicals that arise from polarising media narratives, this study analyses the lived experience of their faith and how that shapes and is shaped by their urban dwelling.

I conducted fieldwork at St John's from February 2010 to August 2011. During this time, I attended two of the three Sunday services each week, as well as midweek meetings and other events. Discussions at Bible-study groups throughout the fieldwork, and in particular a 10-week course training members of the church in how to speak about their faith with non-Christians were important for my analysis here. I also conducted more formal open-ended interviews with 31 members of the church. In this article, my particular focus is on individuals' evangelistic speaking practices, since it is through their speaking – articulating commitment to beliefs that are felt as transgressing modern ideals – that evangelicals become labelled as 'intolerant', a cardinal sin in the 'tolerant' metropolis.[2] As James' desire to share his faith with his colleagues led to his actions being labelled 'offensive', having breached codes of workplace interaction, examining how conservative evangelicals speak – and don't speak – about their faith draws attention to their negotiation of differing norms as they

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[2] For examples of London being described in the British media as 'tolerant' and conservative evangelicals as 'intolerant', see recent articles in The Guardian (2012a) and BBC News (2012).

seek to become 'exiles' in the world, oriented towards a transcendent beyond the cultural and moral fragmentation they perceive within both the earthly city and themselves.

I begin by outlining the relevance of Georg Simmel's writing on cities for exploring these issues. I then outline how ideals for evangelistic speaking are articulated at St John's. I show how the church leaders aim to encourage a specific habitus through which individuals feel both compassion for and distinction from what David, the rector of St John's, describes as the 'lost' city of London, and develop the desire to speak 'publicly' about their faith in workplace and other urban spaces. I then outline how individuals engage with this ideal in practice. Here I focus especially on members of St John's who work in corporate finance and related sectors because the demands of their work seem to relate closely to the emphasis on calculability, punctuality and exactness bound up with the money economy that, following Simmel, characterises metropolitan life, and therefore show in clear relief conflicting norms of interaction associated with their faith and workplace. I argue that as their participation in St John's encourages them to seek 'wholeheartedness' in their lives, they become conscious of tensions in their logics of practice shaped through their simultaneous inhabiting of city spaces suffused with contradictory moral norms. I conclude by arguing that in this context, individuals learn to narrate their experience of subjective fragmentation according to biblical narratives of idolatry, sinfulness and guilt, enabling them to draw these fragments together into an overall pattern of coherence.

Fragmentation, dislocation and life in the metropolis
The idea that the experience of modernity is one of fragmentation has been widely articulated. W.B. Yeats, for example, evoked this sense in 'The Second Coming':

> Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world. (Yeats 1992: 184)

In the lines preceding this – 'Turning and turning in the widening gyre/The falcon cannot hear the falconer' – we get a sense of an 'inability to find the way home, to return to the lost point of coherence and order' (Featherstone 1995: 1). While contemporary cultural theorists display acute sensitivities to how conditions of globalisation intensify the ephemerality and fragmentation of cultural and social

forms, these themes have long been central to the analysis of urban modernity. Historian Carl Schorske, for example, describes high culture in *fin de siècle* Vienna as entering 'a whirl of infinite innovation, with each field proclaiming independence of the whole, each part in turn falling into parts. Into the ruthless centrifuge of change were drawn the very concepts by which cultural phenomena might be fixed in thought' (cited in Harvey 1989: 11).

Simmel's influential 1903 essay, 'The Metropolis and Mental Life' (1971), is centrally concerned with these fragmentary dynamics of modern life. The metropolis, for Simmel, represents a specifically modern way of life and he describes how within big cities, people are constantly confronted with a stream of impressions and sensations which have the potential to overwhelm them. Simmel describes how the city dweller forms defence mechanisms against this bombardment, developing a blasé attitude and disposition of reserve. Simmel argues that this process of increasingly abstracted calculation as a means of accommodating to urban sensory bombardment is also bound up with the money economy. In this economy, the world has been transformed into 'an arithmetical problem and ... every one of its part[s] [fixed] in a mathematical formula' (ibid: 327). The impersonality of money as a form affects social interactions, which become increasingly patterned through a dominance of quantitative values over qualitative, and instrumental, one-sided modes of engagement, with 'all float[ing] with the same specific gravity in the constantly moving stream of money' (ibid: 330). Dealing with the overwhelmingly numerous and complex everyday concerns and engagements of city life involves processes of calculation and rationalisation, so that all activities can be 'organized and coordinated in the most punctual way into a firmly fixed framework of time' (ibid: 328). This focus on precision, calculability and exactness has an effect on the city dweller's subjectivity at every level, leading to attitudes of detachment and a retreat into the self in public spaces, which Simmel characterises as the distinctive mental attitude of the city dweller.

This way of being together in the city implies a minimal ethic of tolerance in terms of not interfering with others, allowing those in close proximity to be strangers and patterning the 'mundane manoeuvres of everyday routine (not making eye contact on the sidewalk, ignoring the weird intimacy of the crowded subway)' (Tonkiss 2005: 11). This impersonality, dissociation and psychological separation Simmel identifies is however, as Fran Tonkiss argues, 'a basic form of urban sociation, one that allows

us to coexist with all these largely unknown others. Refusing interaction is not ... merely a matter of social withdrawal but is instead a primary condition for urban social life, securing individual calm together with relative social peace (ibid.). Yet this urban 'freedom'[3] is bound up with a more melancholy narrative associated with the urban retreat into the self that Simmel describes. As Elwyn Brooks White wrote: 'On any person who desires such queer prizes, the city will bestow the gift of loneliness and the gift of privacy' (cited in Tonkiss 2005: 8).

In addition to this flattening of sensation in the blasé attitude of the city dweller, Simmel sees urban plurality as having further subjective effects. As cities are crossed by physical and symbolic lines of separation, the city dweller, moving between different planes, is addressed as a different kind of subject. Robert Park describes how these processes of urban cultural segregation 'establish moral distances which make the city a mosaic of little worlds which touch but do not interpenetrate' (1925: 608). This, he argues, 'makes it possible for individuals to pass quickly and easily from one moral milieu to another, and encourages the fascinating but dangerous experiment of living at the same time in several different contiguous, but otherwise highly separated worlds' (ibid.). Simmel sees this over-optioned experience of life in the city as leading to subjective fragmentation, as the individual cannot assimilate the diverse cultural forms confronting them. In 'the buildings and in educational institutions, in the wonders and comforts of space-conquering technique, in the formations of social life and in the concrete institutions of the State', Simmel writes, 'is to be found such a tremendous richness of crystallizing, depersonalized cultural accomplishments that the personality can, so to speak, scarcely maintain itself in the face of it' (1971: 338). While all social interactions make a plurality of claims on individuals who simultaneously belong to different groups, and all human subjectivities are therefore formed at the intersection of cross-cutting expectations, Simmel sees this fragmentation as intensified in the metropolis.

The differing logics of practice shaping James' interactions can be understood as symptomatic of this urban fragmentation. However, as I will show, there is also a culturally specific form of fragmentation inherent to conservative evangelicalism that

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[3] This is not to suggest that urban indifference necessarily translates into more than the negative freedom of not being interfered with. Gill Valentine notes a 'worrying romanticization of urban encounter' in some strands of urban literature which 'reproduce a potentially naïve assumption that contact with "others" necessarily translates into respect for difference' (2008: 325).

Simmel's work on religion highlights. Although Simmel does not address religion in 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', elsewhere he describes the role of religion in providing a capacity to unify and frame the excessive fluidity and tensions implicit within modern life and calm the sense of internal subjective division these can create. In 'Religion and the Contradictions of Life' (1997), he argues that religious faith, through creating an orientation to a transcendent beyond cultural fragmentation and social division, brings 'peace to the opposing and incompatible forces at work within the soul, by resolving the contradictions they create' (36). However, while creating a sense of unity, religious practices create a specific form of cultural fragmentation, introducing orientations that sit in tension with those developed through participation in other social structures. Thus the sense of unity created by religious faith is, for Simmel, both present and future: 'It resolves the contradictions it finds outside itself as well as those which arise constantly between itself and the totality of the rest of life' (43). Within conservative evangelicalism, we might see this orientation towards transcendence Simmel describes as focused in the personality of God. As individuals develop an understanding of God's character as coherent and unified, this leads them, I will argue, to become conscious of forms of moral fragmentation in their own lives, which they narrate in the language of sin and idolatry.[4]

Within the study of religion, the increasing cultural plurality that Simmel sees as leading to fragmentation has often played a central part within theories of secularisation. This is not, however, Simmel's story. His brilliantly sketched picture of metropolitan modernity opens onto wider questions about the possibilities and constraints of our being together with others, the nature of tolerance, public space, individuality, the psychosocial effects of money, and the forms of disconnection, sociality and freedom that cities necessitate and enable. This has the potential to contribute to analysis of evangelicalism through opening up how urban norms of indifference and rationalisation interrelate with desires for evangelism and the ambition to proclaim the gospel to all people everywhere, a logic also shaped by the urban beginnings of the church in the ancient cities of the Mediterranean. Let us turn to examine this evangelical desire to speak, focusing on how this is articulated as an

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[4] There is not scope here to explore the range of Simmel's writings on religion, and I do not wish to claim that his analysis necessarily holds for all forms of religiosity. See Strhan (2012) for a more extended discussion of Simmel's work on religion, specifically addressing how his writing on the personality of God is helpful for opening up intersubjective dimensions of evangelical experience.

ideal at St John's and how this is bound up with evangelicals' understanding of their distinctiveness from those around them in the city.

Speaking subjects: 'public and unpopular'

A sense of separation between 'church' and the 'city', understood as a space of moral disorder, resonates throughout the history of conservative Protestant churches, exemplified in the Congregationalist John Blackburn's words to a Mechanics' Institute class in London in 1827:

> The metropolis of a great empire must necessarily be, in the present state of human society, the focus of vice. Such was Ninevah, such was Babylon, such was Rome – SUCH IS LONDON. Here, therefore, is to be found in every district, the theatre, the masquerade, the gaming-table, the brothel. Here are to be purchased, in every street, books that ... tend to weaken all moral restraints, and to hurry the excited but unhappy youth who is charmed by them into the snares of pollution, dishonesty, and ruin. (Cited in Brown 2009: 19)

This sense of a separation between the city and the people of God is expressed in biblical narratives, beginning in Genesis with Cain's building of the first city after killing Abel and the dream of building the city and tower of Babel into the heavens. Yet at the same time, hopes for the city as a space of righteous order are symbolised in biblical promises of a future City of God. The earliest beginnings of Christianity took place in the ancient cities of the Mediterranean, with Acts telling the story of the birth of the church beginning in Jerusalem with the ascent of Christ, moving to its conclusion in Rome, the urban centre of power and empire, with St Paul 'proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ' (Acts 28: 31). Paul's particular emphasis in his letters on the universality of the Christ-event as addressed to all was, Alan Badiou suggests, affected by his encounter with cultural plurality as he travelled around the cities of the Mediterranean:

> Recall that Paul was born into a well-off family in Tarsus, that he is a man of the city rather than a man of the country ... His style owes nothing to those rural images and metaphors that, on the contrary, abound in the parables of Christ. If his vision of things fervently embraces the dimension of the world and extends

to the extreme limits of the empire ..., it is because urban cosmopolitanism and lengthy voyages have shaped its amplitude. Paul's universalism comprises an internal geography, which is not that of a perennial little landowner. (Badiou 2003: 21)

Thus while cities within the lives and imaginations of Christians have been crossed by boundaries of separation, both moral and physical, their urban imaginings have also been shot through with a desire to speak across social and cultural divides 'to proclaim the kingdom of God' to all, potently symbolised in Paul preaching the gospel in public city spaces of the Roman Empire.

This complex weave of desires, dreams, hopes and fears about cities runs through the lives of conservative evangelicals today as they draw on these biblical narratives in shaping their identities and ideals for practice, with a sense of the believer's duty to seek to convert the 'lost' in the city around them. An article on the 'Reaching the Unreached' website, part of a network of evangelicals 'working to make Jesus famous in the tough areas of the UK', for example, articulates this: 'Most Christians think of the city as a hard place or a dark place. But the opposite is true ... Always, always, the more urban a place is, the more troubled and the more plural – the more people have responded to the message of Jesus ... [T]he Christian community is a city within the city. We are an outpost, a glimpse, a foretaste of God's new city ... Christians belong to God's city so we don't quite fit in – we're like temporary residents. Yet at the same time we are to do good to the city in which we live' (Chester 2010a, emphasis in original).

In the 19th and 20th centuries, the quest for souls in evangelistic and missionary movements drove British evangelicals out to distant mission fields and encouraged them to take their faith out to people through house-to-house visitations and other forms of missionary work in inner-city areas increasingly populated by 'the non- churchgoing masses' (Bebbington 1989: 6, 118; Brown: 46). The nature of mission has however become an area of disagreement within contemporary British evangelicalism. Within the history of the evangelical movement, forms of missionary engagement with non-Christians have often extended beyond preaching the gospel to modes of philanthropy and activism on issues of social justice and humanitarianism (Bebbington 1989: 12). Although some conservative evangelicals may be involved in such activism today, there is a particular emphasis placed within contemporary British

conservative evangelicalism on an understanding of mission in terms of verbal evangelism, in contrast with contemporary charismatic evangelical emphasis on both the 're-evangelisation of the nations and the trans- formation of society'.[5]

Listening to sermons articulating this emphasis is a central means by which the conservative evangelical subject internalises this understanding of the privileged role of speaking to non-Christians in the practice of faith, shaping their sense of the city as in need of redemption. This was expressed in many sermons at St John's, for example, a sermon focusing on a chapter from Luke's Gospel, in which David stated that 'Christian mission is only Christian mission if it has to it verbal content.' He differentiated this from approaches other Christian groups might take: 'It's a wonderful, godly thing to care for your neighbour, to love others. But it is not Christian mission unless the gospel is being proclaimed verbally.' However, practising this is not felt as an easy task in a British context in which, in many public arenas, the open expression of religion has become, as Linda Woodhead argues, 'highly contentious. "God" becomes the great taboo – far more than sex or violence' (2012: 25). In this context, struggles in speaking of faith are interpreted as part of a cosmic spiritual warfare in which, David stated, the world is divided between Good and Evil. David described the 'verbal proclamation of the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross' as 'warfare, in which we announce verbally the victory of Jesus as we declare the defeat of Satan ... No wonder it's so hard.' He asked the congregation: 'What is your personal plan of action where God has placed you? Maybe you're in your office or your school: you're there as a warrior, a member of God's army, and the war God wants us to be involved in ... is the proclamation of making the truth of Jesus known.'

In another sermon, George, one of the curates at St John's, emphasised this understanding of evangelistic speaking as a means through which God works: 'Those words we have,...through those words, the Spirit convicts the world, shows people that they utterly need Him.' He described how for most of the week, members of the church would be surrounded by non-Christians – 'maybe you'll get on the bus, driven

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[5] This quote is from the website of the charismatic evangelical church Holy Trinity, Brompton, http:// www.htb.org.uk/about-htb (Accessed 8 June 2012). This is not to say that members of St John's do not also talk about the need for a transformation in society, but their understanding of how this will be effected centres on the need for individuals' redemption, with this privileged in the church's teaching above the need for activism based on the principle of transforming society as an end in itself.

by someone who's not a Christian, maybe the bus will take you up to your hall of residence, and you're going past the porter, who's not a Christian, up the lift to your floor, populated by people who mostly aren't Christians.' George said that these people 'need the words of Jesus': 'These are the words that will convict the security guard, the bus driver, the tube passenger, your next-door neighbour, your parents, that they have a desperate need of Jesus,' and concluded with a prayer, as the congregation bowed their heads:

> We pray, Father, for us as your people, with your words in our hands, that we would speak these words to ... neighbours, security guards, bus drivers, people on our course, people in our office, family. We pray that we would speak these words to them, that the Holy Spirit would be at work, that they would be convicted, that they would come to Jesus.

Through listening to sermons such as these, members of the church are invited to recognise themselves as tasked to proclaim the gospel in the city spaces they inhabit outside the church. Each is thereby encouraged to experience their mundane movements through London as affording multiple opportunities to engage in such acts of speaking, interpreting any difficulties through this narrative of warfare.

This privileging of verbal mission is bound up with a stress on the importance of speaking 'publicly' about faith.[6] In another sermon, David said that Christian fellowship should be 'energetic and corporate, public and unpopular, and selfless and sacrificial'. He stated:

> We contend publicly for the objective truth of the gospel that God has done in and through Jesus, hence the unpopularity of this...Wherever the gospel is proclaimed publicly by gospel partners, we find them engaged in conflict, as in

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[6] This desire for the public articulation of faith is also articulated more widely by socially conservative Christian groups campaigning in Britain for the 'public' articulation of faith, for example, the 'Not Ashamed' campaign by the pressure group Christian Concern. See, for example, http://www. notashamed.org.uk/index.php (Accessed 13 January 2012). To a certain extent, this can be interpreted according to Casanova's (1994) thesis of the deprivatisation of religion, as part of a traditionalist response to processes of universalisation.

> Acts ... As this country careers away from its Christian heritage, we will increasingly be considered immoral, bigoted, out-of-date.

This idea that Christianity will be considered 'bigoted' and 'out-of-date' suggests an understanding of time shaped through specific conservative evangelical moral teachings being experienced as in particular tension with universalising modern norms of equality. As conservative evangelical teachings on gender, sexuality and other faiths in tension with universalising norms come to represent particular cultural flashpoints of tension – intensified in the pluralist metropolis – conservative evangelical leaders' public responses to these issues locate their movement as increasingly countercultural, with religious freedom seen as increasingly under threat.[7] In this context, members of St John's come to understand those outside the church objectifying them as increasingly 'intolerant' and 'out-of-date', as Britain becomes progressively de-Christianised.

This sense of a periodisation of time, moving from a Christian past to a secular, liberal modernity increasingly inhospitable to public expressions of faith in tension with norms of equality, was clearly articulated in a question-and-answer session following a sermon one Sunday. David said that the 'social and political tectonic plates of Britain are shifting radically, as we move from once-Christian – at least nominally – through to post-Christian Britain'. He then asked the congregation:

> given that the tectonic plates are beginning to shift, well, are you not finding that to speak openly of your faith, to make mention publicly of your views of sexuality, or gender, or other faiths, the absolute supremacy of Christ and the impossibility of salvation through any other religion ..., are you not finding that as you say these kind of things, you're facing increasing hostility?

In another sermon emphasising the importance of speaking Jesus's words to others, George said, 'if you insist on sticking with the Bible, the kinds of words that people might use about you are things like "dogmatic", "black and white", "judgmental", "narrow-minded"', and added that 'the only kind of Christian that is authentic' is one who is 'hated' for speaking the words of Jesus. Here we see then how in sermons, the

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[7] See, for example, Christian Institute (2009) and comments by the former Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, cited in the Daily Mail (2012).

church leaders articulate an ideal for practice in terms not only of evangelistic speaking, but of speaking 'publicly' in what is felt as an oppressively secularist context. But other than through listening to sermons such as these articulating a sense of the importance of – and difficulty in – speaking to non-Christians about faith, by what other means does the church seek to create a habitus in which the evangelical's speaking is understood as the medium through which Jesus's words reach others in the city? And how does this affect the interactions of members of the church as they move through the metropolis?

Members of St John's learn to experience the city as peopled by non-Christians on whom they should show compassion and speak to them of their faith through various means. One method is encouraging identification with the emotional responses of Jesus and other biblical characters. Ross, one of the curates, described to the congregation one evening how Jesus, in the feeding of the 5000, 'looked out over the crowd of people, and had compassion on them, because they were lost, like sheep without a shepherd'. He said, 'That's how I feel when I look at London, at the crowds of people here,' and asked, 'Do you feel like that when you think about London?' The physical structures of the city are also described in ways that connect them with individuals' past experiences of evangelism. As many members of St John's identify their student years as the period when they became Christians, the university occupies a privileged place in their imaginations as a field for evangelism, and the city is described through the spatial image of a collegiate university. Matthew, a former lawyer, now in charge of city ministry at St John's, said he told members of the church working in city ministry: 'The way to reach the city is like reaching a collegiate university. You have your Christians dotted around in colleges. Well, here, it's just glass and chrome buildings, steel walls.'

The leadership of St John's also use the figure of the skyscraper to position the relation between church and city in the imaginations of the congregation. In perhaps his most famous and reproduced piece of writing, Michel de Certeau likens viewing the city of New York from the top of one of the towers of the World Trade Center to being lifted out of the city's grasp:

> When one goes up there, he leaves behind the mass that carries off and mixes up in itself any identity of authors and spectators. An Icarus flying above these waters, he can ignore the devices of Daedalus in mobile and endless labyrinths

far below. His elevation transfigures him into a voyeur...It transforms the bewitching world by which one was 'possessed' into a text that lies before one's eyes. It allows one to read it, to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god. (de Certeau 1984: 92)

While skyscrapers are not quite the same dominating feature of the London skyline that they are of some other global metropolises, the ways skyscrapers are used in the church's visual media illustrates how members of St John's are encouraged to 'read' London.

A promotional video for its ministry with city workers opens with a frame of what de Certeau would describe as the 'ordinary practitioners of the city', walking across London Bridge, their bodies following 'the thicks and thins of an urban text they "write" without being able to read it' (ibid: 93). The video then cuts to viewing these workers from above, their walking speeded up to show them rushing from place to place. The video closes with Matthew speaking as a voice-over as the screen cuts from the shot of people walking across London Bridge to a shot of him in a room high up a skyscraper, asking the viewer, in his softly spoken voice: 'Do we share the compassion that the Lord God has, that Jesus has for those around us? Are we that passionately concerned for people's eternal destiny? We're not in it alone. Jesus says, "And I am with you always, even to the end of the age."' Following de Certeau, this view from above might be read as constructing a position that allows Matthew speaking, and the viewer of the video – addressed as a Christian – to read the city as peopled by the 'lost', upon whom they are encouraged to feel a response of compassion and invite them to one of the midweek talks at St John's. This highlights a distinction between the calculating, rational mask of indifference Simmel describes the city dweller as donning, and the evangelical norm of an emotion of compassion and a desire to speak to non-Christians about their faith. How then do these different ethics of interaction interrelate in evangelicals' experience?

While the leaders of St John's address the congregation to encourage them to feel compassion for those outside the church, configuring London as peopled by the lost and themselves as fighting a spiritual battle as they speak to non-Christians of their faith, they are also aware that the majority find this hard. They therefore offer a course that aims to train individuals in techniques of evangelistic speaking. This runs over ten weeks, held at the church once a week, beginning with supper, and followed

by a half-hour talk and small group activities and discussions designed to help members of the congregation feel confident in speaking about their faith. The aim is to equip members with a 'framework' with which to explain the gospel, encouraging particular strategies such as asking questions to lead their interlocutor to interrogate their own values and beliefs.

Throughout these sessions, the minister giving the talks emphasised that it's the usual Christian experience to find it difficult and awkward to speak about faith with non-Christians. One explanation he gave for why many evangelicals put off speaking about their faith is because the other person's 'eternal destiny' might depend on the outcome of that discussion. Members of the group I observed talked about how they often felt embarrassed or awkward trying to talk about their faith with non-Christian friends, family and colleagues. This, together with the fact the leadership of St John's felt it necessary to devise a course specifically teaching people how to speak of their faith, appears to demonstrate that despite the leadership's aim to encourage members of the church to speak about their faith outside the church, many have internalised the sense that speaking publicly about their faith is a cultural taboo. Nevertheless, the dominant idiom individuals used to describe the kind of interaction they hoped to have with friends and colleagues – 'conversation' – demonstrates their desire to speak and their relational understanding of this.

These then are some of the ways the leaders of St John's seek to encourage a habitus oriented towards evangelistic speaking, bound up with a sense of the city as divided between Christians and non-Christians. But to what extent can we see the desire for the public speaking of faith articulated by the leadership of St John's played out in the everyday practices of members of St John's? *Is* London named in their actions as a space peopled by those on whom they must have compassion? And if so, how does this shape their interactions? *Do* their practices make Christianity 'public and unpopular' through transgressing normative modes of interaction in the spaces they inhabit outside the church?

To sketch differing ways individuals respond to the demand to speak about their faith in the city, I will outline the practices of two individuals: Clara and Simon, one an accountant, the other a lawyer, both working in large firms, both in their late 20s, both white, middle-class graduates from elite universities. Because of the long working hours and high demands of competence required by both their professions, the conflict between the ideal expectations of the church that they spend time

evangelising and the expectations of their workplace brings into relief different ways evangelicals experience the urban fragmentation Simmel describes. Both are typical of a certain type of English conservative evangelical who appear ostensibly similar in terms of socio-economic status and patterns of church involvement, with intense participation at university that has been maintained since starting work. By looking closely at how these two individuals engage in evangelistic practices in the city, and comparing these with experiences of other church members, we can identify different forms of social, cultural and subjective fragmentation and consider how these contribute to the desire for coherence Simmel describes religion as offering.

Clara: 'reaching the unreached'

Clara, in many ways, seems to embody the ideal understanding of the evangelical subject promoted at St John's. She organises a Christian group at her firm, leads a weekly Bible-study group at church, writes for a Christian magazine, is on the committee for both a local church plant from St John's and a Christian lawyers' association, and is involved in an evangelism project on local council estates. She generally goes to two Sunday services at St John's each week, in addition to a mid-week service at the church plant. In contrast with James, she experiences her firm as supportive of her faith. When I met her for lunch at her office canteen, she told me that her work Christian group are allowed to hold fortnightly meetings in one of the client rooms, put posters up around the office, advertise in the firm news- letter, and every six months to hold evangelistic events with outside speakers, often from St John's, for which the firm provides lunch. About 50 of her colleagues attended the most popular of these, on Dawkins and atheism. In addition to organising her workplace Christian group, she also leads an 'Introduction to Christianity' course aimed at non-Christians and meets up with a woman who has recently become a Christian to read the Bible together in her lunch hour. Clara said she is mostly 'pretty open' about her faith with colleagues. She added however that while she would tell the woman she shares an office with that she is off to a Bible study in her lunch hour, she wouldn't tell the partners on her team. She said that the members of her team are all aware that she's a Christian, but after six years working with them, she has 'not had the opportunity to share the gospel with them'.

Clara is also part of a group from St John's who are involved in attempting to evangelise to council estates near the church. If we compare this with her workplace

evangelism, we begin to see that her evangelistic practices at work are more reserved than at first they appear, suggesting that processes of the privatisation and de-privatisation of religion can take place unevenly within an individual's subjectivity, formed through the intersection of differing practices associated with particular urban spaces. The project evangelising to council estates was set up out of a concern about the exclusively middle-class culture of conservative evangelical Christianity in the UK, and is part of a broader national network, 'Reaching the Unreached', seeking to take the gospel to working-class urban-priority areas, council estates and areas of deprivation. The website of this network, quoting American evangelical pastor Tim Keller, states:

> Most evangelical churches are middle-class in their corporate culture. People value privacy, safety, homogeneity, sentimentality, space, order, and control. In contrast, the city is filled with ironic, edgy, diversity-loving people who have a much higher tolerance for ambiguity and disorder. If a church's ministers cannot function in an urban culture, but instead create a kind of non-urban 'missionary compound' within it, they will discover they cannot reach out, convert, or incorporate many people in their neighbourhoods. (Cited in Chester 2010b)

What this translates to in the experience of members of St John's who are involved in this work is an emphasis on hoping to convert the local urban poor through speaking to them about faith and reading the Bible with them. The main way Clara and other members of St John's are involved in this is spending Sunday afternoons going around local council estates in pairs knocking on doors and asking anyone who answers to do a questionnaire about their values, and then offering to read the Bible with them. This walking around the estates and knocking on doors provides an example of one way London comes to be named and felt in the experience of members of St John's as 'lost', inhabited by individuals on whom the church shows 'compassion' through trying to convert them.

The UN Report on global cities describes how urban areas are increasingly divided into distinct areas parallel with particular forms of work, each of which can be seen as a 'subcity'. The report identifies five subcities:

(1) the luxury city of those who make decisions about capital and development; (2) the gentrified city of professionals, managers, technicians, and college professors; (3) the suburban city of families of workers and managers in new manufacturing centers; (4) the tenement city of lower-paid workers and unskilled providers of service; and (5) the abandoned city of the very poor. (United Nations Report on global cities, cited in Gunnemann 2005: 106).

The city workers of St John's, such as James, Clara and Simon, belong to the second and first type of subcity, while those they are trying to engage with through their work on the estates belong largely to the fourth and fifth groups. Saskia Sassen (2001) has described how the 'glamour' of global cities like London is increasingly supported by large populations of blue-collar immigrant workers, and this has led to an increasing polarisation between high-income workers of the first and second groups, and low-wage, menial workers.

The awareness the 'Reaching the Unreached' project shows of the middle-class character of conservative evangelicalism suggests a desire by those involved with the work to disrupt the ways socio-economic divides fragment urban space. When some of the team involved in this project spoke about their work to the congregation one Sunday evening, the minister leading the team stated: 'It's sad but true that in the UK, evangelical Christianity is primarily a middle-class phenomenon.' He said that, 'if we could look with x-ray spectacles beyond the walls of the church, we would very quickly come to these estates, and see the proximity of these un-churched people who are facing God's wrath,' adding that the gospel 'must mean breaking down socio-economic barriers between people'.

It is however a minority of members of St John's who are practically involved in this work, and the ways some church members narrate these practices has the effect of objectifying those living on the council estates as 'other', demonstrating how deeply rooted socio-cultural divisions are within urban life. At one of the weekly Bible-study groups, the church invited a former church member now involved with 'Reaching the Unreached' in another church in a white working-class area of Essex to talk about his work. When asked what he would like prayer for, he requested that 'God would raise up more indigenous pastors ... For me, this ministry is cross-cultural, I'm a middle-class toff.' At another prayer meeting in which one focus was the estates work, members of the small group I observed, who weren't themselves involved in

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visits to the estates, discussed 'how scary it must be to go round the local estates'. Straight after praying that anyone who came to St John's from the council estates 'would be able to fit in', the two men I was sitting next to – both high-income professionals wearing pinstripe suits and pink shirts – started chatting about their recent skiing holidays and fine dining in Verbier, and the woman sitting next to them commented to them on the irony of this.

The evangelistic practices members of St John's use on local council estates stand in contrast with the evangelistic techniques they employ with middle-class non-Christians. These are typified by either the workplace methods of organising events used by Clara and James, or more commonly by inviting long-standing friends to church 'guest events'. Clara lives near the council estates she evangelises, in a smart modern apartment block with a security man on the door, but neither she nor other members of the church practise door-to-door evangelism in middle-class pockets of the city. While this is in many ways clearly because the door-to-door evangelism is seen as the only way to reach the urban poor, so separate are their existences that they would not have the opportunity otherwise to engage them; at the same time, the contrast in how they speak about their faith in these contexts illuminates the dynamics of different forms of urban fragmentation.

Their attitude of *comparative* reserve in speaking about their faith with middle- class non-Christian friends and colleagues, evidenced by feelings of anxiety and embarrassment, suggests that in spaces associated with middle-class privilege, it is harder for evangelicals to go public with their faith. Thus one of the main ways members of St John's 'speak' about their faith is not through verbally articulating the gospel themselves, as David advocates, but rather through inviting a friend or colleague to a 'guest event' at which a minister explains the gospel in a setting constructed for this purpose. Even this act of invitation can engender acute feelings of anxiety. When the leadership of the church encouraged its members to invite their friends to a forthcoming event by giving out cards asking what one question they would like to ask of God, they asked people who had given these cards out to talk about how this went to the rest of the church. Several individuals – while encouraging use of the cards – said that they felt embarrassed giving them out. Before another event, Stevie, one of the curates, said to the congregation that it can feel 'very nerve-wracking' inviting people to guest events and described a time he had 'broken out in a sweat' in front of his computer as he emailed a friend to invite him.

Such incidences of embarrassment demonstrate an internal fragmentation arising from the conflict between a norm of reserve inhibiting God-talk in the workplace and among friends and the countercultural demand addressed to members of the church to practise their faith in ways that are 'public and unpopular'. Jonathan, another young graduate, said he found it difficult in his open-plan office 'to talk about Christian things, because people can just come in half-way through a conversation, and then it would probably sound quite strange what we were talking about ... It's hard to have a chat about personal, spiritual things ... I find it quite difficult, but I love it whenever I get the chance to.' This indicates his internalisation of a secular cultural norm that faith is 'personal' and 'private', running in tension with the ideal of 'public' speaking encouraged at St John's.

As other members of the church expressed a sense of anxiety in talking about their faith at work, some described themselves as 'coming out' as Christians the first time they mentioned to colleagues that they go to church. Feeding into their anxiety is not only media representations of conservative evangelicals as increasingly reactionary, but also the circulation through various communication channels of stories about individuals like James who have got into trouble for their evangelism. A student I interviewed, Steph, for example, was formally reprimanded by her course director for inviting her supervisor to an evangelistic event. Her example was mentioned in a sermon, reinforcing a sense of secular places of work and study as inhospitable to the public expression of faith. Jane, a teacher, said, 'when you hear of cases like Steph's, you think that's not what you're meant to do, to tell the gospel to people,' though she qualified that, saying, 'I wonder if it's hard [to speak about faith] not because of the society we live in, it's just that...we make it hard for ourselves, 'cos we're rubbish, and lack the confidence.'

In contrast with this anxiety associated with speaking to middle-class colleagues and friends, no one involved in the work on the estates spoke of this work in these terms, despite the prayers of other members describing this work as 'scary'. Thus comparing these two forms of evangelism demonstrates how individuals' modes of evangelistic speaking are shaped by boundaries of social stratification and that the anonymity this creates for middle-class evangelicals in areas of urban deprivation means their evangelistic practice in these spaces is not marked by the awkwardness that inhibits their evangelism directed towards middle-class acquaintances. While those involved in the estates work seek to challenge and transcend boundaries of

urban division caused by wealth and social inequalities, in practice, they find these difficult to undo, and this social and cultural fragmentation shapes their modes of speaking.

Thus the desire to locate Christianity in public city spaces is both appropriated and contested in the single location of Clara's body, in her busy organisation of evangelistic events and door-to-door evangelism bound up with her comparative reserve about speaking to the colleagues with whom she works most closely about her faith in everyday conversation. Given Clara's commitment to the different forms of evangelistic practice she is involved with, it is perhaps not surprising that she says she is considering leaving the world of corporate law to devote herself to full-time paid Christian ministry. This can be seen as indicative of the tension between the demands of her faith and those of her workplace, and suggests her desire to overcome the pull of different logics of practice and enable a sense of greater overall coherence in her life.

Simon: 'London to me is not what it is to many people'
Like Clara, Simon has been attending St John's since starting work in the city, yet his attitude towards evangelism is less confident that hers, and in many ways more representative of the experience of the majority of the individuals I spoke with. He was wearing shirtsleeves when we met up at a café early one February evening, and after we finished chatting, he returned to his office, as he regularly works until 10 p.m. Simon is a quietly spoken young man, and he told me he doesn't find it at all easy to talk to either his colleagues or his family about his faith. He said it would feel 'unnatural' to talk about it, although he added he should try to think of his workplace more as a mission field. He said he would find it especially difficult to talk about the evangelical teachings on gender and sexuality that David described as provoking particular hostility in a secular context. When I asked him whether he thought his colleagues knew he was a Christian, he said that he thought a number of them did know, but added that he thought their impression of his faith was that it was 'a hobby ... a thing bolted onto my life ... it's just on Sundays'.

Because Simon finds it hard to engage in the sort of evangelistic activities Clara is involved in, he finds other non-verbal means of 'witnessing' to his colleagues and thereby negotiating alternative boundaries of distinctiveness from non-Christians. One area in which he, like other members of St John's, draws boundaries of

distinctiveness from non-Christian colleagues is in the area of drinking culture. Most balance this not by withdrawing from going out for a drink with colleagues, but by limiting themselves to two drinks. Simon said he doesn't think colleagues look down on him for this, however Matthew said other members of St John's had been made to feel uncomfortable by their bosses not only for making a couple of beers last an entire evening, but for refusing to take clients to lap- dancing clubs. He said that for all Christians working in the city, 'you've got to have your own red line', and know where those moral boundaries are drawn.

Performing this distinctiveness from the drinking culture of the city is one way evangelicals can position themselves as distinctive from the moral disorder they perceive around them if they feel awkward engaging in more 'public' forms of verbal evangelism. As cities have figured in biblical and other religious narratives as vice-riddled, so in sermons at St John's, London is frequently compared to the Corinth that St Paul was addressing, a hedonistic 'sin city' in which 'money and sex are the twin idols.' David described the church's urban location as 'within the precincts of the temple of Western idolatry: materialism'. Therefore by giving a significant percentage of their income to the church and by withdrawing from behaviours like getting drunk and sex before marriage, members of St John's are able to position themselves as 'aliens' within this reading of London as 'lost', and they narrate these practices as a means of 'witnessing' when they find it hard to speak of their faith.

Learning to read the city as peopled by 'the lost' for whom they are a 'witness', both verbally and through performing other boundaries of their distinctiveness, entails significant emotional demands as every interaction becomes loaded with possible ramifications for eternity, every moment including the passing of lost chances. In his sermon on verbal mission, David described London both as a space of battle and as a 'lost city' that affords strategic potential for expansion, and talked about how on a recent visit to Bloomsbury, he had been aware of how it was full of students from around the world. He said that St John's has 'incredible opportunities for the spread of the gospel all around the world: God has placed us here, at the centre of this global city,' and he prayed for 'this desperately lost city of London, that they would turn and put their trust in you'. Following Simmel, this mode of concern and compassion for the 'lost city' is in tension with the rationalised forms of interaction that dominate everyday modes of practice in the metropolis. This creates a specific form of subjective fragmentation between the type of emotional

response evangelicals learn to feel for non-Christians through the church and the more instrumentalised norms of interaction of their workplaces where, as Jonathan described, talking about 'personal, spiritual things' is felt as strange.

Despite – or because of – these tensions, the church becomes a space that offers a sense of coherence and unity through both a sense of relationship with God and the experience of friendships formed there. When I asked what difference their faith made to their experience of living in London, both Clara and Simon spoke of the importance of the friendships afforded by the church. Simon said he felt that the city has 'shrunk in many ways', that London is not to him 'what it is to many people, a large impersonal city', but is where St John's is based and where he therefore has many friends. This sense of London being 'changed' through the experience of belonging to the church was reiterated by almost everyone I spoke to, for example, Jenny, an insurance broker, who said that St John's made life in London 'bearable'. These friendships formed through the church are related to its physical location: because it is in a part of London mostly given to commercial buildings where few live (other than those on the council estates they are evangelising), the majority of the congregation live about half an hour's journey away. Thus weekly or twice-weekly meals together in Bible-study groups and after Sunday services form an important means of creating a sense of community, and the practice of sharing prayer requests at Bible-study groups means people are quickly drawn into each others' lives. The time that members of the church make for this might to a certain extent be seen as bound up with rationalised urban logics, as the church strategically seeks to 'build' these individuals in their faith so they can 'reach' more 'unreached'. Yet the details of these practices – eating together and engaging in rigorous exegesis of a small portion of text, listening attentively for half an hour in the middle of a busy working day to a sermon – are also a means of finding a space outside this, a means with which to frame the excess fluidity and fragmentation of urban life through locating what T.S. Eliot (1974) describes as 'the still small point of the turning world/ ... where past and future are gathered' (191).

Simon seems, more than Clara, to have internalised the cultural expectation that faith should not be spoken about publicly at work, and was critical of the privileging of 'verbal mission' at St John's, stating that there is a tendency at St John's 'to downplay social ramifications of the gospel'. While Clara's reading of her office as a mission field and desire to devote herself full-time to Christian ministry

shows one response to the urban cultural fragmentation Simmel describes, Simon deals with this slightly differently, finding spaces for reflection within his weekly routines through which he is able to orientate his attention towards the transcendent beyond experiences of urban fragmentation. In addition to his participation at St John's, he attends choral evensong in another church, sings in a choir, and regularly escapes the sensory bombardment of urban life with a Christian walking group. All of these can be seen as a means of providing a more coherent pattern to urban life, while simultaneously introducing a further form of fragmentation – which Simmel sees as specific to religious faith – between these practices that seek to develop an orientation towards transcendence and more calculative modes of interaction characterising urban life.

Discussion: striving for wholeheartedness

In an article on the St John's website, one of the church staff described how at university, she'd been the 'compartmentalising queen. I had a box for study, a box for CU, for church, a box for my social life, and the most important ... a box for sleep ... And very oh so very rarely did any of them meet.' An image of stacked card- board boxes accompanied the article, and the writer suggested that rather than compartmentalising, Christians should see the ultimate 'aim of our lives being to see God's name spread, wherever we are or whoever we are with, or whatever area of our carefully boxed out life it intrudes upon'. She concluded by suggesting that instead of experiencing life as a pile of boxes, it is 'instead one huge box, where the cardboard is Jesus'. This writer articulates the tendency in complex, differentiated societies – with London exemplifying this – to cope with the fragmentation of cultural spaces by compartmentalising and separating out religion from other areas of life, so that it feels 'unnatural' to transgress the instrumental norms of workplace interaction to talk about 'personal, spiritual things'.

The logic of impersonal urban sociality patterned on rationalising interactions that separate life into 'public' and 'private' spheres allows certain freedoms and a minimal 'ethic' of tolerance, not interfering into others 'private' lives. As Tonkiss argues, 'relations of indifference may be fragile, grudging, uneven, but they can also be seen as ethical in inscribing an attitude, however minimal, of the self in respect of others' (Tonkiss 2005: 9–10). Despite the discourse of Christians being persecuted that is articulated at St John's, members of the church also frequently express

gratitude to God that they are free to practice their faith in contrast with Christians in other global contexts for whom they pray. Formed as modern subjects who value the freedom this urban norm of privacy (mostly) allows, they feel uncomfortable articulating beliefs that appear to transgress impersonal and instrumental norms of 'public' interaction by expressing a sense that others' 'private' moral behaviour is wrong. This is most intensely felt in relation to issues where the teachings of the church rub up against broader norms of equality. Yet the teachings of their faith also ask them to feel compassion for those around them and to 'witness' to those they perceive as in need of Jesus's words, a logic pulling against this urban norm of indifference.

Members of St John's are conscious of these tensions, and their reflection on the extent to which their own speaking practices fall short of their understanding of what God wants of them leads them to work on themselves as ethical subjects, seeking to discipline their practices and their attitudes towards the different codes of behaviour they experience in different spaces. Foucault describes the process of subjectification as taking place through 'dividing practices': 'The subject is either divided in himself or divided from others' (Foucault 1982: 208). At St John's, the naming of the ideal evangelical subject, who speaks publicly about her faith in the city and expresses beliefs that go against universalising norms, functions as a boundary that divides evangelicals from others. It *also* divides the subject within herself, introducing a demand into her that she is conscious she does not meet, and therefore feeling, as Jane described, 'rubbish', and there being an inevitability in this. The experience of a tension between an ideal of practice – here the public proclamation of faith – and the sense of having fallen short of that is not new within conservative evangelicalism. Practices of listening to sermons, Bible reading and small group discussions name ideals for performance, while practices of confession – in church, small groups and private prayer – divide the individual, making her conscious of her having fallen short of these ideals and desiring to come closer to them in future.

The tension between the desire to speak about faith in city spaces outside the church and the consciousness of failing to do so is narrativised as an internal battle, through idioms of guilt, sin and idolatry. David, for example, said in a sermon on the letter to the Hebrews, that he had been talking to a group of Christian business people, 'and I said to them, "what is the most costly aspect of being an out-and-out Christian

to you at the moment in the office?" And they said, "oh the ridicule, my reputation is at stake, I might be known as a Bible-basher."' David stated that the author of Hebrews 'lines up shame and the social distance that might be placed between an individual and the people of God with sin and the moral battle that's going on right in the heart of every Christian believer, as the battle is raging morally, simultaneously as the battle is raging socially'. Shame can be seen, as Loïc Wacquant describes, as an emotion which 'arises when the dominated come to perceive themselves through the eyes of the dominant, that is, are made to experience their own ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving as degrading' (2004: 393). The fracture of subjectivity implied in shame is both determined by and expressed wider diminishing social cohesion (ibid.).

As members of the church learn to narrate the subjective fragmentation spot-lighted by the emotion of shame through idioms of sin and idolatry, biblical narratives enable them to make coherent sense of this tension and shape their orientation to their own practice. One young graduate I interviewed said, 'Jesus talks about, "whoever will be ashamed of me and my words, I will be ashamed of him,"' and stated that this showed that feeling ashamed of their faith is the inevitable experience of all Christians. The leadership of St John's are sensitive to and acknowledge these tensions, and articulate a sense of 'wholehearted' devotion to God as a way beyond this. David, for example, preached a sermon on this theme of 'wholeheartedness' in relation to a passage from 1 Chronicles:

That word, 'wholehearted,' means exactly what it says. It speaks of every part of me. The whole of me. You know, the psalmist ... speaks of, 'Lord, give me an undivided heart' ... 'Give me a whole heart', he could have put. And the idea is that, there's not little bit of my passion focused over here on my career, ... and then a little piece of me over here focused on God, or one piece of me focused over here on my favourite sport, and another piece focused on my x-box, and then another piece focused on-, you know, that would be a divided heart, wouldn't it? And it always results in a miserable life ... So it's not as if God was the focus of their [the Israelites'] energy at the Christian Union, or at camp in the summer, or midweek [Bible study group], and the rest of the time actually their heart was somewhere else. Rather, 'the people rejoiced because they'd

given willingly, for with a whole heart they had offered freely to the Lord, David the king also rejoiced greatly.' It's a great summary verse, isn't it?

David went on in the sermon to discuss the joy that would be found in serving God as related to His character, what he described as His unparalleled 'moral, eternal, philosophical, weightiness. Truth. Purity. Integrity. Justice. Love. Com- passion. Severity. Holiness. Why give God wholehearted service? Because He's worth it.' As Simmel theorises religion as providing a sense of unity through focusing attention on what transcends processes of cultural fragmentation, so we get a sense in David's words of how the personality of God that conservative evangelicals experience as pure integrity offers the promise of a source of coherence beyond cultural, social and subjective fragmentation. Yet their focus on God's character through their practices of Bible reading and listening to sermons leads them to become conscious of themselves as morally fragmented in contrast to their understanding of His unity and to desire greater coherence and wholeheartedness across all their practices in response.

Individuals' sense of relationship with God thus provides a means of responding to the experience of urban fragmentation, which in itself creates a particular form of fragmentation specific to their faith. While praying in small groups together, members of St John's can confess their embarrassment and awkwardness about speaking about faith to each other and to God. Through this, they experience a sense of emotional release that this shortcoming in their practice has been dealt with, binding them in their sense of relationship with God and each other and thereby reinforcing their sense of distinctiveness from those around them in the city whom they perceive as standing outside of that relationship. The spaces of these groups, together with practices of private devotional Bible reading and prayer, thus provide a means for members of the church to orient their attention to a transcendent beyond the rhythms and contradictions of metropolitan life, which then shapes their experience of urban life in the present.

The development and maintenance of dispositions such as attentive listening to sermons that are felt as out of step with contemporary culture is experienced as an on-going struggle within the context of the relentless busyness of the city, and introduces a further form of fragmentation as individuals seek to shape all their interactions according to the norm of wholeheartedness. Thus David prayed for the congregation:

> Thank you our loving Lord that you know everything about us. You know how busy we've made ourselves, you know the long lists of things we think we have to do, and we pray that it would become a joy to us to listen to the Lord Jesus day by day. Please put this discipline at the centre of our beings and as we listen, please enable us, we pray, by your Holy Spirit, to act on what you say.

In these words, it is possible to see the evangelical subject as conscious of his internal divisions, aware he is distracted and divided in his attention, and therefore labouring to come closer to the ideal of the attentive, undistracted listener.

This experience of self-division is the inevitable consequence of the fact that evangelicals, as they travel between different urban spaces, are 'in a constant movement across different practices that address them in different ways. Within these different practices, [they] are addressed as different sorts of human beings' (Rose 1996: 141). Thus seemingly contradictory norms of interaction are spun in uneven patterns in evangelicals' bodies, shaping their engagement with and formation by the city in complex ways, as their desire to speak is often inhibited and they must find alternative means of 'witnessing'. Through these practices, they draw lines of distinctiveness that separate them from non-Christians and connect them more closely with each other. London is therefore named and experienced in particular ways as individuals learn to read the city in different ways: as a 'desperately lost city' and site for busy evangelism; as a space where Christianity is marginalised; as a space of friendship; as a space of socio- economic divides; as a site for workplace productivity; as a site of missed encounters and opportunities. The specific sense of fragmentation created by the conflicting demands of faith and wider social life is, as Simmel describes, a never-ending process as the individual 'cannot constantly maintain the perfect oneness of life itself and that of life and religion itself' (1997: 43). Within this on-going process, seeking a sense of unity and coherence amidst the fragmentary nature of metropolitan life can, for those who are engaged in it, be the source of both struggle and comfort.

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