GETTING THE HOLY GHOST

Urban Ethnography in a Brooklyn Pentecostal Tongue-Speaking Church

PETER MARINA

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LEXINGTON BOOKS

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Introduction

The senior pastor's normally genteel presence suddenly turns explosive as his fist slams on the lectern, producing an alarming sound that echoes and reverberates throughout the church. Staring ferociously at the congregation, his intense gaze penetrates the eyes of each audience member and into the depths of their souls.

He screams again, "Can you stand to be blessed?" It is followed once more with a long pause and fiery stare.

No one even dares say the usual "Amen."

"I said, can you stand to be blessed?," he repeats, scrutinizing every move, every facial expression of his flock. "Do you know what that means?"

No one replies. Rather, they sit solemnly, guiltily. The congregation anxiously waits for the pause between questions to end while bracing for the next.

The pastor pounds his fist, again accompanied with a forceful voice that answers his own rhetorical question. "It means you must surrender," he says, and goes on to explain that this means surrendering to God[1] and the world He has fashioned for each "saved" believer in the church. In almost the same breath he defiantly proclaims what everyone already knows: "This is not religion. We don't do religion in here."

The congregation appears more at ease, demonstrated by the occasional "yes" and "that's right" emanating from the pew.

The pastor goes on: "You are not in a religion, but in a relationship." The flock voices its affirmation, more loudly now. This is something they know. This is something they agree upon. This is something that is at the very center of their beliefs.

They aren't in a religion, they would insist to anyone who asks. They are in a personal relationship—with God.

To a person, every church member will vehemently deny participating in a religious group. They reject religion, pointing to its institutional corruptions, blind following of old doctrines, dry conformity to dogma, vague and impersonal attachments to a bureaucratic order, and disingenuous belief toward an impersonal and indirect God. They refuse to accept that institutions have legitimacy, believing instead that only God holds authority. Relationships, on the other hand, are directly experienced, unique to each individual, highly personable, and unconstrained by any intervening authority. Relationships involve a personal commitment to another being and develop based on the interactions between the two parties involved. Though church members share a relationship with the same God, these relationships are not carbon copies of each other—each individual fashions a unique relationship to their God distinguishable from all other divine relationships.

The pastor moves from his lectern, approaching closer to the front of the congregation and into the middle aisles. He says, "You have a relationship with the most powerful force in the universe." He explains how this force conquers two highly related phenomena—both spiritual and earthly forces. This relationship, the pastor explains, conquers not only evil forces that exist in the spiritual world but also the manifestations of that world—hunger, poverty, joblessness, jealousy, suffering, disease, and all the ailments that plague human life. Modern science might reign in the more secular world outside and partially explain some cures to the problems of the human predicament. But here in this church, a cocktail of Old World miracles, modern rational thought, and postmodern religiosity combine to produce a view of reality in which enchantment continues to exist in the modern world to a level that would make any secularization theorist cringe.

Now the pastor, animated and jubilant, runs down the aisle and back up again. He jumps up, landing with microphone in hand, while screaming, "I got the power! I got the Holy Ghost power!"

He dances in the aisle and chants repeatedly, "I got the power, the Holy Ghost power!"

The congregation members jump to their feet—some remaining in the pews while others head toward the aisles—and dance, moving their bodies in emotional exalt.

Curious outsiders unfamiliar to the Pentecostal scene might wonder how residents of a Brooklyn ghetto and members of a small black church feel empowered, in fact so empowered that their emotions explode in gratitude of it. "It's all about relationship," they say, "You have to experience and feel it to know it."

The entire church congregation now melodically chants "I got the power, the Holy Ghost power." Those that remain in their pews now enter the aisles. In train-like fashion, the congregation walks up and down the front, back, and side aisles, repeating the chant. Though they repeat the same chant, each member celebrates this moment with their own unique physical gestures, from clapping to lifting palms in the air to dancing to jumping.

The collective chant continues but evolves as a cacophony of new sounds wells up. The chant is now accompanied with various swooping howls, wails, and shrills along with shouts of "Amen" and "Yes Lord" and "Praise Jesus." This continues, gradually escalating the emotional energy building in the church.

The human chanting train explodes and fragments to pieces, falling apart as people collapse to the floor, grab on to the walls, pray facing a corner of the room, and fall to their knees while grabbing at pews.

Some continue to walk the aisles, moving past some church members who lie silent on the floor or writhe in spiritual intoxication. It's an unpredictable, disorderly, seemingly random, and spontaneous spectacle. Some continue the original chant while others—either pacing aisles or hugging walls—begin to speak in tongues. The collective sounds combine, separate, coalesce, disintegrate and reemerge again into a collective whole.

The chanting—"I got the power, the Holy Ghost power!"—ends as each church member begins to pray, some in a rapid rapping style ascending in tempo, some in slow deliberate praise, and still others speaking in tongues. Finally, a crescendo is reached followed by complete silence. The brief silence lasts only for moments as church members stand, take a breath, and look around the church. Everyone claps in praise to what just transpired. One church member quietly utters "I got the power, the Holy Ghost power." The others repeat the words while walking back to the pews.

This is the Holy Ghost Church.

The Holy Ghost Church

This book is about big city lives in a small black church. It's about the global Pentecostal movement—the largest and fastest-growing Christian denomination in the 20th and 21st century—as it materializes in a small local setting. This book carries an ethnographic signature in approach and style, concerning an examination of a Brooklyn, New York, community Pentecostal church congregation and is based on a unique set of data: extensive ethnographic notes taken over the course of almost four years in New York City.

The Pentecostal Church is known to outsiders almost exclusively for its members' "bizarre" habit of speaking in tongues. This ethnography, however, built on participant observation, puts those outsiders inside the church pews, as it paints a portrait of piety, compassion, caring, love—all embraced through an embodiment perspective, as the church's members experience these forces in the most personal ways through religious conversion. Central concerns include the notion of "spectacle" because of the grand bodily display that is highlighted by spiritual struggle, social aspiration, punishment, and spontaneous explosion of a variety of emotions in the public sphere. The analysis provides both historical and theoretical overviews of the sociological work on religion, race, gender, postmodernity and the Weberian concept of charisma as central analytical frames.

An ethnographic approach to study intimately the members of a Pentecostal congregation in the extraordinary socio-cultural experiment known as New York is particularly appropriate to understand one of today's largest, and most widely misunderstood, global religious movements. The approach to sociology throughout this work incorporates the striking dialectic of history and biography to penetrate and interact with religiously inspired residents of the inner-city—in a quest to make sense both empirically and theoretically of this rapidly changing, surprising and highly contradictory late modern church scene.

The book's focus on the individual process of becoming Pentecostal provides a road-mapping voyage into the church and canvasses an intimate view into the lives of its members to capture stories as they proceed in their Pentecostal careers. This book fills gaps in the existing literature and differs from other scholarship that explains the Pentecostal movement in a macro context (Miller and Yamamori 2007; Cox 1995; Martin 1990 and 2002; Rambo 1995). Instead, the focus is on the small black church and how individuals within it navigate through a particular milieu influenced by definite structural conditions and in doing so construct unique biographies. The findings throughout this work engage in ongoing theoretical debates on the process of religious conversion using these biographical narratives on becoming Pentecostal.

Almost four years of participant observation and dozens of intense formal and informal interviews give breath to the narrative voices of Pentecostals who have yet to give their own authoritative imprint in the telling of their experience. The phenomenological approach used throughout this book displays the lived experiences of individual church members developing concepts—such as what I call "God Hunting" and "Holy Ghost Capital"—to explain the process through which individuals become tongue-speaking Pentecostals. What I call "process analysis" explains how individuals experience incipient moments at various steps in a journey to become religious seekers or "God Hunters" toward conversion that challenges and moves beyond the reigning paradigm of crisis to explain religious seekership.

Tongue-speaking demonstrates "Holy Ghost power" where church members acquire "Holy Ghost Capital," a subcultural "spiritual" capital accumulated in the church, and construct a Pentecostal identity through a relationship narrative to establish personal status and power through conflicting tongue-speaking ideas that allow for individuals to embrace values in tune with the church but with a personalized twist. This book shows how church members do more than simply conform or resist church authority; they negotiate the meaning behind tongue-speaking that illustrates commitment to the institutionalized norms of the group while also accomplishing personal empowerment for oneself. These distinctions demonstrate how members use Holy Ghost Capital offered in the church subculture to craft and express a unique form of identity and power. This work demonstrates how ethnographic data and inductive procedures link empirical data to the development of ideas explaining the path of conversion.

The ideas developed from this extensive research in a Pentecostal church scene challenges both old and new religious conversion paradigms, updating past research and advancing new ideas on how to approach understanding "conversion" as a process. This book tells numerous intimate stories of individual lives that converge in one place for a common purpose, though for a variety of reasons.

Finally, recent scholarship suggests that the charismatic forces that birthed the Pentecostal Church—a charismatic explosion that emerged in early 20th century America—is now in decline, succumbing to the cold, rationalistic forces of modernity that transforms charisma to bureaucratic institutions (Poloma 1989 and 2007). This past scholarship, however, focuses on the large Pentecostal denominations. To date, nothing has been said about the fate of the small, denominationally unaffiliated Pentecostal Church. This book addresses that future and argues that the small Pentecostal church is better able to resist modernizing forces retaining the charisma that sparked the movement. The power of charisma in the small church has far-reaching consequences and implications for the future of Pentecostalism and its followers.

Map of the Book

Part I

Chapter One–Global Pentecostalism: A Brief Overview

The Pentecostal movement is a global religious phenomenon, but no matter how global, its impact remains largely at the local level. This chapter begins with an introduction to the Pentecostal movement, explaining its genesis and spread across the world. Although Pentecostalism exists in communities rich and poor, it thrives most in many of the most impoverished areas on Earth. As such, the connection between poverty, Pentecostalism, and urban responses to marginalization is considered. This introduction includes a description of the form Pentecostal ideas have taken in the United States.

Chapter Two–The Brownsville, Brooklyn
Neighborhood: A Community of Poverty, Decay, and God

This chapter begins with a highly descriptive excerpt from journal notes taken in my initial visit to Brownsville and Holy Ghost Church. The journal notes describe a surprising and unexpected Sunday church scene that set the stage for the research. The notes record observations made while walking through the Brownsville neighborhood heading towards its 73rd police precinct.

This chapter is all about the Brownsville neighborhood in which the vast majority of Holy Ghost congregation members live, love, shop, eat, and worship. Brownsville is considered a ghetto, but a closer look into its history and the lives of its community residents show that it is a highly resilient one. Its residents experience spatial

isolation and a form of racial segregation that sociologists Massey and Denton (1993) describe as "hypersegregation." Such segregation often operates as breeding grounds for an oppositional culture, but this is not always the case. Communities and their residents have agency to respond to such intensive marginalization in creative and innovative ways. Perhaps what happens in places like Holy Ghost Church is one type of response to subordination and marginalization.

A thorough description of the neighborhood and its past and ongoing struggles place the Pentecostal stories in their proper socio-spatial context. This chapter shows how church participation and membership influences the individual lives in this community. A historical overview of the neighborhood using archives, newspapers, locally produced literature, and ethnographic fieldwork—including interviews with "on the beat" community affairs Police Officer "D'Angelo" and his partner "Ms. Crockette," who serve as liaisons between the Brownsville community and the 73nd Precinct police station—to describe the neighborhood, its central concerns, and ongoing challenges. This chapter covers, among other things, the failures of city planning in Brownsville, the city's investments in the community—a juvenile detention center and a probation office planned and implemented against the will and knowledge of community members—as well as New York's controversial, and perhaps unconstitutional, "stop-and-frisk" policy. It is argued that Brownsville's residents, tired of disappointing secular institutions, turn to the more capable religious institutions in addressing their needs.

Chapter Three–Holy Ghost Church Structure

In order to understand the Holy Ghost Church, it is important to make clear the formal and, especially, informal structure of the organization. Borrowing from Weber's notion of charisma (1978), this chapter begins to explore how today's small Pentecostal Church maintains its charismatic qualities as it confronts the rationalized modern world. Scholarly evidence suggests that large Pentecostal denominations have increasingly succumbed to institutional pressures. This chapter begins (later examined in more detail in chapter 9) the argument that the church's informal structure retains the original charismatic forces of early Pentecostalism that emerged from the days of Azusa Street in Los Angeles. This struggle between the charisma and institutional bureaucratization materializes in the church's balancing of its formal and informal structures. After reviewing Weber's concept of charisma, the chapters analyzes the informal structure of the church looking at six major themes: (1) Institutionalization versus Autonomy; (2) Claims to Religious Truth: Adherence to Doctrine versus Charismatic Revelation; (3) Promotion and Institutional Authority: Professionalism versus Charismatic Gifts of the Spirit; (4) Religion versus Relationship; (5) Predictability and Structure versus Spontaneity; and (6) Formal versus Informal Status.

It is argued that charismatic forces operate in the small Pentecostal churches showcasing the resilience of small, neighborhood churches against modernizing forces. The formal organization of the church describes the titles, offices, roles,

and positions of the church. Within this formal organization, an informal status hierarchy emerges as members seek promotion and prestige within the church. Gaining status usually results in upward mobility to a higher church office. For example, members can elevate their status to elder, deacon, minister, missionary, and other lesser titles. Such promotions serve as some of the potential benefits to becoming a member. Gender also plays an important part in Holy Ghost Church. Though gender roles have a formal equality, informally they are far from equal. The chapter ends with my experiences traveling to Toronto with "Soldiers for Christ International," the foreign ministry under the umbrella of the Holy Ghost Church.

Part II

Most chapters begin and end with excerpts taken from my personal fieldnotes, interviews, or transcripts from Sunday services, men's meetings, spiritual warfare events, interventions, Bible meetings, water-baptisms, spiritual revivals and my international travels with "Soldier's for Christ International." The chapters navigate freely between the personal voices and experiences of church members and my own narrative voice explaining the fascinating, sometimes uneven journey members navigate throughout the process of becoming tongue-speaking Pentecostals. This flow moves from one experience to the next and contains various aspects of Pentecostal life including getting saved, speaking in tongues, ecstatic worship and praise, and spiritual warfare.

Chapter Four–The Characters

This chapter introduces the book's main characters, giving voice to Holy Ghost Church members as they tell their own stories. These biographical stories rely upon the interview subjects' personal anecdotes, and memories—some fully formed, some fragments—from a past that alter conceptions of the self. Memory necessarily involves the production of a personal narrative account through the medium of storytelling that often involves the biographical reconstruction of the self. As the self—a never static but always fluid entity—receives new experiences and moves through multiple cultural milieus, it redefines and reconceptualizes past events based on current, ongoing new and emergent realities.

Humans are storytellers, or homo narrans (Fisher 1984), but no matter the intent to give accurate accounts, stories are often fictional tales. In an advanced or postmodern world characterized by rapid change and highly reflexive individualism the individual becomes increasingly fragmented (Young 2011; Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1994; Gergen 1992). Telling stories requires taking the fragmented components of the self and piecing them together into a coherent whole. Paying close attention to their telling of their own stories gives insight to how individuals construct their narratives through the telling of their own stories. These

Pentecostal stories say something about how church members come to terms with their past life before conversion to their new ones as members of a Pentecostal tongue-speaking church.

Each main character is introduced in a separate section to familiarize readers with the variety of individuals presented throughout Part Two. The personal biographies and views of congregation members prior to group contact reveal life circumstances, as they remember them, before the search to find a church begins. The various and multifaceted processes at work preceding and beyond group contact shows individual changes throughout each step in the process of becoming Pentecostal. Knowing one's prior perspectives makes it possible to better understand the motivations for joining the group and assessing the outcomes of becoming Pentecostal. Subsequent chapters weave together the personal stories of each individual in the narrative to further develop theoretical ideas from observations and interviews to explain the process of becoming a tongue-speaking Pentecostal.

Chapter Five–The Sunday Church Scene and Music

This chapter begins with an excerpt on journal notes immediately following a Sunday service, leading to an interview with Amelie. This excerpt gives insight into Amelie's "frightful" but exciting first visit to Holy Ghost Church. The chapter ends with an interview excerpt where Debbie discusses how she "feels" the music and presence of the "Holy Ghost," especially the different emotions associated with worship and praise songs.

This chapter builds on the notion of "scene" as developed by sociologists of music (Bennett and Peterson 2004) and sex (Terry Williams, forthcoming) who define scenes as the environment that affects human interaction (embodiment and action) and involves six dimensions: (a) Container—fixed enclosure of human interaction; (b) Props—physical objects which adhere to persons in the enclosure or to the enclosure itself, including dress, religious symbols, and furnishings; (c) Actors—the persons involved in, peripheral to, or spectators to the transactions carried on in the enclosure; (d) Modifiers—elements of the lighting, sound, odor, texture, temperature, color and humidity which serves to affect the emotional tone of or mood of the interaction; (e) Duration—the objective time in measurable units (minutes, hours, days) during which the interaction occurs, as well as the anticipated time the interaction will require; (f) Progression—the order of events which precede and follow, or are expected to follow the interaction and have some bearing on it. Applying the concept of "musical/sex scene" to build the "Pentecostal scene" leads to a description of the church religious scenes, from solemn moments of getting saved to explosive tongue-speaking moments. I set the scene using the literary device of visual text to bring the reader into the church to experience the sights, sounds, tastes, smells and energy of the mainstay of Pentecostal activities showing how church members take space and make it a unique Pentecostal place. Music plays a central role to provide a type of ambiance:

worship songs inspire notions of the sacred, praise songs provoke gratitude. The Sunday service offers the Holy Ghost Church an opportunity to sell itself, showcasing its visible, personal excellence.

Chapter Six–Becoming a God Hunter

Chapter 6 begins with a telling excerpt from an interview transcript that tells about church member "Denver" and his unusual path to becoming a religious seeker that includes a chance encounter leading to his finding and joining Holy Ghost Church.

The chapter moves on to explain the first step to becoming Pentecostal—a process that requires a commitment to forfeit a lifestyle that many young men and women, particularly in New York City, enjoy. Few people volunteer to give up such lifestyles, and church life hardly serves, at least for most people, as an ideal alternative. So why would a seemingly reasonable person join a church and surrender their "personal will" to a God? Most people, sociologists included, have a tendency to explain seemingly abnormal behaviors with unusual motives. Upon closer inspection, strange phenomena reveal reasonable explanations. This chapter is one of the more compelling aspects of the book that explains what I call "God Hunting," or the process of becoming a religious seeker. God Hunting includes a series of steps or events that lead the individual to take the path of becoming a religious convert. I explore crisis as a sociological concept, tracing the word's etymology and changing usage. I unfold the fascinating and detailed stories of "Denver" and "Pastor Redford" to illustrate why people become God Hunters. The findings incorporate past scholarly ideas on religious conversion, Weber's Protestant ethic and capitalist spirit, and postmodern ideas on conversion to explain becoming a God Hunter. This chapter challenges the concept of crisis—which serves as a reigning paradigm in both old and new conversion theories—while also establishing how elements of both theories persist in postmodern religion. The findings reveal, among other things, that crisis fails to explain how and why individuals become seekers. The result is the development of fresh ideas that include such concepts as chance events, incipient moments, and inter-contingencies that challenge theories of crisis as a catapult to religious conversion. The section "Crisis: RIP" offers new ideas on how to explain religious seekership leading to conversion.

Chapter Seven–Getting Saved

This chapter begins with extended journal notes taken during a Holy Ghost men's meeting that included an unexpected dramatic moment with a member of New York's Almighty Latin King and Queen Nation. The chapter ends with an excerpt from a transcribed interview where Amelie discusses the events leading to her getting saved, including, among other things, learning "Christian jargon."

The neophyte now gets saved. This chapter first presents the official Holy Ghost Church views on getting saved. This includes a detailed explanation of the church's views on salvation, indwelling, divine nature vs. adamic or carnal nature, second-birth baptisms, spiritual vs. physical reality, spiritual battles, sin, and gifts of the

spirit, among other things. Church authorities expect church members to accept these views associated with getting saved. Following this, the chapter traces the individual's initial steps toward increasing involvement with the Holy Ghost Church, as well the individual experiences and concerns that occur throughout the process.

Incorporating various sociological ideas, including role theory and labeling theory as well as the sociological concepts of biographical reconstruction and encapsulation, this chapter explores the interaction between neophytes and the established members of the congregation in the early stages of conversion. Getting saved requires a verbal commitment, an important step that begins an enduring process of living the "born-again" life. Getting saved is a powerful experience in the lives of many individuals and marks a transformative event that separates one's old life from the new one. Though common themes emerge from each conversion, the experience is unique for each individual.

This chapter tells these original stories of getting saved weaving together voices of people individually traveling a collective journey. Once "saved," the new member is often vulnerable and easily drawn away from the group. The individual is introduced to and must internalize the rules, roles, rituals, and rhetoric of the group to remain Pentecostal. This chapter includes: (1) Initial Church Visit, (2) Verbal Commitment, (3) Learning the Rules, and Learning the Roles, and (4) Learning the Roles, Rituals, and Rhetoric.

Chapter Eight–Speaking in Tongues

Chapter 8 includes a transcribed recording of an explosive tongue-speaking scene that I sent for transcription to Dr. Alena Horn, PhD in Linguistics at The University of Texas at Austin. The description of the scene combines my journal notes, her transcription, and our comments on it.

This chapter begins with journal notes during a church altar call where the service took a sudden and dramatic turn of events. While church members approached the altar to get saved, the church service stopped while all attention was directed toward me. It was the second of three attempts to administer my salvation. Another excerpt follows from an interview transcript where Pastor Redford discusses his first tongue-speaking experience. A third excerpt is taken from an interview transcript where Redford's wife, Jamie Redford, discusses her first tongue-speaking experience. This chapter includes a lengthy excerpt on an explosive tongue-speaking moment during a church service within the text.

The peculiar phenomenon of speaking in tongues seems strange to outsiders, a "bizarre" practice that belongs in more "exotic" cultures, rather than in cities like New York's urban landscape. Just like the typical outsider, the neophyte in the Holy Ghost Church also finds the behavior strange, at least initially. This chapter lays out the process of how people become tongue-speakers and receive a "gift of the spirit" demonstrating a commitment—beyond the verbal one—that some scholars call a "bridge-burning" act. Using Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) cultural capital and Sarah Thornton's (1996) concept of subcultural capital, I develop the notion of "Holy

Ghost Capital" to describe how church members acquire an alternative form of capital where internal status hierarchies emerge that show various levels and intensity of commitment to the Pentecostal career and also distinguish members on an internally devised scale of authenticity and social status demarcating core and elite members from the marginal. Tongue-speakers construct a Pentecostal identity through a relationship narrative not always in tune with church authority. Church members do more than simply conform or resist church authority; they negotiate the meaning behind tongue-speaking that illustrates commitment to the institutionalized norms of the group while also accomplishing personal empowerment for oneself. I recorded tongue-speakers for years to collect this data during spontaneous moments of individual and collective effervescence. This chapter includes the following steps to becoming a tongue-speaker: Learning to Tongue-Speak, Attempting to Tongue-Speak, Creating Tongue-Speaking Ideas, and Developing Reasons to Tongue-Speak. A section on tongue-speaking fakers is also included in this chapter.

Part III

Chapter Nine–The Future of the Black Tongue-Speaking Church

This chapter focuses on the future direction of the small Pentecostal Church with an analysis on the challenges it faces, the roles and functions it serves, and its orientations as it heads towards the future. The first section of this chapter is an extension of chapter 3 (Holy Ghost Church Organization Structure) building on the problems of charisma and the routinization of religious movements providing an analysis of the challenges that the small black Pentecostal church faces as it plunges towards the future. This analysis is on how the small Pentecostal church fares in comparison to the large Pentecostal denominations using O'Dea and Yinger's (1961) scholarship on the five dilemmas for religious movements and Margaret Poloma's scholarship exploring the tensions between charisma and institutionalization in one of the largest Pentecostal denominations in the world—Assemblies of God—borrowing from O'Dea and Yinger's five dilemmas. The argument is that while the future seems dim for the large and established Pentecostal denominations, the small Pentecostal church better balances the tension between charisma and institutionalization, and will continue to push the movement—in postmodern form—into the future. The future looks bright for the small Pentecostal church.

The functions and roles of the Pentecostal Church, in particular, the small Pentecostal church, is important to understand its potential future directions. The small Pentecostal church serves important roles for both the public sphere and the individual.

Lincoln and Mamiya (1990) develop a dialectical model to understand the modern black church describing the social tensions it experiences as an institution. They juxtapose these tensions between six categories of diametrically opposed tendencies that challenge past social scientific models to understand the major

orientations of the black church. This sections provides a detailed analysis of the small community Pentecostal church using Lincoln and Mimiya's six categories: (1) the priestly and prophetic functions, (2) other-worldly and this-worldly, (3) universalism and particularism, (4) communal and privatistic, (5) charismatic and bureaucratic, and (6) resistance versus accommodation. This section argues that, despite the conservative views of the church, the small black American church contains subversive and resistant functions. For example, speaking in tongues and "Holy Ghost Capital" present challenges to the dominant culture and, further, empower church members in new and interesting ways.

Three examples illustrate this argument. First, tongue-speakers subvert the dominant institution of language by offering a more pure, pristine form of communication that transcends the limits of the European tongue forced upon Africans. Second, the notion of individuality illuminates present black urban struggles as Pentecostals refuse the dominant label of belonging to a religion and instead argue their involvement is a "relationship." Third, "Holy Ghost Capital," provides church members with an alternative form of capital that members believe are more powerful than traditional forms of capital (political, social, economic, cultural). Tongue-speakers use Holy Ghost Capital offered in the church subculture to construct identity, elevate status and gain upward mobility.

Finally, this chapter includes a section on spiritual warfare describing Holy Ghost theology behind this practice which includes spiritual battles between heavenly and demonic forces, struggles against principalities and wicked forces, dunamis and exousia powers, spirit wars, and casting out of demons.

Borrowing from Robert Merton's (1963) work, this chapter ends with a discussion on the manifest and latent functions of the small black Pentecostal church. Whatever its functions, it is important to remember, as Norbert Elias (1984) reminds us, that for individuals, institutions like a church function for the individual. Finally, this chapter also includes a section on spiritual warfare describing Holy Ghost theology behind this practice which includes spiritual battles between heavenly and demonic forces, struggles against principalities and wicked forces, dunamis and exousia powers, spirit wars, and casting demons.

Chapter Ten–Individual Consequences to Becoming Pentecostal

This chapter begins with an intense story taken from journal notes on what was supposed to be a simple "Service of Holy Ordination," presenting the senior pastor's daughter for promotion to elder (associate pastor) along with various promotions for four others church members. The story presents the unfolding of a dramatic and unexpected scene with far-reaching consequences for the Holy Ghost Church senior pastor.

Chapter 10 focuses on the emotional, personal, practical, intellectual and religious consequences—or the "I" function—of becoming Pentecostal for the book's main characters. Each section, similar to chapter 4's introduction of the characters, is devoted to each main character. This section reports the consequences of becoming

Pentecostal for each main character while in the various stages of their Pentecostal career during my last days in the field. This chapters ends with a brief summary of some of the major findings of this book as well as with some comments on understanding Pentecostalism in late modernity and the importance to locating Pentecostalism within the realm of culture.

Overall, this book contributes to a sociological understanding of religious conversion and the process whereby individuals decide to convert to a religious organization using a micro-analysis of a small Pentecostal church and thick description of the stories told among church members who have various levels of commitment to, and duration as participants in, Holy Ghost Church. Another major focus is the tension between religion and late modernity, specifically, between charisma and modern rationality as the small Pentecostal Church faces the pressures of institutionalization to develop structures of rational authority. This book now proceeds to chapter 1 presenting the historical antecedents of the Pentecostal movement, its relationship to poverty, and its global spread. The chapter ends with a general overview of mainstream Pentecostal ideas in the United States.

Note

[1] The words "God" and "Holy Spirit" are capitalized throughout this book to follow the expectations of the Holy Ghost Church research participants. In no way does this imply the privileging of the Christian god.

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"This is a skillfully researched account of a small African/Caribbean Pentecostal congregation in Brooklyn, New York. Framing the work with sociological theories on Pentecostalism and religious conversion—some supported, others modified, and still others rejected—Peter Marina narrates a delightful story, using rich interview data and personal observation. His account considers the role emotion plays in the growth of Pentecostalism, a global movement with paranormal experiences. Marina's analysis of how this small congregation balances charisma with institution in an age when spirituality increasingly challenges religious bureaucracy will be of interest to Pentecostal scholars and all serious students of religion."

—Margaret A. Poloma, University of Akron

"*Getting the Holy Ghost* is a marvelous ethnography taking us to the hidden places and strange raptures of Pentecostalism. Peter Marina has a fine eye for physical and social detail—he writes like a dream and his text springs to life. . . . You are there amongst the dancers, the singers, and the people speaking in tongues. You share both his attraction and disquiet for this movement to reclaim the supernatural from the cold rationality of conventional religion." —Jock Young, Distinguished Professor, City University of New York

"Peter Marina presents a rare portrait of religious rites in a small community church in Brooklyn. Marina's skillful use of qualitative data tells an intriguing story involving 'speaking in tongues,' rites of aggregation, and a moving pathos that is part of the historical circumstance of African American life since slavery. It is a powerful ethnography, a fascinating account, thoughtful and dynamic, which deserves wide praise and should be read by all interested in life in the city." —Terry Williams, The New School for Social Research

"Peter Marina has achieved something rare in the annals of sociological ethnography: he entered a community with which he had little in common and told a compelling story about its innermost meanings and cultural rituals with the analytical deftness and observational acuity of an old hand. Yet this is Marina's first book! It is a wonderful accomplishment by an expert chronicler of the everyday urban poor. Read it and experience life in a house of worship as you've never seen it."

—David Brotherton, The City University of New York

"A richly descriptive ethnography that challenges the crisis model of religious conversion and argues that conversion is a life-long decision-making process . . . While reading the life stories of these struggling Pentecostals, you'll feel as if you know each of them personally."

—Peter Althouse, Southeastern University

Getting the Holy Ghost examines a Brooklyn Pentecostal church congregation based on four years of ethnographic notes. The Pentecostal church is known to outsiders for its members' seemingly bizarre habit of speaking in tongues. This ethnography puts those outsiders inside the church pews, as Peter Marina paints a portrait of piety, compassion, caring, and love, as the church's members experience these forces through religious conversion. Marina's approach to sociology incorporates the striking dialectic of history and biography to penetrate and interact with religiously-inspired residents of the inner city, in a quest to make empirical and theoretical sense of this rapidly changing, surprising, and highly contradictory late-modern church scene. This work examines the future of the small Pentecostal church maintaining charisma in late modernity. This study will be of great value to scholars in urban sociology, ethnography of the city, sociology of religion and religious studies, theologians and historians who study Pentecostalism, and lay readers interested in the changing shape of religious experience in America.