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***El mundo, God, and the flesh :*
Experiencing sacredness in a Nicaraguan church**

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A Thesis

in

The Department

of

Sociology and Anthropology

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts at
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ABSTRACT

El mundo, God, and the flesh :
Experiencing Sacredness in a Nicaraguan church

Elysée Nouvet

This is an ethnographic study of being Pentecostal in present-day Nicaragua. The emphasis is on varieties of religious experiences within one church: the First Apostolic church of Faith in Jesus Christ. Through a sensory and social analysis of members' narratives of their "lives in Christ", the body is shown to be central to Pentecostal knowledge of the divine. Illness and healing, fighting addictions, suffering in marriage, and constantly avoiding the sinful *mundo*, are some of the sites wherein one's body, actions, and moral state are experienced as inextricably intertwined. The thesis argues that sacredness is experienced differently based on the culturally contingent shaping of bodies. In the final chapter, this argument is pursued through an analysis of the gift of speaking in tongues. Glossolalia is posited as a Nicaraguan feminine knowledge of the sacred that challenges machista definitions of 'proper' feminine experience. Apostolic religious experiences are shown to grant individuals a sense of personal power and successfully broaden dominant gender expectations in Nicaragua. Limitations to the socially transformative power of Apostolic religiosity are also brought out in the thesis.

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**Alberto, whose intellectual jousting and dyonisian cooking helped maintain my states of
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INTRODUCTION

In contrast to “traditional” Protestant churches with their emphasis on inner contemplation, Pentecostals experience sacredness through their bodies (Laplantine 1999: 101). Given that the body and its experiences are informed by past practices, and socialization processes such as the learning of gender, how might sacredness be experienced differently by Pentecostals with socially differentiated bodies? This study describes varieties of religious experience within a Nicaraguan Pentecostal church. While focusing on how different members experience the divine through their bodies and make sense of the sacred in their everyday lives, the social significance and potential impact of such religious experiences in the context of Nicaragua is simultaneously explored.

“[E]vangelism is now overwhelmingly a Third World phenomenon and less and less comprehensible in European and North American terms” (Gumucio 1998: 38). Counting 320 million Pentecostals, most of them economically deprived, charismatic Protestantism constitutes the fastest growing religion in Latin America (Hollenweger 1994: 203; Stoll 1990).

Debates over the socio-political significance of this astonishing turn on the once Catholic Continent are multiple (Bastian 1992; Gumucio 1998; Mullins 1994; Stoll 1990 & 1993). Some authors have suggested that economically and/or socially marginalized

Latin Americans are attracted to Pentecostalism's promise of a decentralized religious experience (Burdick 1998: Chapter four; Coleman et al. 1993; Stoll 1990: 319). In contrast to the Roman Catholic Church, the dominant religious alternative in Central and South America, lay participation and equal opportunity for all to know God is preached and often practiced in Pentecostal churches. Evangelical growth has also been explained as a survival strategy based on (a) the mobilization of moral and emotional resources (Coleman et al. 1993) or (b) the persecution of Catholics particularly in Guatemala (Green 1993). In Colombia, being Evangelical has been described as a feminist strategy, found to bring value to the household realm and to women in that context (Brusco 1995).

I wish to contribute to the study of Pentecostalism and its role in Latin American social change. My study distinguishes itself from previous work in four respects. Firstly, in reviewing case studies and theories on Pentecostalism in Latin America, I was struck by the silencing of the body in explaining Pentecostal experience. Overwhelmingly, the literature on Pentecostalism assumes that religious experiences are significant solely as manifestations of social or psychological conditions and needs (Coleman et al. 1993; Green 1993; Gumucio 1998; Hollenweger 1994; Levine 1995; Mullins 1994; Stoll 1990). It is only John Burdick, in his examination of the articulation of race to Christian idioms in Brazil (1998), and François Laplantine (1999) who actually explore the physicality of religious experiences as a site for the gaining of knowledge and, in the case of Burdick, contestation of power relations (1998). Pentecostal Christianity emphasizes knowledge of the sacred as something that is felt and must be performed through the body. Previous works that have neglected to explore bodily experience in Pentecostalism are inadequate

to describing what it means and certainly what it feels like to be charismatic in a specific context. Thus, the first contribution I am making in this field is to examine experiences of the sacred for members in their somatic as well as ideological dimension, these being approached as interpenetrating realms.

This leads to the second contribution of the study. Felt, performed, interpreted through culturally and historically shaped bodies, it is my hypothesis that the sacred is experienced differently by individuals based on the habituses developed through their beings-in-the-world. The potential variety of religious experiences beckons exploration towards elaborating the “intrinsic dialectic between ritual and everyday life” (Csordas 1997: xviii). Studies of new Christian churches, whether these be Colombian Evangelical (Brusco 1995), American Charismatic Catholic (Csordas 1997), or Ghanaian Pentecostal (Meyer 1998), have outlined the changes wrought on other realms of social life by new religious identities. The gap which I seek to address is due to the failure of existing studies to describe specifically how other social identities may alter the very experience of the divine in the first place. Class, ethnicity, and age can all be expected to inform knowledges of the sacred.

In the present study, I focus on gender, and how it shapes men and women’s experiences of Apostolic religiosity. This decision reflects my personal experience of gender being dominant in determining members’ participation and experiences within that church. When I entered the Apostolic church for the first time, I was lent a prayer shawl worn only by female members and ushered into the married women’s section. The following day, a church leader came to discuss the Bible with me in my home¹. Pointing

to the book of Timothy, he outlined all the rules of conduct for me as a woman, if I was to practice the Apostolic faith². Pentecostal Christianity's role in social change will be limited until varieties of localized experiences of religiosity are explored. If socially distinct persons, such as men and women, experience and/or practice Pentecostalism differently, then the impact of being Pentecostal and experiencing the sacred as a Pentecostal might also be gendered. A phenomenological approach focusing on the relationship between gender and religious experiences, has the potential to reveal the unevenness of a religious movement's effects across socially differentiated members' lives.

I have conducted my research in the politically and religiously charged atmosphere of Nicaragua. To the best of my knowledge, no case studies of Pentecostalism have been conducted there. Nicaragua harbors a unique history, having been host to the only socialist oriented revolution in Latin America to refuse admittance of any contradiction between Christian belief and Marxist ideology (1979-1990). The Sandinista government was the first regime in the world to give liberation theology official status (Stoll 1990: 219). In Nicaragua, authority of the Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional derived from the "God of the poor" (Ibid). Until the legislation of mandatory military service, Sandinista members were recruited from Christian youth groups (Foroohar 1989: 38 & 132). In this country where there is a historical institutionalized precedent for socially critical religious action, I ask how Pentecostal churches may or may not inscribe themselves in this trajectory of "revolutionary" new religious movements.

The greater part of my study is based on four months' participation in the first Apostolic Church of Faith in Jesus Christ in Diriamba, a southwestern mountain town (approx. population: 35,000). Originating in the U.S. but with no financial or ministerial links to the United States at this time, the Apostolic is what non-Apostolic Christians in Diriamba term a 'legalistic' church. This label refers to the strict man-made (as opposed to divine) rules and regulations which organize Apostolic members' behavior. The Apostolic church is conservative in its attitudes towards women and less so towards men. It is highly exclusionary, refusing to participate in inter-denominational activities on a regular basis, and interprets both Old and New Testament literally, which is to say, as a truth that cannot be interpreted historically.

In North America, the Apostolic church would most likely be identified as fundamentalist. The Apostolic denomination has 10 to 36 times more members than other groups in Diriamba. Given this immense and growing popularity, I felt that the Apostolic church was an appropriate choice of site for exploring the social impact of Pentecostal experiences in Nicaragua. Moreover, I was intrigued by women's experiences of Apostolic faith. Unlike the situation for women in other Christian churches in town, Apostolic women cannot assume any leadership role before the congregation, must sit separately from the men, follow a dress code, and be obedient to God, the (male) pastor, and their husband (in that order). Women constitute 2/3 of the Apostolic church membership, and I was interested in exploring why they would chose this church.

In my review of the literature on Protestantism in Latin America, I did not find any recent case studies on legalistic (fundamentalist) churches. Participants' experiences of movements which Western scholarship might name fundamentalist remains a topic minimally explored in anthropology (see Griffith 1997 for such a study). Due to extreme right-wing lobbying by some of these churches in Canada and the U.S., fundamentalist Christianity is an Other, exotic and dangerous, which secular social scientists do not necessarily want to describe from within. The growth of fundamentalist movements cannot be understood unless the experiences of those joining these churches are explored. By focusing on Apostolic members' narratives of their experiences, I hope to broaden understanding of the role of one legalistic/fundamentalist church in everyday life and social change. Apostolics' narratives simultaneously serve to reveal participants' creativity, intelligence, and emotion. This is important: in order for 'other' (religious and legalistic) ways of understanding to become engaged in cross-cultural communication and debate, these must be recognized in their complexity (Abu-Lughod 1991).

Methodology

I spent four months in Nicaragua from October 2000 to February 2001. My research site was Diriamba. My husband is studying a play only performed in that town. As my main objective was to study the particularities of Pentecostal experience in Nicaragua, and as only 30% of Nicaraguans live outside urban centers, the medium-sized town of Diriamba seemed an excellent starting point.

I ended up being a participant-observer in three Evangelical (*Cristiano*) churches:

the Cristocentro, a very liberal and American-inspired independent church, the Cuadrangular, a small and perhaps the poorest Pentecostal church in town, and the Primera Iglesia Apostólica de la Fé en Cristo Jesús, amongst the most conservative and the largest *Cristiano* churches in Diriamba.

My first few nights attending the Apostolic *culto* (this term refers to a non-Catholic sermon), I recognized an excellent site for studying varieties of religious experiences within one church. In the temple, men and married women sit on opposite sides of the church, and unmarried 'youth' (not always so young) are located in the middle. While men are the exclusive leaders of the sermon, praying, and healing, women experience speaking in tongues, a spiritual gift in Pentecostalism, in far greater numbers and with a physical intensity unseen amongst the men in the church. These immediately visible differences in Apostolic experiences drew me into the lifeworlds of my informants there.

The Apostolic church definitely stands apart from other evangelical denominations in Diriamba. Along with the Jehovah's witnesses (with whom I unfortunately did not work), they are the only church refusing to partake in monthly pastoral meetings or inter-denominational evangelization campaigns. Indeed, there is minimal contact between members of the Apostolic church and members of any other churches. As will be explained in the chapter on *el mundo* (Chapter four), this is partly linked to Apostolics' experience of all non-Apostolic society and its inhabitants as damned and threatening to their own sacredness. Apostolics monitor their every action and contact with *el mundo* towards building and preserving their spiritual superiority on

which change in their lives is felt to be contingent.

Why one would join this insulated Apostolic church became an intriguing question for me given its lack of popularity and distrust by other *Cristianos*.

Cuadrangular and Cristocentro members to whom I spoke did not seem to respect the Apostolic church. One Cristocentro prayer leader, with thinly veiled contempt, described the Apostolic church as lacking in spirituality: “There is no spontaneity, no spirituality. Jesus was a spiritual leader. His church, if we can call it that, was not a structure with rules.” The Apostolic church harbors so many strict and stated rules that *Cristianos* from other denominations have labeled it a *legalista* movement. *Legalista*, as the pastor of the Cuadrangular defined it, refers to the church’s “inflexible order”, a result of the high number of rules not based on the principles of the Bible but “man-made” (Pastor Eyner).

The most visible of ‘laws’ ordering Apostolics’ lives and setting them apart from other *Cristianos* in Diriamba apply to the women. Whereas many of my non-Apostolic informants participated in writing and giving sermons or leading the congregation in song, Apostolic women are not to assume public leadership before their congregation. *Cristiana* women belonging to other churches were particularly distrustful of the Apostolic church because of this rule. Apostolic women must follow a strict dress code, a sign of female devotion discussed further in Chapter five. The women must wear long skirts, conservative (shoulder concealing) tops, and low shoes. While members of other *Cristiano* congregations may adorn similar outfits with subtle makeup or jewelry, these are considered signs of vanity and forbidden in the Apostolic church. During *culto*, female members wear a (usually lace) prayer shawl. There exist no corresponding dress

guidelines for male congregants.

In terms of evaluating the social impact of religious experiences, the Apostolic Church was an obvious choice as a site. It is the most popular and fastest growing religious movement in Diriamba, opening up a seventh Church in the town's region in December 2000. Its membership is large, including about 1,000 Diriambinos.

My main research method consisted in participant observation of/in my informants daily lives. In accordance with the principal framework of this study, phenomenology, I sought to approach understanding of my informants' lifeworlds through my own experience in Diriamba and as a guest in the three churches mentioned above. I spent a great deal of time with my female informants and friends, going to the market, learning to make delicious Nicaraguan dishes, visiting their families and homes, or just talking. Women volunteered their experiences, many of which were related to their experiences as mothers, wives, daughters, or girlfriends. In exchange, I answered questions about my husband, our relationship, marriage, male-female relations, and gender roles in Canada. As we compared the gendered aspects of our lifeworlds, I knew that describing how men and women experience the Apostolic faith differently would find a place in my analysis as this experience of difference was so central to my informants' everyday life.

I attended the Apostolic Church *culto* three nights per week, and participated in the Cuadrangular Church and home *cultos* two nights per week as well. I also attended Sunday *cultos* at the Cristocentro. Throughout my four month stay I continued to attend the two churches which were not my focus as I found this sharpened my attention to

those aspects of the Apostolic faith and members' experiences which are unique amongst Nicaraguan *Cristiano* movements. Informal and formal interviews with members of the Cuadrangular and Cristocentro churches on baptism in Holy Spirit, becoming a member of their particular denomination, and relationship to predominantly Catholic society and politics is the basis for generalizations I make about *Cristianos* in Nicaragua in Chapter one.

I conducted formal interviews with twelve members of the Apostolic church. Six of these interviews were on becoming Apostolic, specifically on the significance and practical components of this transformation for my informants' lives. Three interviews were on healing. Carmen was a main informant. She shares her narrative of healing in Chapter three, and in Chapter four describes how she builds and protects her life in Christ from the polluting *mundo* (world). During the months of December 2000 and January 2001, numerous informal conversations and talks followed up my initial formal interview with Carmen about her struggle with leukemia. While formal interviews were conducted in members' or my own home and tape recorded, informal interviews consisted of my asking questions to congregants in various contexts, and often before, during, or after *culto*.

Most of my time and research was devoted to learning about women's experiences. While my personal interest in these women's lives certainly led me to this focus, major factors in determining my research were the homosocial contexts of Nicaragua and the Apostolic church. I had easier access to women because of my own gender. The quality of information from male and female informants was also different.

In interviews, I definitely felt women were more open with me, sharing marital problems and the specifics of bodily sensations that were not shared with me by male informants.

While no doubt a result of the social awkwardness of speaking with a stranger of the opposite sex about one's body or relationship, men's willingness to share intimate details may also have been hindered by the presence of my research assistant. I hired a research assistant to act as a third party for my interviews with men. This was necessary, I felt, as despite my marital status, I did not feel it to be socially acceptable or safe to interview male informants alone.

My partner and I took photos and slides. These would have been useful in granting the reader that extra glimpse of how embodying the sacred looks. None of these turned out, but as being Apostolic is such a processual and multi sensorial state, perhaps my failure to provide visual and static representations is appropriate.

Breakdown of the Study

The first chapter will give a brief history of Nicaragua's intertwined political, social, and religious history. The reader will be introduced to this area of the world and provided with the socio-political context of Pentecostal growth in Nicaragua. The country's history of oppression under the Somozas, the eleven-year Sandinista revolution, and the post-revolutionary situation will be summarized. I will argue that to be Pentecostal in Nicaragua is to seek to improve one's life in a context of limited choices and widespread political cynicism. It will be substantiated that the growth of non-Catholic churches may be a reaction to the hierarchy and traditional political

conservatism of the Catholics in Nicaragua. Finally, I present a question that is addressed throughout this study: What are the possibilities and limitations of social transformation for Nicaraguans being *Cristiano* (evangelical)?

Chapter two presents the theoretical framework. My principal analytic strategy is phenomenology, the study of experience, and is based on the writings of Merleau-Ponty (1962) and Jackson (1989, 1996). The prominence of the body and everyday practices in phenomenology corresponds to Apostolic experiences of the sacred through their bodies: “It is their [Pentecostal] belief based on experience that mind, body, and spirit become one through healing, prophecy, dreams and visions” (Droogers 1994: 33). *Habitus*, as defined by Bourdieu (1977) and Jackson (1989), will be presented in this chapter as a tool for understanding why experiences of the sacred may be different for men and women. Briefly, I will posit how habituses acquired in relation to gendered practices in Nicaragua may structure experience/knowledge of the sacred (Lancaster 1992; Whisnant 1995), a topic developed to a greater extent in Chapter six. This proposal is informed by Elizabeth Grosz’s description of the sexualization of knowledges, the culturally contingent outcome of etching sex onto mindful bodies (1994). Performance theory informs my phenomenological framework. Performance theory is appealing in its attention to the freedom of the performance instance, and for its attention to audience reaction as significant to the socially transformative power of events (Fabian 1990; Shildrick 1997). As a group phenomenon whose practices are defined in contrast to a broader ‘other’ and ‘ill’ society, Apostolic religiosity is about embodying one’s sacredness in a performance oriented to that society and the church. Performance theory

is particularly useful in the analysis of women's charismatic action in Chapter six.

The third chapter begins to look at particular Apostolic experiences. Towards stressing the inter-connectedness of body, soul, and self amongst Apostolics, healing and illness will be described. Healing is the most commonly cited event in Apostolics' lives at which point Apostolics claim to know God's power. The healing narrative of one woman, Carmen, will be provided and discussed, taking into account the importance of this physical experience for personal faith, the performance of testifying to a healing, and the significance of divine therapy in the context of Nicaragua's unreliable and inaccessible medical services. Following recent phenomenological descriptions of healing (Csordas 1996; Desjarlais 1996; Jackson 1989), I propose that an altered way of feeling may be central to the effectiveness of Carmen's religious healing. This is posited against intellectual reductions of religious healing's success to the power of the imagination (Desjarlais 1996: 150). Carmen does not only *think* about her body as healed in an extraordinary way, but *feels* the healing in her flesh. Addressed is the social significance of feeling empowered by an experience of divine healing.

Chapter four presents the *Cristiano* concept of *el mundo*, that world of sin from which the *Cristiano* escapes in living his/her life in Christ. How *el mundo* (sick and sinful society) is conceptualized against the sacredness of Christ's body which is the Apostolic church will be described. Through a continuation of the healing narrative in Chapter three, Carmen explains how her promise to serve Christ at all times translates into a constant vigilance of her home, children, and corporeal self against the evils of society. Potential for social change in Apostolics' daily avoidance of *el mundo* is

examined.

Chapter five looks at daily performances which characterize becoming Apostolic. How is one's life and relation to one's body, both related to the social body, transformed through acceptance of Christ as one's personal savior? Dress is shown to be a central transformative marker in women's conversion to the path, whereas men's transformations have more to do with an abandonment of machista practices such as drinking. Two narratives of individual transformations, one male one female, and both typical of the conversion narratives I gathered are examined for the differences in the experience of conversion for men and women. The practice of praying is described by women as a tool they have developed as Apostolics, which they wield against suffering. Comparing these two narratives, reproduction of social themes of masculinity and femininity are identified in the church-valued aspects of the conversion. Men and women both feel more powerful through their adherence to *Cristiano* doctrine: what are the realities and limits of this power?

Chapter six looks at the most prominent charism (spiritual gift) manifested in the Apostolic Church. This gift is glossolalia, better known as speaking in tongues, and part of a full-body experience of receiving the Holy Ghost. The historical importance of this gift is examined for Pentecostal churches and a description of the phenomenon within the Apostolic is given. This is followed by an analysis of why women would experience the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues more frequently and in a much more physical manner than do the men within the church. I propose that this gendered experiences of the sacred should be approached through the gendered body and its habitus. How might

daily experiences and expectations of male and female in Nicaragua inform Apostolics' ability to experience glossolalia? In the final part of Chapter six, I argue that glossolalia is a feminine knowledge of the divine that transgresses norms of Nicaraguan feminine experience.

A conclusion reviews the study's findings, and is followed by a brief review of questions for future research.

BEING *CRISTIANO* IN TODAY'S NICARAGUA

For the members of the Apostolic church with whom I worked, their community is closer to God than any other. Apostolics feel that they are the undeniable elite of the country. As long as they live their lives in Christ, members of the Apostolic church are confident that abundance will follow their shortages, and that eternal life is theirs (and theirs alone). With faith that God responds to their state of faithfulness, Apostolics experience their daily actions as determinant of their earthly living conditions and salvation.

The specifics of Apostolic experience, how congregants construct their lives in Christ and sense the divine in their corporeal selves, is the focus of my study. Through my informants' narratives in Chapters three to six, I will describe how Apostolics experience their relationship to the sacred as a source of personal and community empowerment. My hope is that this phenomenological study will broaden understanding of Pentecostalism's social impact in a specific context, by exploring how the divine makes different individuals, feel, be and therefore engage in the world through action. The present chapter will broadly situate Apostolics' experiences of the divine in present-day Nicaragua as part of a growing *Cristiano* (Evangelical) population. Awareness of the context is necessary to understanding how being *Cristiano* is a particular sort of socially

implicated action. While to live one's life in Christ, as will be seen, is not usually directly implicated in Nicaraguan politics, being *Cristiano* is to seek improvement in one's life in a country of limited routes for such change.

Nicaragua's political and economic context

There is a deep political cynicism and economic turmoil prevailing in Nicaragua today. Through a brief history of Nicaragua, its Sandinista revolution (1979-1990), and post-revolutionary political scene, the basis and gravity of this situation will be described. The growth of Pentecostal movements in Nicaragua must be understood as a mode of social action in this context wherein many Nicaraguans feel their fate as victims of economic and social marginalization is sealed.

Nicaragua is a country of approximately 4 million people, of which 1.5 live in or around its capital, Managua. Despite a turn of events during the eleven year rule of the Sandinista party (1979-1990), Nicaragua is now returning to its late 1970's status as a nation of desperate poverty with 53% unemployment and the highest infant mortality rate in the region (EIR 1996). With usually only one informal economy wage earner in the family, and prices rising with the near dollarization of the economy, getting even the basics of beans and rice on the table is a constant challenge for the average Nica.

The political history of the republic of Nicaragua is one typical of the colonized Latin world. Hierarchies based on degree of whiteness and maleness, as enshrined by the Roman Catholic Church and fueled by machismo, survived Nicaraguan independence in 1823, excluding the majority of the population from the corridors of power. Through its

first 100 years as a republic, elite domination and competition characterized Nicaraguan politics with the Conservative party in Granada bickering against the Leon-based Liberals.

Elected in 1893, liberal president Zelaya set a historical precedent for the critical anti-imperialism that would become central to the conscientization of Nicaraguans. By the late 19th century, Nicaraguans had already been given a reason to doubt American partnerships. In 1854, the Conservatives had invited American filibuster William Walker to help them gain control from the Liberals. Walker took the presidency for himself, declaring English the official language and reinstating slavery. He was chased out by 1856, leaving his mark by burning down most of Granada. During Zelaya's presidency, a number of American investors schemed a proposal for a canal to be built in Nicaragua, linking its Pacific and Atlantic coasts. In 1901, Zelaya refused the project plans as he did not like the U.S. condition that American laws and law-enforcement officer would reign in the vicinities of the canal. The U.S. government had already become suspicious of Zelaya due to his dream of Central American unity, a project bound to threaten U.S. control in the area (Lancaster 1992: 2). When Zelaya furthered the offense by inviting British bids for a canal, the United States retaliated. In 1909, U.S. Marines landed to enforce a conservative electoral victory. Leaving the country briefly, the Marines returned in 1912 and settled in to guarantee conservative and thus pro-American victories in national 'elections' (Lancaster 1992: 2-3).

It is in 1927 that Nicaragua's now national and certainly nationalist hero determined that the ongoing American occupation and political control of Nicaragua

must end. Augusto Cesar Sandino, son of a coffee farmer and the first Nicaraguan political figure not to represent elite interests, was inspired by Mexican popular nationalism and labor movements there (Foorohar 1989: 18). His words ‘Patria Libre o Morir’ (free nation or death) would inspire countless Sandinistas and become central to Sandinista propaganda in 1979 (O’Brien 1990: 165). From 1927 to 1932 Sandino and his army fought against the U.S. Marines. The clergy played a pro-conservative role, saying Sandino’s imminent debacle would be God’s will. Leaving behind a trained Guardia Nacional led by Anastacio Somoza senior, in 1933 the U.S. Marines went home (Leiken & Rubin 1987: 41). As had been promised, Sandino laid down his arms. In 1934, Sandino was killed through trickery by Somoza’s National Guard after accepting an invitation to negotiate with the conservative government (Foorohar 1989: 23).

Soon after Sandino’s death began “the time of the Beast, the forty-six years of fear” (Rushdie 1997: 124). The Somoza family dynasty ruled Nicaragua from 1936 to 1979. Their brutal dictatorship transformed an already greatly impoverished majority into the Central American population with the lowest standards of living. This was greatly a result of the Somozas and their elite friends buying up most of the country and leaving peasants at the mercy of landowners. Worsening the situation was the transformation of land for agro-export purposes, such as cotton production. While many campesinos lost their jobs as a result of this change, others found themselves with seasonal rather than year-round income (Whisnant 1995: 120). Nicaragua’s GDP increased eight-fold between 1940 and 1980, but was felt only in the increasingly concentrated circles of political power (de Franco & Velazquez 1997: 85). The National Guard was wielded

remorselessly to eliminate any potential threat to the Somoza order.

In 1956, Carlos Fonseca formed the Frente Sandinista de Liberacion Nacional as an underground resistance option. It was only after the 1972 earthquake that the Frente truly gained momentum. This was due to the government's complete indifference to the death and destitution of thousands of Nicaraguans resulting from the natural disaster. Without food, basic education, and health care, suffering was now compounded by the grieving of lost loved ones. While large amounts of international aid poured into the nation, none of this capital went beyond the elite's greedy hands. Machinery sent to repair roads and homes was used in the construction of luxurious villas. Canisters of powdered milk and packages of sugar marked with red crosses and 'not for resale' stamps were sold at high prices in supermarkets, unaffordable to the hungry majority. Members of the bourgeoisie who had been complicit with the Somoza government as they benefitted from economic growth were now suffering material losses as well as being excluded from the latest jackpot. The church, which throughout Somozas' rule had given its silent approval to the government, could not justify this latest gross larceny. The Sandinistas took advantage of the situation to recruit new members from the clergy and universities. Finally, in 1979, just months after the assassination of elite liberal Joaquin Chamorro, the Frente seized control of the country. Many of the elite escaped to Miami and began lobbying for support.

The Sandinista revolution produced dramatic social changes on many levels. Redistribution of wealth was a priority. Between 60 to 120 thousand Nicaraguan peasants received land titles under the agrarian reform program (Lancaster 1992: 13; Hart 1990:

xviii). Resulting in widespread international praise, from 1980 to 1981, 80,000 mostly teenage volunteers were mobilized in a nationwide literacy crusade (Hart 1990: xviii). Illiteracy was reduced from 60 to 13%. Health care centers were built and medical services provided free of charge.

A minority of Nicaraguans with whom I spoke did not acknowledge the improvements brought by the revolution at first. Most describe the literacy campaign as 'un tiempo muy lindo' (a beautiful time); following three years of basking in socialist glory, however, that dream came under serious attack. In 1983, the U.S. blocked international development loans to Nicaragua and declared a partial embargo on the country.

The 1984 elections saw a 66% victory for the Sandinista leader, Daniel Ortega (EIR 1986-7: 11). Ronald Reagan, his ultra-conservative administration, and Somoza's now America-based elite were ever more worried by this democratic show of support. Daniel Ortega declared a state of emergency and began forced military draft. By 1985, the U.S. trade embargo on Nicaragua became total (Hart 1990 xix). Food became rationed. Economic growth was at a standstill. A contra-revolution which had posed little threat at first became more aggressive, with the U.S. funding equipment and soldier salaries at \$80 million per year (EIR 1986-7: 11).

By 1987, 60% of government spending was being devoted to national defense (Lancaster 1992: 6). In 1988, real wages had dropped to 10% of what they had been in 1980 (Lancaster 1992: 7). Hungry and depressed by the death of drafted loves ones, and seduced by U.S. funded campaigning, Violeta Chamorro for the United Opposition

(Union Nacional Opositora) took the March 1990 elections with a 54.7% majority (EIR no. 2 1990: 16). In their last days of government, the Sandinistas handed out \$700 million in nationalized properties), mostly to high officials in what is referred to as “la Piñata” (EIR no. 2 1990: 17)³. Economic restructuring was imposed by the World Bank in 1992, causing enormous job cuts which hit the women’s sector first. With suspicions of tampering shared by 75% of the national electorate, Arnaldo Aleman and his extremely right wing Alianza ‘Liberal’ won power in the 1997 elections with a 51% majority (EIR 1997, no. 1: 14). National elections are scheduled for November 2001.

The political insecurity and economic crisis that have characterized Nicaragua for the last 20 years is significant in situating growing Evangelical movements. While complexly motivated by a number of spiritual, personal, and social factors, the appeal of joining an Evangelical church in Nicaragua may stem in part from “the normative order and control it proposes” (Moriz 1998: 218; Pattnayak 1995: 2). For the majority in Nicaragua, this is in contrast to the unpredictability of everyday life. Since 1987, Nicaragua has been characterized as a Polyarchy (William 2000). While appearing to constitute a ‘democracy’, voting has become a ‘choice’ as to which elite group will dominate, and not a vote that transforms the unequal distribution of social power (Ibid). This is the context in which joining a church, whether seeking salvation, a community, healing, or praying for life changes is to assert control over one’s life, and can increase one’s chances of psychological and economic survival.

Choosing not to be Catholic

Nicaragua's ruling elite is and always has been Catholic. The Roman Catholic hierarchy, for reasons outlined below, is widely associated with corruption. In this context, there is a political dimension to being *Cristiano* (Evangelical) in Nicaragua that is socially significant and thus described here.

"Everyone must obey the authorities that are over him, for no authority can exist without the permission of God; the existing authorities have been established by Him, so that anyone who resists the authorities sets himself in opposition to what God has ordained, and those who oppose Him will bring down judgment upon themselves"
(Romans 13: 1-2)

The Roman Catholic hierarchy's stance as upholder of a right-wing status quo has been a constant in Nicaraguan history. During the first century of Nicaraguan independence, this 'divine' approval of ruling governments was guaranteed in exchange for enormous economic and cultural power. The Catholic church was granted the status of official religion in both Liberal (1826, 1838, 1858) and Conservative (1848, 1854) constitutions during the 19th century (Stein 1999: 176). During the Conservative rule of 1859-93, the clergy legitimized forced labor drafts in exchange for the government collecting tithes (Stein 1999: 177). The Holy See agreement of 1862 allowed the church to supervise public education and all publications (Whisnant 1995: 392).

This overt position of Catholic control ended with the 1893 elections. President Zelaya opened the door for non-Catholic proselytization and declared Nicaragua a secular state. Marriage became bound through civil ceremony, education made secular, and the public wearing of religious dress declared illegal. Despite Zelaya's actions, the

Catholic hierarchy remained a hegemonic force. When Sandino was assassinated, serving the conservative government's purposes, the national bishops' council declared this to be God's will. During the Somoza dictatorship, the hierarchy's silence at the disparity between rich and poor, and prayers for the ailing Somoza as late as 1976 demonstrated complicity with Somozan oppression.

The Nicaraguan revolution was unique in its encouragement for Christians and particularly Catholics to be motivated into participation by their religious convictions. Churches were decorated with revolutionary murals (Rushdie 1997: 43), and youth were recruited from Christian base communities (Feroz 1989: 132). This politicization in Christ was justified through the teachings of Liberation Theology, a movement which had been initiated in the early 1960s by a Brazilian priest committed to changing the lives of the poor. Vatican II (1962-5) played an equally important role, calling for the Catholic church 'to dialogue with the world, to confront it, to live within it, and to influence it' (Williams 1989: 1).

The Nicaraguan hierarchy (bishops, archbishops, and some clergy), consistent with its conservative stance throughout Nicaragua's history, demonstrated a very different interpretation of how they should influence the world. While Christian base communities largely composed of laity helped promote revolutionary ideals, the Nicaraguan hierarchy worked full-time to delegitimize the revolution. Archbishop Obando y Bravo, for the sake of preserving some influence within the new Sandinista government (Williams 1989; Sawchuk 1997), initially lent support to the Sandinistas; this solidarity, however, was short-lived. With its mass support independent of the

Catholic Church, the new Sandinista government represented a threatening ‘Parallel Magisterium’ (Davis 1997: 186). The blatantly Marxist content of the literacy campaign, the use of religious symbolism by the Sandinistas, and participation of priests in the new socialist government was not approved of by the Catholic elite. Furthermore, Christian base communities’ opposition to private property and businesses (Lancaster 1992: 14) was no doubt interpreted as a direct attack on the hierarchy’s centuries old economic power. Adding to this, Obando y Bravo’s refusal to denounce the contras produced increasing stress on church-state relations (Davis 1997: 186).

While the Sandinista government, to the Catholic hierarchy’s growing displeasure, continued to proclaim that no contradiction existed between Christian and revolutionary ideals, the United States fabricated its own version of the Nicaraguan Holy War. Starting in the early ‘80s, anti-Sandinistas in the U.S. lobbied in support of American military support by claiming Nicaraguan “communism” posed a “religious threat” (Stoll 1990: 223-4). Reagan and the American right referred to the contras as “Christian freedom fighters” and Obando y Bravo was baptized by the contras as heading the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (Stoll 1990: 219). In 1982, the Washington-based Institute on Religion and Democracy aimed at fighting communism in the Church gave an award to Obando for his work (Beeson & Pearce 1984: 258).

In the mid 1980’s, the Catholic hierarchy and its anti-Sandinista position received the blessing of the Vatican. It was after a visit from the Pope that church-state polarization became unreconcilable, on a day that many Nicaraguans, Catholic and non-remember still. Twenty Sandinista youth had just been killed in combat. Mothers of the

fallen asked the Pope to honor the soldiers by offering a prayer: the Pope refused (Lancaster 1992: 172). Soon after this, the Vatican named Obando y Bravo 'Cardinal', increasing the former Archbishop's divine authority for devout Catholics. While the Vatican and hierarchy's stance may have caused some Catholics to abandon previous Sandinista beliefs, it seems that the Catholic church's polarization between highly socialist base communities and contra-revolutionary leaders may have also caused Nicaraguans to question the high politicization of Catholicism. Whereas 95% of Nicaragua was Catholic in 1979, only 85% remained so by the end of the revolution in 1990 (Freston 1998: 337).

Following Violeta Chamorro's win in the 1990 elections, the Catholic Church remained the unofficial ally to conservatism. Government officials frequently appeared with members of the clergy and the Bishops maintained an anti-Sandinista tone in their publications and sermons (Stein 1999: 181). In the 1996 elections, before any scrutiny or recounts were effected, the Catholic Church along with the United States proclaimed Arnaldo Aleman President (Ibid). This was despite 71% of the public claiming irregularities in the electoral process (Ibid). Support for Aleman by the Catholic hierarchy has not been without reward for the Church. Managua's city hall under Aleman erected multiple \$35,000 statues of Saints (Alford 1999: 22). More recently, at the height of public outrage at the Liberals' refusal to acknowledge Sandinista gains in November 2000 municipal elections, the government donated prime land for the building of a Sanctuary in honor of the Virgin of Socorro (Narvaez in *El Nuevo Diario*, Nov. 27 2000). This central Managua property previously had been promised for the building of a heart

disease treatment center. The Catholic Church's collaboration with the ultra right wing Liberal government has been called the most total since the Somoza era (Morena 1999).

There is an implicit political consequence to increasing evangelical faith in the Nicaraguan nation. To be Evangelical, whether Apostolic or of another denomination, is not to be Catholic. The leaders of the Roman Catholic Church, members of the Catholic hierarchy, have used that faith throughout Nicaraguan history to mobilize support for conservative political agendas and governments. This power is diminishing as a greater percentage of Nicaraguans are born into or leave Catholic congregations for Evangelical churches. The following section presents the recent historical and political identity of Evangelicals, identified as *Cristianos* in Nicaragua. It aims to clarify the limits of Evangelical political mobilization in Nicaragua, while nevertheless outlining how being part of this spiritual movement is to become implicated in social change.

The Politics of *Cristianos* in Nicaragua

“We don't use the term evangelical. Evangelical implies missionary, American. We use the term 'Cristiano'. To say you're a Christian is to say that you are not Catholic. You can be from the Cristocentro, from the Baptist Church, from the Apostolic, and you are a Christian. This word places more emphasis on a way of life and vision than on a doctrine.”
(Salvador, church leader, Cristocentro)

In accordance with this correction to which I was subject early on in my field research, I use the term Christian or *Cristiano* throughout this study to refer to a panoply of religious options in Nicaragua. Referred to as 'Evangelical' in North America or Western academic literature, these include traditional churches, such as the Methodist

and Baptist groups, literalist/legalistic like the Nazarene or Apostolic church of Faith in Jesus Christ, or other Pentecostal groups such as the Cuadrangular, Iglesia de Dios, and Asambleas de Dios churches. Historically a minority, these churches form a non-Catholic Christian community. Inter-denominational activities reinforce this sense of community. For example, on October 28, 2000, Nicaraguan Christians held the first Day of National Clamor. *Cristianos* joined in prayer and song for divine wisdom in the solving of national problems, peaceful elections, and an end to corruption. A similar event was held in December 2000. Thousands prayed against general corruption and for the transformation of Aleman into a true and democratic governor (Rizo in *El Nuevo Diario*, Dec. 18, 2000).

There are 600,000 *Cristianos* in Nicaragua today, 85% of which belong to Pentecostal type churches characterized by laying on of hands, speaking in tongues, and worship through music (Davis 1997). Most Pentecostal groups I was aware of held *cultos* (term referring to non-Catholic sermon) at least four times a week. The Apostolic church had services daily. In contrast to the traditional Catholic Church, here lay participation is high, with multiple members being granted the privilege of leading the congregation in song, reading the bible, collecting donations.

While some members of *Cristiano* churches in Diriamba are well off, owning home, car, and earning \$1000 U.S./month, none to my knowledge are descended from the historically Spanish elite, nor is any member of the current ruling class in Nicaragua a *Cristiano*. In fact, regardless of individual members' economic status, the social status of Christians in Nicaragua is generally low. This is not only because *Cristianos* constitute

a religious minority. It may also be the result of popular association of *Cristianos* in Nicaragua with the counter-revolutionary movement.

Animosity and suspicion towards *Cristianos* was high during the Nicaraguan revolution. With Reagan and the contra-fighters claiming religious persecution and appealing to the evangelical right in the U.S., the Sandinista government began to suspect all Christians of being ally to the contra-revolution (Stoll 1990: 223-4). Directly linking the contra to evangelicals, tele-evangelist Pat Robertson and his Friends of America group started funding contra propaganda at \$2 million/year (Ibid: 282). In 1982, then minister of Interior Tomas Borge publicly denounced the Jehovah's witnesses, Mormons, and 7th Day Adventists for receiving CIA funds (Stoll 1990: 233). Despite the statistic that 80% of evangelicals were supporters/members of the Sandinista-backing CEPAD organization (Ibid: 242), persecution became real.

Pastor Ronaldo of the Cristocentro (a *Cristiano*) church in Diriamba recalls being accused in the mid-80s of being a CIA envoy. Sandinista officials in 1984 came to his home where he had just started his church, and warned him that he was being watched. Humorously, Ronaldo adds that when the country elected Chamorro and rejected the Sandinistas, he was in turn labeled a Sandinista. According to Ronaldo, the overwhelming Catholicism of Nicaragua creates a constant suspicion towards *Cristianos*.

When I arrived in Nicaragua in the Fall of 2000, based primarily on my conversations with Nicaraguans in Canada, I expected non-Catholic churches would be actively anti-Sandinista, perhaps even led by ex-conterrevolutionaries. To my surprise, the politics of *Cristianos* in Nicaragua today are unclear and heterogeneous. While the

link between religious identity and politics is evident for the Roman Catholic hierarchy, with government and Catholic elites buttressing each other's authority, there is no definitive link between politics and religious identity for *Cristianos*. On the national political scene, *Cristianos* have represented both left and right wing agendas. The right wing Partido de Justicia Nacional was created in 1992. It was closely linked to Nicaragua's fastest growing evangelical movement, the Iglesia de las Asambleas de Dios, as since disappeared from the public eye (Stein 1999). In 1991 and 1993, the short-lived pro-Sandinista Movimiento Evangelico Popular y Convergencia Evangelica parties were born (Stein 1999: 183). With 72,000 votes, the left leaning Camino Cristiano came third in the 1996 Presidential elections (Ibid: 184). The Camino Cristiano and the center-right Movimiento de Unidad Cristiano (MUC) are the two *Cristiano* parties that will have representatives running in the November 2001 elections.

The ambiguity of how *Cristianos* might mobilize politically in the future is supported by two recent surveys on this topic (Davis 1997; Haas & Smith 1997). Based on a 1990 Gallup survey, Haas and Smith conclude that Sandinista partisanship is higher amongst Nicaraguan evangelicals than amongst Catholics (1997). Choosing the left over the right is explained as related to the low income of most evangelicals. Davis also investigated voting trends amongst Protestants (80% Pentecostal) and Catholics in Managua. While making the same argument of intersecting politics and class interests as do Haas and Smith, Davis found that rather than support the Sandinistas, the urban poor were more likely to denounce the Sandinistas as these were seen as having failed to improve their economic situation.

I worked with *Cristianos* from various economic backgrounds, some with no regular income, without electricity or running water, others owners of large homes and cars with an income paid in much valued American dollars. None flaunted political colors, nor did I see any member of the Christian churches I attended at the political rallies throughout the Fall of 2000. Some responded to my questions of their partisanship: most declaring that this was not relevant and private⁴. I believe that such unwillingness to declare partisanship, while pointing to a subtext I cannot define with certainty, was derived from my informants' experiences, related in Chapters three to six, that their faith and God have a power to change the world far greater than that of mundane politicians.

Indeed, while not all Nicaraguans turn to the divine in the hopes of changing their lives and society, many Nicaraguans I met seemed dissatisfied with their political options and were cynical that change would result from their participation in elections (Davis also mentions this dissatisfaction in his study 1997: 192). Every day it seemed, corruption scandals against both major political parties could be found on the pages of the *Nuevo Diario* (pro-Sandinista) and the Liberal-backed *La Prensa*. All political parties and their leaders, to varying degrees, have been accused of stealing money or manipulating the democratic process in some manner. With little hope that political elections will change Nicaraguan society, and the association of Catholicism with the country's change-impeding corruption, becoming *Cristiano* is to actively seek improvement in one's life in a context of few choices for such change.

Social criticism from the heavens: *Cristiano* beings-in-the-world as critique of Nicaraguan society

**“Let’s speak politics. Politicians say, ‘I promise you peace.’ But the only one who can create peace is Jesus Christ. Man doesn’t have that power. Man wants to destroy. The only one who can create peace on earth, a peace based on love and sincerity, where there is friendship and people feel like they are one, only Christ has that power.”
(Apostolic hermano Carlos)**

Stoll critiques evangelical movements as “indifferent to oppression” through their insistence that “the only genuine revolution in Latin America will be spiritual” (1990: xiv, xvii). Spiritual revolutions, however, are not necessarily separate from social ones. While not supportive of any political party, many of my informants adopted a critical stance vis à vis current Nicaraguan affairs as part of their Christian being-in-the-world. Every two weeks or so, one middle-aged Apostolic brother would visit me to share the Bible with me, in the hopes that I would be touched by the Word. As the sky turned pink and then purplish gray one evening, he lamented Nicaragua’s sinful state in which most citizens are of *el mundo* (the world of sin, to be discussed in Chapter four). After quoting statistics on rising teenage prostitution, drug use, and crime, he offered the following critique of the government:

“You’ve seen in Managua, even the government is Catholic. They build big monuments, they invest money in this instead of investing money in creating shelter for orphaned kids or other humanitarian acts. God wouldn’t be happy with those acts.”

As the Nicaraguan revolution demonstrated and such a comment illustrates, spirituality is not necessarily reactionary. Hermano Marcos, an Apostolic church leader, related his interpretation of Christian justice which definitely coincides with a revolutionary vision:

“Jesus is not in agreement with men’s exploitation of other men. That doesn’t please him. It doesn’t please Him that a person who has money humiliates poor people. There’s going to be a time when those people will be made humble by Jesus and they will kneel down to the poor.”

Despite such declarations, I would not call *Cristianos* social activists in a traditional sense of the word, because their critiques of the current situation seemed so rarely countered with concrete action. In fact, the same relationship with the divine that grants *Cristianos* the confidence that their actions can change the world, and strength in everyday life, seems at times to impede the faithful from questioning their social constraints. For example, the pastor of the Cristocentro emphasized in more than one sermon that, “We do not depend on the government to provide. God is the only provider”. While expressing a common dissatisfaction with political options (discussed earlier on), this position seems to excuse any future government from committing to improve the lives of Nicaraguans. The Apostolic pastor frequently expressed his knowledge of families struggling and hungry in his congregation. For those who did not even have beans to go with their tortilla, the pastor situated this lack within a divine plan, explaining that God makes all his children pass tests. Apostolics may gain a strength in their experience of hunger as a symbol of their close relationship to God; however, when this strength is not directed to transforming a situation of deprivation with a socio-economic basis, is it appropriate to name this religious experience empowering?

With constant media allegations of the current Liberal government tampering with the democratic process, and growing wealth disparity, most Nicaraguans are cynical that social transformation is possible. This cynicism is all the greater because of Nicaragua's recent history. The Revolution (1979-1990) mobilized virtually the entire nation for leftist social change. Immense transformations in land and wealth distribution, health, and education, accomplishments that had seemed impossible before given Nicaragua's history of elite domination, were lived in this period. In spite of a country's massive effort, marking countless families who lost loved ones in the fighting, today the country is rapidly returning to Somozan levels of corruption and elite control. There is a hopelessness amongst Nicaraguans who feel that if the revolution failed, nothing will ever change.

While agreeing with the majority of Nicaraguans that social change will not come from a corrupt national political system and its leaders, members of the Apostolic church are not hopeless or powerless faced with this reality. As will be described in detail in Chapters four and five, devoted Apostolics monitor their actions, impulses, and contact with the non-Apostolic world on a constant basis. Their daily discipline is directed towards ensuring that God improve their life.

As will be seen through Carmen's narrative of healing in Chapter three, and again through Julia's description of food and money shortages in Chapter five, Apostolics are never without a plan of action because they can always turn to God. Apostolic men and women feel divinely empowered. This feeling of empowerment derives from their active and conscious organization of their lives in faith, which grants the devoted a hope of

reward in both this life and the next.

What are the limits of this agency and divine empowerment for bringing about social change? Herein lies the paradox with which I struggled as I listened to my informants, and which surges over and over again throughout this study. As will become evident in the following chapters, a variety of religious experiences grant my informants a deep sense of personal power. In present-day Nicaragua, many are exhausted and cynical due to what they perceive as the failure of past struggles for social justice in the country. Linked to this hopelessness, many Nicaraguans feel that they have no agency, and that their fate is sealed in a systemically corrupt and unjust society. Given this context, there is a revolutionary potential to Apostolics experiencing their everyday actions as effective towards improving their lives. The question remains whether these empowering energies are being directed to social change. Apostolics perform a relationship to the sacred as a religious minority in Nicaragua, and within a highly impoverished, gender differentiated and politically corrupt setting. How are these performances 'in the world but not of it' significant to the transformation or reproduction of this context?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

My interest is to describe performances and experiences of Pentecostal religiosity within the First Apostolic Church of Faith in Jesus Christ, Diriamba. My principal objective is to contribute to a phenomenological body of literature within the anthropology of religion (Burdick 1998; Comaroff 1985; Csordas 1994 & 1997; Desjarlais 1996; Jackson 1989; Laplantine 1999). Specifically, I am exploring how one knows the sacred through the physical and experiences one's corporeal being as sacred.

Phenomenology provides the principal framework for my analysis. Through phenomenology's concept of *being-in-the-world* (Jackson 1996; Merleau-Ponty 1962), embodiment comes to prominence as the body is experienced as inextricable from the self. The correlation between the Apostolic self and phenomenological approaches to knowledge and being renders phenomenology an appropriate theory for this study. The Apostolic person is under constant construction as a sacred self. This corresponds to the phenomenological understanding of the self as a constantly negotiated engagement in relation to the world. For Apostolics, knowledge of the world and one's position in it results from performances of faith in daily and church life. Corporeal and intellectual, spiritual and earthly, action and thought, are united in the experience of being in Christ's path. The descriptive tool of the *lifeworld* is useful in understanding both ritual and

everyday life as existing in/on a dialectic continuum. This blurring of boundaries between that which is conventionally regarded as 'religion' (i.e. church ritual) and everyday action in faith is appropriate to Apostolics' definition of *living their lives in Christ*.

In Chapters five and six, I posit that physical experiences of the divine may be constrained and informed through the body's history. It is Bourdieu's idea of *habitus*, elaborated upon by Jackson, which forms the basis of my argument (Bourdieu 1990; Jackson 1989). *Habitus* is Bourdieu's term for the "system of dispositions" determining how and what one experiences, and gained through status-contingent daily practices. How the body's sex constrains one's habitus and thus experience and knowledge of the world will be discussed through the work of Elizabeth Grosz (1992 & 1994). Grosz's notion of 'feminine' knowledges presents a useful tool for approaching women's glossalalic experiences explored in Chapter six.

Performance (Bauman 1975; Fabian 1990; Turner 1979 & 1987) is a theoretical tool that facilitates my understanding of a socially complex religious action: Apostolic women speaking in tongues. For the exponents of this theory on which I base my analysis, "Performance is a paradigm of process" (Schechner 1987: 8; see also Bauman 1987; Carlson 1993; Fabian 1990; Turner 1979 & 1987). Through performative action, cultural meanings may not only be learnt and reaffirmed, but also may be challenged and transformed. It is this "freedom" of the performance instance which appeals to me in terms of allowing me to articulate how women's glossalalic action, performed in church, may constitute socially transformative events.

Throughout this descriptive task, I intend to examine how forms of Apostolic religiosity are articulated to the wider social context, thus addressing issues of social constraint (economic, gender-based) and empowerment. With the booming growth of Pentecostal movements and given the popularity of the legalistic Apostolic church, the social impact of growing Apostolic membership must be addressed.

Phenomenological considerations: Being-in-the-world, habitus, and the sexualization of knowledges

Phenomenology in anthropology has been long associated with the study of religion. When Levi-Strauss claimed that religious texts could be analyzed independently of their production context, Paul Ricoeur adamantly argued that no cultural article could be understood independently from those participating in the text's meaning through their experiences of it (Ricoeur 1969: 48-51; Ricoeur 1981: 217-218). More recently, Michael Jackson has stated that, "subjugation of the bodily to the semantic is empirically untenable... meaning should not be reduced to a sign which, as it were, lies on another plane outside the immediate domain of an act" (Jackson 1989: 122). Phenomenology, the study of experience (Jackson 1996: 2), insists upon an examination of religious movements which travels beyond ontological definition of characteristic features and semantic deconstruction to a description of members' experiences (Csordas 1994: ix). Juxtaposed to an attention to the web of cultural meanings in which experiences are immersed and from which they arise, phenomenology has become an important means to an inter-subjective cross-cultural understanding.

Merleau-Ponty provided the groundwork for today's phenomenology through his convincing argument on the inter-connectedness and -dependency of mind and body in all human experience. His philosophical discussion of *Being-in-the-world*, which emphasizes that there is no being without the world through which it is constructed (1962: 140-145), argues for an understanding of the subject as process, constantly being remade and shaped by the world in which it moves. In Merleau-Ponty's formulation, the body is the mediator of world and subject (1962: 145). The *body-in-the-world* becomes synonymous with *being-in-the-world* (Ibid). Cultural phenomenology's approach to embodiment as constituting "as much a primordial aspect of human subjectivity as it is of sociality" is thus justified (Jackson 1996: 32):

"My own body that is flesh, as well as the flesh of language, the flesh of history, and the flesh of the world, is in every instance, both subject and object, both for-itself and in-itself. My own body prefigures its contact with and divergence from the other, for when one hand touches the other, the subject is for itself *already an other*."
(Johnson & Smith 1990: xxi)

The above quotation expresses the crucial flaw, from an anthropological perspective, in Merleau-Ponty's theory, mainly that it fails to acknowledge socio-cultural influences on experience. Granting such centrality to the body, and an arguably gender neutral body at that (Sullivan 1997)⁵, eclipses the socialization processes wherein experience is mediated. My use of phenomenology, informed by the habitus (Bourdieu 1990; Jackson 1989), Grosz's notion of the sexualization of knowledges (1994 & 1992), and performance theory, avoids such indifference to social context.

The phenomenological identification of the body as self elicits description of how

Apostolics construct their selves as Apostolic and separate from non-Apostolic society through their bodies. The corporeal being of phenomenology facilitates understanding of why and how transformed bodies are experienced as transformed selves in the Apostolic context.

Approaching the body as the material frame of selfhood and religiosity as based in action has been successfully described in other studies of religious movements (Burdick 1998; Comaroff 1985). In her study on Zionism amongst the Tshidi in South Africa, Comaroff states that “Zionists are what Zionists do; and their primary mnemonic is lodged not in scripture but in the physical body and its immediate spatiotemporal location” (1985: 200). Comaroff is interested in religious practices amongst the Tshidi as sites for the negotiation of colonial capitalism and both race and class-based oppression. She explores how Zionist “modes of practice... signify resistance to the institutions and categories of the dominant culture” (1985: 255). As Comaroff’s focus is on the shared Tshidi experience of living under and resisting colonial rule, one limitation of her study is that she does not explore differences in members' experiences. Closer to my project, John Burdick invites Pentecostal women to describe how religious experiences of their bodies transform their sense of self in the context of Brazil and in relation to their daily lives (chapter 4: 1998). Pentecostalism demands attention to experience and the body because, in contrast to other forms of Christianity, knowledge of the divine is not attained through texts but through the body (Laplantine 1999). This dimension of Pentecostalism, lived and practiced, constitutes my principal reason for using a phenomenological framework.

As the following chapters will describe, Apostolics experience daily practices,

observances, healing and glossolalia as embodiments of that Otherness which is the divine. There can be no permanence to a state of sacredness in Apostolics, for the divine can never be human without losing its sacredness. Thus, Apostolics are constantly reconstructing their bodies in Christ. The specific experiences through which Apostolics feel out their sacredness are always articulated to the social context. Where my study will differ from previous work on Pentecostal churches is that I will address not only how bodily practices of the religious movement transform lives and selves, but also how bodies inform the very experience of the sacred in the first place. For this aspect of my research, prominent in chapters five and six on becoming Apostolic and glossolalia, I am motivated by Bourdieu and Jackson's definitions of the *habitus*.

Bourdieu identifies the body as central to the shaping of experience in more explicit and culturally contingent terms than does Merleau-Ponty:

“the structures characterizing a determinate class of conditions of existence produce the structures of the *habitus*, which in their turn are the basis of perception and appreciation of all subsequent experiences.”
(Bourdieu 1990: 54)

Habitus refers therefore to the conditioning of the body through those practices which result from one's everyday participation in society, including such aspects as occupation, gender, and modes of consumption (Bourdieu 1990: 54). Thus, the habitus is both subjective and social, a historically based “system of dispositions” gained through the accumulation of past experience (Ibid: 54-56). Bourdieu provides an alternative to arguments long dominant in anthropology, in which symbolic systems underlie and determine experiences and bodily practices. Characterized by the works of Mary Douglas

(1996) on bodily symbols and Marcel Mauss's theory of 'bodily techniques' (1980), such arguments are problematic in that they ignore agency, and propose no alternative explanation of how social change occurs. Completely reversing the argument, Bourdieu argues that daily practices, not symbolic systems, form the basis of our socialization and cultures (1990: 72).

Bourdieu's *habitus* appeals to me for describing experiences of the sacred as what he is referring to is a non-verbal knowledge. For Apostolics, as is the case for rituals elsewhere (Bourdieu 1977: 116; Jackson 1989: 131-136), experiences of the divine can be and often are 'beyond words'. Knowledge of the divine is felt through healing, recognized through the heat preceding glossolalia, expressed in tongues indecipherable to both the speaker and the other members of the church. Recognizing another's state of sacredness is not based solely on 'reading' another's clothes or listening to another's language according to Apostolic guidelines on these aspects. An Apostolic who has experienced the Holy Spirit in their own body will know in a somatic identification of postures and movements, or in the feeling given off by their neighbor's body in a hug whether or not that person has been touched by the Holy Spirit.

I do not share Bourdieu's extreme position that the habitus is a pre-cultural and determinant reason for human behavior. Jackson has elaborated on Bourdieu's notion of the habitus, concerned with the persistence in anthropology of approaching the body a blank slate, passively inscribed with cultural patterns. Agreeing with Bourdieu, Jackson points out that, "[t]o treat body praxis as necessarily being an effect of semantic causes is to treat the body as a diminished version of itself" (Jackson 1989: 123). Breaking away

somewhat from Bourdieu's subjugation of the cognitive to the corporeal, Jackson outlines an approach to body praxis in which there exists an interplay of "habitual patterns of body use and conventional ideas about the world" (Jackson 1989: 124).

By locating corporeal and ideational influences in a dialectic given form in how we experience the world, Jackson aims to move beyond the dualism that has characterized Western thinking going at least as far back as Plato (Grosz 1994: chapter 1). Pursuing this same goal, Elizabeth Grosz uses Lacan's Mobius strip as her model for the relationship between mind and body. This image of an inverted figure eight can be twisted so that "one side becomes another", representing an "uncontrollable drift of the inside into the outside and the outside into the inside" (Grosz 1994: xii). Influenced by Jackson (1989) and Grosz (1994), my approach to experience and practice in terms of habitus is informed by an awareness of the blurriness and inter-connectedness of body and mind. I accept Bourdieu's notion that systems of dispositions for experiencing the world are developed through status-contingent daily practices; however, in my interpretation, dominant social ideas on how one should experience the world or what one can experience as a person with a particular social status are also part of one's habitus. With respect to exploring Apostolic men and women's experiences of sacredness, within this understanding I find a need to approach gendered differences not only in terms of habitual patterns of bodily use, but also in terms of dominant Nicaraguan expectations of what and how a man or woman should experience.

At least as far back as Mauss, within anthropology there has been an argument that certain bodily techniques are required to enter into communion with the divine (Mauss

1950: 385). Many religious traditions from Buddhism to shamanism formally address the education of bodies as a precondition for religious experiences (Asad 1997: 48). Lodged in the body, socio-historically determined and constraining all future experiences of the body, the *habitus* provides an explanation as to why different social groups may know/experience the divine differently. In chapter six, I discuss glossolalia, an aural and physical manifestation of receiving the Holy Spirit. It is historically highly valued in the Pentecostal church and predominantly practiced by women in Diriamba's First Apostolic Church. I wish to explore the possibility that this is a feminine knowledge of the divine in the Nicaraguan context of its emergence. My approach is informed by Grosz who insists on recognizing the "explicit sexualization of knowledges" (1992: 47):

"Knowledges, like all other forms of social production, are at least partially effects of the sexualized positioning of their producers and users; knowledges must themselves be acknowledged as sexually determinate, limited, finite."
(Grosz 1994: 20)

My identification of the glossalalic experience as a feminine knowledge is not a definition of a universal 'feminine' or reduction of knowledge/experience to biology. It is not the body type which determines the capacity for a certain religious experience. On the contrary, it is the gendering of that body, at the core of socialization processes and realized through daily practices, that is significant (Strathern 1996; Synnott 1993). The sexualization process which begins at birth and is socio-culturally contingent results in a *sex-specific coding of and propensity to certain experiences for certain bodies* (Grosz 1994: 18 & 191).

Gender studies in Nicaragua (Lancaster 1992; Whisnant 1995), as is the case

throughout the world, have insisted on the corporeal learning of gender. Echoing the power attributed to *habitus* by Bourdieu, Lancaster states that “the habits that die hardest of all are precisely those that are habituated in the body” (1992: 40). Lancaster insists that machismo, that complex cultural system of male dominance organizing Nicaraguan society realizes its values on the raw material of the human body “in the most intimate experience of gender, sexuality, and the body” (Ibid: 20). Chapter six will examine the identity of gender habituses in Nicaraguan society, the related sexualization of knowledges, and how these might affect men and women’s ability to enter into communion with God in the Apostolic church.

Phenomenology provides a means to engage critically with Foucauldian analyses that tend to exclude discussion of specific experiences (Grosz 1994; Jackson 1998; Lock & Scheper-Hughes 1987; McNay 1991). The value of this paradigm for my study of Apostolic religiosity lies in its dialectical presentation and blurring between subjective agency and social constraints (collective, historical, socio-cultural forces). Experience is situated within relations and between persons, rather than located within individuals or within a socio-cultural frame alone (Jackson 1998: 6).

A key analytic tool in phenomenology is the lifeworld:

“that domain of everyday, immediate social existence and practical activity, with all its habituality, its crises, its vernacular and idiomatic character, its biographical particularities... from which conceptual understanding arises but on which it does not primarily depend.”
(Jackson 1996: 7-8)⁶

The notion of lifeworld implies that each individual will have a particular experience, unique through their embodied negotiation of socio-cultural, economic and historic

forces: “the subject always figures, at the very least, as the site where these forces find expression and are played out” (Jackson 1996: 22). The *lifeworld* informs my conceptualization of experience as *inter*-subjective, individually mediated yet socially contingent (Jackson 1996). Through the various narratives which are presented in Chapters three, four, and five on healing, the world, and becoming Apostolic, the cultural constraints on individual experiences of the Apostolic faith emerge.

Amongst Apostolics, it is common knowledge that one cannot leave one’s “life in Christ” when one leaves the church space. Studying *lifeworlds* encourages the placing of the secular and ritual on a continuum of experience (Werbner & Basu 1998: 8). I studied the generation of meaning on a day to day basis. Chapters four and five address the construction of Apostolic sacred selves and maintenance sacredness through everyday life, while chapters three and six address experiences which are defined by its participants as extra-ordinary in the contact with God achieved during these.

Attention to the particular is part of the post-modern project (Enslin on Marcus & Fischer 1994: 541), and serves to subvert the “homogeneity, coherence, and timelessness” frequently attributed to the Other in anthropological renderings (Abu-Lughod 1991: 154). My choice of phenomenology is politically motivated: while recognizing the limitations of trying to represent ‘reality’, I have made my utmost effort to include informants’ voices and their ways of making sense of their lives in a manner which they would recognize as their own.

Performance: freedom in cultural acts

In Chapter six, theoretical instances from performance theory allow me to explore how Apostolic women's glossolalic action is socially significant. Fabian (1990) and Turner (1987) have posited a "freedom" in performances of religiosity wherein there exists a potential within the performance instance for re-structuring meanings and social statuses. This idea of "freedom" within the performative act informs my analysis in Chapter six at two levels. First of all, influenced by Bauman's (1975) and Fabian's (1990) inter-subjective (audience-performer) approaches, I ask how women may or may not be altering their social status vis à vis the men within the church when they speak in tongues. Secondly, the phenomenological dimension of performance implies that, in the instance of glossolalic action, social change can arise at the level of a social actor's embodiment during the performance. This is important for understanding how women, through their glossolalic action, can experience their bodies in new ways and transgress their Nicaraguan feminine habituses.

There exist multiple definitions of what constitutes performance, to which are linked debates over the origins of performance in the study of cultures (see Herzfeld 2001: 285; Sullivan 1986). I must emphasize that I have selected specific theoretical instances of performance theory. I regard these instances as useful vehicles towards increasing understanding of what is going on as women experience glossolalia within the Apostolic church.

As one of the originators of performance theory in anthropology Victor Turner stated, performances are "the basic stuff of social life" (1987: 81). It is through

performances, including daily embodied practices, impromptu communication, and staged events such as rituals and theatre, that people learn, create, and contest their culture (Herzfeld 2001: 285). It is in this sense that, according to Fabian, through specific performances one can come into contact with the process of knowledge creation of a culture (1990: 18). “Performance is a paradigm of process” (Schechner 1987: 8; see also Fabian 1990; Turner 1979 & 1987). For performance theorists such as Fabian (1990), Turner (1987), and Bauman (1975), the significance of a performance can not be predetermined by social systems or individual intentions. Against structuralist interpretations, widely recognized within this strain of performance theory is that the social context is under constant reconstruction. In the very instance of their manifestation through performances, social meanings, statuses, and structures, are always being adjusted, interpreted, re-iterated, or challenged (Turner 1987: 78). Herein lies the “freedom”, the possibility for social change within the performance (Turner 1979: 66-67): “Performance is action, but not merely enactment of a pre-existing script; it is making, fashioning, creating” (Fabian 1990: 12).

Broadly speaking, the performance framework has established its project on the inter-subjectivity of cultural meaning (audience-performer) (Bauman 1975; Carlson 1993; Fabian 1990; Schechner 1987; Turner 1987). Within this perspective, highlighted is the need to approach experiences of the sacred through the reaction of and relations between performers and audience. Grasping the extent to which a performance “*does something in the world*” (Laderman & Roseman 1996: 3) requires studying how social relations between performers and audience may be altered in the instance of the performance. This

focus is useful in Chapter six, to the extent that it allows me to investigate whether women's status within the church is challenged through their glossolalic gifts.

The potential for social change in a performance such as glossolalia is contingent on the form and content of a performance and interpretation of that form and content by an audience and by the performer. Bauman writes on the potential for altering one's social position through cultural performances:

“the performer elicits the participative attention and energy of his audience, and to the extent that they value his performance, they will allow themselves to be caught up in it. When this happens, the performer gains a measure of prestige and control over the audience – prestige because of the demonstrated competence he had displayed, control because the flow of interactions is in his hands.”

(Bauman 1975: 305)

Re-structuring/creative manipulation of the social order, evident in the actor-audience relation, is “often elusive, chimerical, short-lived” due to social constraints (Reinelt 1996: 11). Consequently, the moment of performance is often more important than its final outcome (Fabian 1990: 12). My analysis of the predominantly male audience's reaction to women's glossolalic gift during its manifestation is informed by this performative argument. Similarly, I include my own descriptions of Apostolic glossolalic performances in which I participated, as well as various descriptions by the women performers of their glossolalic experience and how this makes them feel. This information is important from a performance and phenomenological perspective. Even if some unbelieving readers or many members of the male audience seem to doubt women's claims to be receiving the power of the Holy Spirit, the women's actions, bodily rather than verbal, in the performance instance have real effects on the women's corporeal selves.

This leads me to the second way in which a performative approach informs my analysis. In Chapter six, I argue that long-term social change arises at the sensual level of women's glossolalic performances. In the instance of corporeally knowing the Holy Spirit and speaking in tongues, women experience their bodies in new ways. Where the *habitus* illuminates the limits to certain corporeal selves' ways of experiencing and knowing the world, in the event of women's glossolalic action there emerges a possibility for momentary escape, critique, and even transformation of those limits.

It is my interpretation that emergent in the women's glossolalic performance is a transgressed and thus transformed *habitus*. As will be substantiated in Chapter six, women's altered bodily states when they speak in tongues are not visibly contingent on the reaction of the male or female audiences in the church. Regardless of whether or not social relations within the church are changed in the end by the performance, all involved participate in the event's action. How one participates in performative action affects one's being-in-the-world (Gibson 1996: xx). This can be understood through a phenomenological evaluation of the performance, wherein "the experience is a concrete one" (Boal 1985: 141). The women know their corporeal selves in new ways in the instance of their divine inspiration. This experience is real in the phenomenological sense of that word, and thus has the power to transform the women's systems of dispositions or *habitus*es. In Chapter six, I will elaborate on the Nicaraguan context and social significance of the changes brought about at the sensual level through Apostolic women's glossolalic performances.

Performance, “giving form to” (Fabian 1990: 11), is both bound and free. A site for the highlighting of social constraints, it is also ideal for the legitimization, contestation, and transformation of these. While it is only in Chapter six that I explicitly apply performance theory to my analysis, how Apostolic varieties in experiencing and practicing the sacred may result in reinforcing or altering social relations is a guiding question throughout my study.

EXPERIENCING THE DIVINE IN ILLNESS AND HEALING

“I know God’s power to heal. He has performed many miracles in my life. Gloria to God. Many years ago, I was in Los Angeles with my wife and daughter. We were starting out, and didn’t have much. Gloria to God. And my daughter, one week, she was very bad. ‘Papa! My stomach it’s aching horribly’. The pain was bad, and for the first time we went to see a doctor and he told us that my daughter, she needed an operation that would cost \$2000 U.S. We didn’t have that kind of money! We were alone in the city, we didn’t have any family. We didn’t have any friends we could borrow from. My wife and I were very worried. One night, my daughter couldn’t stand up. She had a fever and her stomach, it was hard. She was ten years old. And my wife and I were panicking, because the doctor had told us she needed the operation, but we didn’t have the means. My daughter was crying ‘Papa, papa!’. So I said to my wife: ‘We are going to pray to Jesus for our daughter to get better’. And we got on our knees by the bed. And we started to pray. Gloria to God. ‘Oh Jesus, heal our daughter.’ And, I... Gloria to God (witness wipes his face, crying). I am not a healer. This is the only time that God used me to perform a miracle. But my hands, which were pressed across my daughter’s stomach, they became hot, very hot. And I felt this tremendous energy moving through my arms towards my daughter’s body. And she stopped crying. My wife and I prayed all night. In the morning, her fever was gone, and she is, Gloria to God, still alive today. I am a grandfather to her children. Since that day, I have known God’s power, and I have worked to remain in His path.”

The first night I attended the Apostolic church in Diriamba, it was a Tuesday.

Culto de oración, a night when all are welcome to kneel to be healed and prayed over.

Sticky October weather, the señoras around me in the women’s section nodded their heads understandingly as the leader evoked his panic before his daughter’s near death. Many punctuated his testimony with emotional Glorias a Dios! After finishing his attestation to

God's power, the church leader passed the microphone to the pastor, who called all wishing to be healed tonight to the front. All but five (including myself) of the perhaps 70 women walked calmly to the front and kneeled, backs straight. In a later session, I would note the discomfort of this position with knees weighing into hard tiles. Half the men and youth also went up, some finding a spot right in front of the central podium, others filling the aisles.

“Oh Jesus, the greatest Doctor, I command you to perform spiritual surgery tonight! For you are all powerful!” It is hard to hear much more than the first few sentences of the pastor's words during these healing prayer sessions. His voice quickly becomes drowned in 150 mouthed prayers for healing and help, some pleading loudly, others whispering. Swiftly, the pastor moves through the crowd, trying to offer his healing touch to as many members as is possible. Some speak in tongues trembling slightly or quaking violently, others bend forward in prayer, one man usually would shout, arms thrown out from his body demanding: “Help me Lord, tonight!”. These weekly healing sessions, differing in appearance from other prayer sessions only through the pastor's laying on of hands, last 15-25 minutes.

I will here begin to describe how Apostolics experience their corporeal selves as central to their religiosity. A shared intention of this Chapter and the next (Chapter four) is to establish the *corporeal basis to all Apostolics' epistemologies of the divine*. This provides the groundwork for the discussion in Chapters five and six, in which I approach differences in Apostolic men and women's knowledges of the sacred through the Nicaraguan gendering of bodies and experiences.

In the present chapter, I have chosen to focus on illness and healing, for three reasons. First of all, crucial to understanding what it feels like to be Apostolic is description of one's physical being as inextricable from the Apostolic self. This is particularly clear in Apostolics' experience of disease and illness. Contrary to the Cartesian dualism between spirit and body which has dominated Western epistemologies since the time of Plato (Grosz 1994: Chapter I; Le Breton 1990: chapter III), Apostolics experience the state of their bodies and the condition of their souls as linked at all times. Against biomedical explanations of illness in purely biological terms, disease is known to Apostolics as significant to their salvation. I hope to evoke what it is to experience the body as sacred through one woman's narrative.

Carmen's healing narrative is rich territory for phenomenological understanding of the work of religious healing. Carmen describes an altering in her sensorial order as she experiences an Other order of being, from heaviness to lightness and into heightened sensorial awareness, ultimately being cured. Arguing that this sensorial voyage is an essential part of Carmen's recovery, I am contributing to a growing body of literature that writes against intellectualist or symbolic reductions of religious healing's effectiveness (Desjarlais 1996; Jackson 1989).

To have one's relationship with God affirmed through a 'miraculous' healing such as Carmen's can make one feel very powerful. As will be discussed further on in this chapter, Carmen's access to a source of death defying power during the healing translates into a deep confidence that she can achieve anything in her daily life today. Consistent with my preoccupation throughout this study, divine healing constitutes a site for

examining whether personally empowering Apostolic experiences of the sacred are socially transformative.

While it is my argument that all practice becomes sacred in Apostolic lifeworlds, ritual and secular existing on a continuum of being in Christ, certain events are experienced as more important amongst Apostolics. This is the case of illness and healing, and the final reason for its focus here. That the first Apostolic church of Diriamba devotes one night a week to healing is itself indicative of its importance within the church. The high status of healing as a religious experience is most evident in its dominance of testimonial content within and outside the church (during proselytization).

Healing souls, sacred bodies

Ministry to the sick is part of the full gospel, and therefore has a place in many Christian denominations throughout time. Pentecostals have always had a praxis of prayer for the sick (Hollenweger 1999c: 179). My interest here is not in healers or the history of healing in Pentecostalism. Both topics surpass the available space in this work. In accordance with the dominant aspect of healing which I observed in the Apostolic church, I have focused on those individuals giving testimonies, most often members who have been healed themselves.

In the literature on healing in Pentecostal churches of Latin America, North America, and Africa, the Pentecostal therapeutic process has been shown to include the laying on of hands, baptism in the Holy Spirit, and/or exorcism (Csordas 1997; Laplantine 1999; Meyer 1998; Van Dijk 1998). In all cases, the sins contained in an individual

member's body are interpreted as responsible for the body's physical breakdown. Healing is therefore aimed at transforming a soul in need, rather than the physical symptoms of disease.

Sin's manifestation in diseased bodies was an experience familiar to all Apostolics with whom I spoke. One woman described a revelation in which God told her that a very ill relative had recently had an abortion. No doctor could diagnose the relative's illness. When the woman confronted the relative with her revelation, she broke into tears, admitting her guilt at the operation she had experienced as a sin. The Apostolic woman told her to ask God for forgiveness: the woman did so, and was cured.

Not all diseases are attributed to what Apostolics would define as wrongful action. Illness can communicate a divine message/intention to the sick, or to those close to the sick. For example, I did not hear of any child's illness in any church being attributed to a child's sin. In such instances, the child's disease is, however, usually still categorized as a religious experience. Friends and family know God's power through the child's recovery. This knowledge of God's power is not necessarily based on an intellectual assessment. Two women, one unmarried, 18 years old, and another in her sixties with grandchildren, described standing next to another member in the church on different occasions and feeling an enormous heat as that neighbor was healed. Both these women cited these events as ones in which they were in awe at God's power, providing more examples of how healing can be significant to those not directly experiencing the illness and healing.

The most common descriptions of illness and healing amongst Apostolics, however, are those in which the illness and healing constitute a life-transforming

experience of God's power, a power felt through one's bodily breakdown and restoration to well-being. David Le Breton has written that the body "is the flesh of the relationship to the world, indistinguishable from the man to which it gives its face" (my translation, 1993: 275). Accepting the "phenomenologically experienced individual body self" (Lock & Scheper-Hughes 1987: 6) allows an understanding of illness as an assault on that self (McGuire 1990: 291), as "operations on the body 'outside' affect and are affected by the self 'inside'" (Lester 1995: 485). For many Apostolics, that 'self' which is 'inside' and performed daily through dress, speech, prayer 'outside' is sacred (Csordas 1995). It is that sacredness, being part of the body of Christ, "having Jesus and not 'I' in your heart" (Apostolic pastor), which has grown for many Apostolics through experiences of illness and healing.

As it is my goal to focus on experiences of Pentecostalism, I have decided to include the testimony of one woman who was divinely touched and transformed through her illness. Carmen's narrative is, in my opinion, a clear example of the powerful role of illness and healing in the Apostolic church. I listened to more testimonies of healing in the Apostolic church than in any other church which I attended regularly. Testimonies are performances. They are intended to share, but also create and/or re-affirm faith in its listeners. This is in accordance with the Apostolic conviction that words harbor the power to transform its listeners. Awe-inspiring in the conquering of a lethal condition, Carmen's testimony serves to stress not only the power of faith, but also, I hope, the power of the testimonial performance on healing.

Carmen's narrative

Carmen is 32, has three daughters, all of whom attend the Apostolic church. Her husband does not practice any religion and “wanders in the world”. As a lottery ticket seller, he is the sole breadwinner in the family, earning between 40 and 100 cordobas per day (\$4-10 canadian). Their household consists of three dirt floor rooms and is rented, not owned. Carmen grew up Catholic, but had stopped going to mass when she got married at the age of eighteen. She joined the Apostolic congregation four years ago when she moved a few blocks from the church. Asked why she joined at that point, Carmen answered, “I have always believed in God, and every night I could hear the singing from the church. It sounded very happy. I went, the first time, to pray for my husband who was looking for work. The women welcomed me like their own daughter.” A year after first stepping foot inside the Primera Iglesia Apostolica, Carmen was baptized, publicly accepting Christ as her personal savior.

It had been a month since the Baptism in the name of Jesus. I remember staring down at my body and not recognizing it. Before the illness, I used to weigh 185lbs. When they brought me to the hospital, I weighed 91. Can you imagine? I was so thin, my skin was hanging as though I was an old woman. I had huge circles under my eyes, and I was always sleeping. Always so tired. One morning, I was doing the laundry on the patio, the girls were at school, and I felt as though I was choking. And then this pain shot across my belly. Like fire, the pain moved down near my uterus. And I said, 'I am so tired, God. I feel so weak. So weak. God, help me. Oh Lord! So recently I have promised myself to you.

Please help me, God'.

Everything went black. I don't remember anything after that. My oldest daughter, Lisbeth, took me to the hospital here in Diriamba. She took me in a taxi. My husband wasn't around. He hadn't been home for a few days at that time. So my daughter took me into the Diriamba hospital. And the doctors ran blood tests. Immediately, I was ushered to Jinotepe. It was in Jinotepe that I woke up, many days later. There were tubes in my nose, and one of those needles sticking into my arm. And I was so weak. My stomach was swollen and stiff. But everything else was so skinny! I had lost almost 100 lbs. in one month, since the baptism. And I was eating well that month. I have a good appetite. I woke up in a Jinotepe hospital room with lots of other patients. I was still too weak to speak. Everything in my body ached. I couldn't move. I was so weak. My stomach was aching. The pain down there... (Carmen winces) huge! I could not go to the bathroom. Everything in there was blocked. And it hurt! The doctor told me that I have kidney stones and that my bladder is swollen. He told me that I would not live long. Along with the kidney stones, I had advanced leukemia. I was 27 years old. I could not speak because I could not move anything. I remember thinking, 'God, will you forsake your daughter?' I knew I was dying. I could feel it in my entire body.

I was moved to the unit for people who are dying. And there, this old woman was lying in her bed next to me and she spoke to me. She said that she was old, but that I was young, and that with children I could not leave this world. She told me to ask God to cure me. 'God will save you', she said. 'Pray', she told me. 'He will help you.'

I woke up later. The old woman, she was gone and I asked to see another doctor. Many

doctors came to tell me that I was very sick, that I would not live. At that point, I had the strength to speak. And I told them that I would recover. 'God is powerful, and He will heal me. I know that God will not let me die.'

'Your faith is grand', one doctor answered. 'If you live long enough maybe we'll be able to get a spinal done at the Baptist hospital in Managua and start a treatment.' I was too weak for it and thank God, because you can end up in a wheel chair when they do a spinal. They have to extract bone marrow from your back and often you are paralyzed afterwards.

'God is great and when I pray to Him, He listens. God will heal me.' And I said this, but I could see the doubt in the doctor's eyes. He didn't believe me, but I was already feeling stronger. I kept praying, whenever I was awake I prayed to Jesus to save me. All I did was pray and think of my kids. I prayed in my sleep! About a week went by, and the first doctor came to see me again. I was still not gaining weight, and the cancer was advancing. I had still not peed, now for over a week. I was told that I would live two more weeks at best. I was scared then. I thought, 'I am dying. Jesus has abandoned me.' I said,

'I am going to go home. I want to be with my family, in my house.'

'You should reconsider that. No one at home can give you the care you need at this stage. Also, you are too weak to be moved. I have to insist against that idea.'

'I am going home. You can't stop me.' The doctor was getting agitated. He said,

'You won't even make it to the door of this room.'

I hadn't walked in over a week. Somehow, I managed to get up and get dressed. I

don't know how. And I started walking to the door of the ward, my legs wobbly. I couldn't even feel them, they were so weak. The Lord held me up. The doctor let me pass him in the door. But when I started down the hall, he yelled, 'Carmen, come back. You need intensive care! You can't just leave now'. I just remember focusing on the door of the hospital.

'Carmen! How are you going to get home?'

I walked out and collapsed in a taxi. I must have looked very ill. I told him my name, my address. I told him that I didn't have any money on me, and that I only want to get home. He took me, God bless him. I entered my house, and fell unconscious. My daughter found me there.

The second time I woke up, my stomach was even bigger than before. As though I was pregnant. I remember, I was in my bed at home, under many heavy blankets. It was June, but I was freezing. I had not eaten in days. I had not gone to the bathroom now in fifteen days. The throbbing was like a constant fresh huge internal burn. Unimaginable pain. I prayed to God that He would let me pee soon.

Nobody was in the room with me. The door was closed. I could hear the praying and crying outside. Many brothers and sisters from the church gathered for me then. They thought I was going to die. Some women took care of the girls who didn't see me in that condition, thank God. 'Oh señor!' I prayed, 'Heal me! I was wrong. I know Jesus, you will not abandon your daughter.'

Then, God performed His miracle. Oh thank you Lord! It was like a dream, but I was awake. I was in the bed, with my huge stomach, and the bed started expanding,

expanding. It became huge. I saw myself on the bed, as though from above. I could not feel my body anymore. All the pain was gone. Then, two huge white hands, draped in a white satin mantle, lovely, lifted the bed up, so gently. I was watching this as though from above, and it was so beautiful. Everything turned white. An opening appeared, like a cave. Oh Lord, thank you. Through it, I could see this beautiful field of the most brilliant green. And the light there, so incredible, so lovely. It was the brightest light. I cannot describe it. It is so white, so pure. It is like no light you can see on earth. In this illuminated field stand many women. I cannot see their faces, because they are hidden under prayer shawls. I can feel that they are happy. It is so beautiful. I walk to the edge. I feel pulled towards these women. Then I understand that I have to make a choice. God is giving me a choice. I don't hear a voice, but I understand that I must decide. I can enter this beauty, become part of it, or, I can return. 'God. I want to return. I want to live. I want to be a mother to my daughters. Thank you, God.' And I see that world move away from me, away, and then disappear.

That's when I heard a voice, faint. A woman from the church: 'Brothers, sisters. Our sister Carmen is dying!' I opened my eyes, and could feel tears streaming down my face. So many tears, I was soaked in their warmth. And I said 'Oh Lord, I am sorry because I doubted your Word. But from now on I'll serve you, I will commit my life to you'. And I have, because I had not felt God's power and my devotion had not been pure before the illness. One day I want somebody to give me a megaphone so that I can preach the Word. Wherever you want to take me, I'll go! Thank-you Jesus! Oh God! Thank you!

(Carmen's face is streamed with tears. She leans forward, head bowed, and turns

her palms upwards expressing her gratitude)

And I said, 'Hermana, I am healed.' I hadn't spoken in days. The members of the church were in awe. 'Bless you sister!' 'Bless you!'. I felt so calm. Many people came in to see me. I kept proclaiming: 'I am healed! God has healed me! Oh thank you Lord!' And I was crying and crying. Some sisters from the church started adoring God through song. In thanks. That was a miracle. It was the work of God. Thank-you Lord.

My husband was there at my bedside, crying. I asked him to help me to the bathroom. 'I am going to pee, God', I said. 'Help me God. I have to.' The pain was excruciating at this point. I sat on the toilet. And I prayed. 'Oh Lord! Help your daughter Lord! I have been suffering. Help me with this pain!' And I waited and prayed for maybe three hours. And after three hours, I heard a small trickle. It was painful, like burning, but I was laughing. 'Thank you Lord! You are powerful!' And I peed and peed and peed. I could see my stomach deflating. 'Thank-you Jesus!' I couldn't stop crying and laughing.

Two weeks went by. I started eating normally. Actually, I was so hungry, I was eating three plates at dinner! I gained weight. I felt like new. One day, I was drinking a beet drink and my father came. He said, 'This looks like thanksgiving'. And I said 'the Lord has healed me, father.' 'Truly, daughter? You don't feel anything, nothing?' 'Nothing, God has cured me.' And I started telling him everything. But he was doubtful. 'Let me see you walk.' 'No, I don't walk, I run'. And I ran up and down the room. And I was so happy. My father still was not satisfied. He wanted me to go to the hospital. To see. He didn't believe that such a serious illness could be gone.

'Father, this would be to doubt the work of God. I know that I am healed.' I did

not want to go. The pastor came and agreed with me that to have a checkup would be to doubt, but that also it could confirm the power of God. Finally, I agreed to go.

In Jinotepe, they performed all the exams on me. Blood tests, urine tests: everything! And when they found out that I didn't have anything, they said 'That can't be, it cannot be.' They were so surprised. I had known all along. All these doctors gathered around me. They were amazed. I smiled at the doctor, the first one who had told me I would die and said, 'I told you. It is God's work. God is powerful. He can do the impossible.' The doctor smiled.

Four years have passed since then. I am in good health. I am back to 170 lbs. When I go to Jinotepe, sometimes I will pass a nurse or a doctor on the street there and they will ask how I am doing. They point me out, 'That is Carmen.' God has different ways of revealing himself to each of us, tests for all of us. He is the only one who can give us the strength to survive them.

Religious and social significance of experiencing divine illness and healing

Carmen has not had a relapse of leukemia, which, according to medical doctors, should have killed her four years ago. Prior to examining the experiential aspects of Carmen's healing, I wish to identify a few elements of the content that are representative of Apostolics' relationship to their bodies in illness and healing as linked to the sacred. First, the testimony points to the role disease can play in testing faith and affirming conversion: Carmen did not feel committed to a life in Christ until she became ill. Her soul's imperfections were manifested on the body, forcing her to recognize these. A sense

of God's power, the need to place her life in His hands, concretized through a promise to serve God better than before, resulted in recovery. Her experience of death in which she had to decide to return to the earth is also an account of a rebirth in her commitment to a life in Christ.

Carmen's narrative also stresses the inferiority of medical science in comparison to divine power. Had she been of 'el mundo', she might have accepted the medical diagnosis of a lethal disease and not been saved. Carmen's story could be interpreted as a critique of Nicaraguan medical services, costly, inaccessible, and often fatally wrong. The three other Apostolic women with whom I discussed healing specifically insisted that seeing a doctor in Nicaragua is a waste of time. As one of these explained,

"If I go to the state funded hospital, I have to lose half the day waiting. That's time I could be working. I iron and wash clothes in my home. I lose half the day, and then the doctors give you a prescription which I can't afford. It is better to pray. Jesus is our doctor."

The prevalence of healing in new Christian churches has been attributed to inefficient and inaccessible health system (Slootweg for Chile 1998: 67): I think for some Apostolics, prayer is the only available option when sick. Apart from economic considerations, there is an obvious clash between medical theory about the body and disease, and Pentecostal experiences of the soul-full or sacred body. The medical scheme is entirely inadequate to describing Apostolics' experience of illness, and therefore can be expected to lose credibility amongst this religious group.

Thirdly, Carmen has total faith in a supra-human determination of whether or not she will live. Surrendering of one's physical well being to divine will is common in the

church. One man started his sermon on healing by declaring that he had two kidney stones and that he will be leaving this earth soon: “That is God’s will and Gloria to Him”. The pastor, during another culto de oración, stated that, “We all want to be healed. But I say, If God heals, Gloria to Him. And if He doesn’t heal, Gloria to Him”. With respect to the social consequences of new Pentecostal movements, there is a concerning element to such divine justifications of life and death. In Nicaragua, the distribution of health services as a result of the distribution of wealth is completely uneven. If a child dies of malnutrition, a tragedy I did not witness but which is widespread in Nicaragua, is that God’s will? There appears to be little room for government accountability and popular demands for health service improvements within the Apostolic experiencing of disease.

In his study of Pentecostalism, Laplantine stresses the unique path to salvation for Pentecostals. While in other religions knowledge of texts is considered the key to a life in faith, in Pentecostalism that knowledge which will save you emerges from non-verbal experiences of divine power:

“C’est en effet la connaissance qui sauve de la malédiction du péché, lequel doit être considéré comme ignorance. Mais cette connaissance, contrairement au Kardécisme, ne s’appuie pas sur l’étude de textes, mais sur une expérience: celle de la conversion et du baptême dans l’Esprit Saint.”

(Laplantine 1999: 105)

For Laplantine, the saving experience in Pentecostalism is conversion and baptism in the Holy Spirit. Many of my Christian informants felt those moments to be transformative for their faith and as a result their lives. Based on my research, illness and healing are equally if not more transformative to numerous members of the first Apostolic church. Not

phenomenological ly distinguishable from conversion for these members, experiences of healing are moments wherein the absolute power of the divine became a certainty. This certainty comes from a learning that is doubly powerful: it enters both mind and body at once. Like medical interventions, divine healings are “particularly potent, because they operate indirectly on the person’s entire mindful body” (McGuire 1990: 291).

As experience can only be evoked, and not reproduced, testimonial performances of divine healing invite its listeners to encounter this power for themselves. Perhaps desire for the mysterious, “authentic” (both corporeal and psychological), and empowering knowledge of the divine, so talked about in the Apostolic church, is one reason this congregation is growing more rapidly than any other in Diriamba.

Having briefly sketched the social context and significance of divine illness and healing for members of the Apostolic church, I move to examine how healing by the sacred feels to Carmen. This provides a phenomenological perspective on how religious healing can work, not only to cure illness, but also to make Apostolics like Carmen feel powerful.

Carmen’s sensing of sacred power

The ‘feeling out’ of Carmen’s healing narrative is inspired by Margulies’ (1985) sensorial analysis of a dream and responds to calls within the phenomenological impulse for a ‘sensorial’ anthropology (Howes 1990; Stoller 1989). There is a growing body of work aiming to bring the lived experience of religious healing into explanations of its effectiveness (Laderman & Roseman 1996; Csordas 1994 & 1996; Desjarlais 1996;

Jackson 1989). It is to this corpus that I contribute, inviting Carmen's "making sense" of her recovery to go center-stage.

While Carmen describes feeling stronger through her faith as early as page 57, it is on page 59 that she starts to describe her experience of being healed by a divine force. Carmen's sensorial awareness in this process differs dramatically from that of her ill and everyday beings in the world. How this altered sensorial state is integral to Carmen's recovery and sense of her own increased spiritual status will be explained using the works by Margulies (1985), Jackson (1989) and Desjarlais (1996).

To begin, a recapitulation and elaboration on the significance of Carmen's sensorial state during the healing 'miracle' is appropriate. Like Margulies in his sensorial analysis of a patient's dream, "I will give free rein to *my* sensory responses" to Carmen's narrative (1985: 374), while using his comments on synesthesia and narrative tenses as a guide to my own reactions.

Prior to the healing, Carmen describes being in a closed room alone (61). She is freezing, swollen, in pain, under a pile of blankets. Outside, she hears crying and praying. Suddenly, her bed starts expanding. She is outside her body, looking down at its stillness on a growing bed. She no longer feels the pain that has dominated her for weeks. The body from which she feels separate is lifted on the bed, as she continues to watch from above. Everything is white, and an opening appears like a cave through which she can see a field with women in it. She describes a white, incredible, pure, bright light, like none on earth, illuminating this space.

In this initiation into the religious healing, I am struck by the contrast evoked

between the space of her ill and dying self and that of her healing self. The small, claustrophobic, painful and sad room in which Carmen has been seemingly dying becomes an expanding glowing whiteness. According to Margulies' "The experience of spatial transformation goes hand-in-hand with the internal, emotional transfigurations" (1985: 375). Indeed, Carmen is released from the confines and weight of blankets, pain, and the stress of dying, describing herself instead as floating pain-free above her body, in awe at the beauty she is experiencing. From the perspective of cultural phenomenology, recognizing the inter-connectedness of mind and body (McGuire 1990; Jackson 1989), this emotional-imaginal experience engages Carmen physiologically as well (Laderman & Roseman 1996; Csordas 1996: 103): the healing process has begun.

It is as Carmen is describing "the brightest light" (62) that her verb tenses switch from past to present. In Margulies' analysis of a dream, this accompanies the "higher level of sensory awareness" that result from non-visual sensations dominating in a dream description (1985: 374). As Carmen switches into the present, a tense she abandons when she "awakens" from the healing, her sensorial being in the mystical world is transformed. From watching her body from above and seeing a green field with women in it, she is walking and then suddenly being pulled towards the women in the field. With sight one can stay at a distance, avoid interaction with the object of one's gaze, and even close one's eyes at will, thus granting seeing its widespread characterization as an 'active' and 'dominating' sense (Classen 1998: 63; Margulies 1985: 378). When Carmen is pulled towards the women in the field, she becomes more wholly and intimately involved in the moment. Without the choice to turn away (Margulies 1985: 374), her previously separate

body is now central to her now augmented sensorial awareness. In the final moments of the healing, Carmen describes understanding without any external stimulation, perhaps in a movement beyond the senses as we know them, that she has the will and power to be healed or die. Significantly, Carmen describes the religious healing as resembling a dream from which she does “wake up”: perhaps the dream is the only experience to which she can compare the altered imaginal and sensorial space which she comes to know in this moment.

From a phenomenological perspective, Carmen’s description of a simultaneously emotional, psychological, and physiological religious experience presents the strongest argument for the sensory being key to her religious healing’s effectiveness. Two recent anthropological studies, by Jackson (1989) and Desjarlais (1996) elaborate in two different but complementary directions on how that which is sensed by the patient can determine healing. With necessary brevity given the breadth still to be covered in this study, I nevertheless feel it is valuable to summarize these authors’ “making sense” of religious healing. While Carmen may attribute her recovery to faith, her experience of that recovery was complex and its process can be clarified, particularly for the secular reader, through these works.

For Jackson, Carmen’s religious experience may be evidence of how metaphors are lived and thus can heal (1989). Pushing beyond theories of metaphor emerging in the 1980’s (Johnson 1987; Lakoff and Johnson 1980), Jackson argues that metaphor is not only drawn from bodily experience but are psycho physical in effect (Jackson 1989: 143; see also Kirmayer 1995). For him, if our cognitive and physical beings in the world are

interdependent, as theories of embodiment in phenomenology do posit (McGuire 1990), then metaphors, a mode of thought, is a mode of action simultaneously: “I think” being inseparable from “I can” (Jackson 1989: 143). In this scheme, Carmen’s illness is mediated by the metaphor of her body as sacred. This same metaphor mediates her cure (Jackson 1989: 145). The healing moment’s sensorial description by Carmen could be seen to support this proposal. Where Carmen might think of herself as sacred on an everyday basis, in the crisis of sickness this metaphor is activated (Jackson 1989: 144). She knows/experiences an Other (sacred) sensorial order, one of an Other being-in-the-world. She is healed through this at once physical and psychological assumption of Otherness.

Where Jackson (1989) speaks in largely abstract terms about metaphor’s basis in praxis, interaction, and everyday life, Desjarlais firmly grounds his argument for attention to the sensory by evoking his ethnographic experience of healing rituals. Desjarlais critiques those intellectual and symbolic theories which would have successful ritual healing be the effect of altering states of minds, views of the world, or social relations (1996: 143). Desjarlais does not deny the multiple aspects of healing, but states that in his research with Yolmo spirit calling rites in Nepal “sensory dimensions of the rite worked to bring home its symbolic and ideological ones” (Desjarlais 1996: 159). The shaman heals, “changes how a body feels by altering what it feels” (Ibid: 143), this sensorial altering induced through a number of stimuli that include ringing bells, special foods, and incense. While not all will respond to these rites (Ibid: 149), those that do describe feeling “lighter”, “brighter”, and “cut” from the “fatigue” that dominated their body in illness.

Health is known to be restored when the patient not only thinks of their body as being healed, but also feels revitalized in their flesh.

Whether incorporating Desjarlais or Jackson's experiential reasonings, within the phenomenological understanding of the body-self (McGuire 1990; Turner 1997), the images and sensations of which Carmen speaks must be assumed to have engaged her emotions, mind, soul, and physiology as the inextricable whole these constitute (Laderman & Roseman 1996: 7). It is in this context that the sensual dimension of Carmen's experience of religious healing is crucial to Carmen's recovery and current well-being.

Carmen's narration indicates that her religious experience has not been effective solely in terms of reversing an illness. Carmen experiences herself during the healing process as close to if not part of the sacred. She has the power to decide whether or not she will recover or die. This ability to determine her own life or death, resulting in her miraculously healthy return to everyday life, alters Carmen being-in-the-world. Carmen feels powerful because of this religious experience. She knows her illness and recovery as part of a divine plan, and feels that she has been elected by God to live and spread the Word.

How is this sense of personal power gained through divine healing socially significant? Carmen's experience has granted her a confidence that she can succeed in any undertaking. By liberating individuals from the insecurities that can inhibit action, feeling divinely empowered is limitless in its potential to change individual lives connected to social change. The following chapter will provide insight into how Carmen's sense of

spiritual empowerment informs her everyday life. In chapter four, Carmen relates how she channels her empowering energies into defending the borders of her body and home against the sinful world (*el mundo*). It becomes apparent that this expected and conventional form of Apostolic devotion is limited in its transformation of Carmen's life or potential transformation of Nicaraguan society. I will argue that to experience empowerment in the context of a church's patriarchal expectations for devotion can be as binding as it is potentially liberating.

In considering the social impact of Apostolic experiences of health and disease, I must reiterate my major apprehension on this subject. I do not doubt that divine healing can be a rewarding experience; however, I was disturbed by my informants' spiritual and individual interpretations of their health in the context of Nicaragua. As mentioned earlier on in this chapter, medical services are inaccessible to most Nicaraguans. There exist state-funded hospitals, but, in Diriamba at least, these are notorious for handing out unaffordable prescriptions and for alleged lethal malpractice tragedies. Private hospitals are very costly. In short, Nicaraguan Apostolics are economically limited in their options when sick.

The unacceptably low standards and exorbitant costs in Nicaraguan medical services are part of broader national crisis, discussed in Chapter one. This crisis is visible in the increasing gap between rich and poor in Nicaragua. Linked to widespread corruption, unemployment, and plummeting currency value, this situation means that the country's economically marginalized are leading a more and more tenuous existence.

Within Apostolics' experiencing of health and illness as contingent on their soul, I

encountered no motive to transform Nicaragua's unequal distribution of health services.

I think that many Apostolics would continue to consult Doctor Jesus over a medical professional, if they did have access to one. My concern is that, at present, they do not have this basic choice and do not seem to find this situation problematic.

EL MUNDO AND THE BODY OF CHRIST

Nightly, the hymn “Somos el Pueblo de Dios, somos el Pueblo Especial”⁷, reinforces that members of the first Apostolic church of Diriamba are united and superior as divinely chosen ones. Defining how they differ from other churches, I was told by all informants that members of the Apostolic church are predestined to be saved. This was in contrast to the damnation of all other humans.

The Apostolic separation from the world is not only experienced in the afterlife. Being part of the Apostolic church means experiencing belonging to a sacred body, the body of Christ.

*For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.
(I Corinthians 11: 12-13)*

Readings from the books of I and II Corinthians and Ephesians (4-5) on a regular basis in sermons discursively construct this reality. Members do seem to actually experience their religious brothers and sisters as linked by a powerful bond. One man, in a discussion of the breaking away of many members to form the 7th Apostolic church of Diriamba, said that he would miss his long-time worship friends, but seemed genuinely tranquil and explained: “Distance is nothing for us, we are one in the body of Christ”. The following

description from a woman suggests that being part of the body of Christ is manifested on the flesh for some: “I feel in my own flesh what happens to another hermano. Deeply. As though they were my offspring. I feel it on my body. Because we are all one in Christ”.

This chapter explores how Apostolics in Diriamba experience their church as a divinely ordered nation, and their embodied selves as sacred citizens of this nation. These sacred bodies are in opposition to *el mundo*, the term commonly used by Nicaraguan Christians to refer to the world beyond the church. This world is characterized as damned, and this damnation seems to be linked to its chaos. Apostolics’ daily defense of their bodies in Christ as opposed to an existence in *el mundo* embodies a critique of particular aspects in Nicaraguan society. Widespread in non-evangelical Nicaragua, sins of *el mundo* denounced by Apostolics include smoking, drinking, swearing, telling crude jokes, watching soap operas, going to fiestas, adultery, theft, drugs, lying, gambling, wearing tight or revealing clothing, using makeup or jewelry, and fighting (verbally or physically).

Avoidance of sin is crucial for Apostolics: it is the principal manner in which to keep one’s passport to salvation. As one Apostolic leader stated clearly, “Sin is a border crossing. Illegals run the risk of death and deportation”. It was my experience that all *Cristianos* from various churches did aim to act in a moral way, avoiding sin and opposing their lives to *el mundo*. The Apostolics differ however, in that it is not sufficient to live one’s life in Christ. One also had to defend the borders of Christ’s body and one’s own body from the threat of *el mundo*, its sins, and sinners. This defense is practiced by Apostolics on a daily basis.

Risk of having the sacred body of the church and sacred citizens contaminated by

el mundo is reduced through a number of rules and practices which focus on the family and home space in particular. The targeting of the home and its investment with sacredness has been noted amongst charismatic Catholics in the United States and amongst evangelicals throughout Latin America (see Brusco 1995; Csordas 1997: 113-116). I am interested in giving the reader a sense of how devoting oneself to living in Christ in Diriamba demands a constant vigilance of sacred borders.

In the previous chapter, a young woman from the Apostolic church described her religious experience of illness and healing. Feeling empowered through her miraculous recovery from leukemia and kidney stones, Carmen devotes her life to His service. In what follows, Carmen describes the order of her home and the polluting sinful world from which she defends herself and her children at all times. Here, it will be seen how Carmen's sense of power through healing is channeled daily into avoiding 'el mundo'. Amongst Apostolics, Carmen may be particularly vigilant because of her close encounter with death and rebirth in the service of God. The following narrative is my own construction based on a number of talks and interviews with Carmen conducted in December and January 2000 and 2001.

"Since the healing four years ago, I lead a life of discipline. This is the promise I made. This is not to say that everything I ever talk about with friends or do is related to the Bible. No, but the Word is always there, and I try to act in a way that would please God always. Because the church is the body of Christ, and together we must honor that body. And to honor it, there is an order, a discipline that must be respected. Like the

women in church must cover their heads, and the señors and señoras sit separately, with the youth in the middle section. This is to maintain order, because when wives and husbands sit together, they talk and then no one is listening to the culto. If you go to another church, you will see that men and women sit together and there is chaos, and this chaos is also in their life at home. Because if you do not have order in the church, how are you going to have order at home?

It is not easy to bring up three kids in the Christian path. When they come home from school, I have to put aside my cleaning or cooking or whatever and help them read a passage of the Bible, and before every meal and bedtime they have to worship God. Because even for the unbaptized – my eldest is getting baptized this year – prayer is encouraged five times daily at least. As their parent, I must ensure that they show their appreciation of God in the home as much as in the church. This is especially difficult when, once a week, I fast: from six in the morning until one in the afternoon, or from two in the afternoon until nine. Always seven hours, a sacred number. I need to fast because the body is a sacrifice to God. Because we are not of the world, but we are in it. During my fast, I like to just close the door to the bedroom and concentrate on God, cleanse my mind, maybe read the Bible. Sometimes the devil tries to interfere with my fasting. I still have to prepare the kids' food, and sometimes I forget the fast and taste what I am making. A spoonful of beans, almost nothing, but the discipline is broken. Or the devil gives me a huge pain along the bone of my nose when I don't eat. And for this pain, I need to take an aspirin. But when you are fasting you cannot let anything of the world into your body which is a temple to God. So I have to not only be hungry, but also support this

impossible pain.”

(Carmen's eldest daughter Lisbeth who is 13 comes out of the back room wearing a tank top. Carmen calmly states, 'Daughter, what did I say about that top? That would not please God. Change it.' Reluctantly, the daughter leaves and returns wearing a T-shirt.)

“You see, it is difficult to always be caring for the kids. I try to bring them up properly, not only because they are my offspring, but also because they are young sisters in Christ. I can't always be watching them. I do try to bring them to church every night. They enjoy it because we have been going for four years now and they have friends. But like a couple of months ago, I was working in Managua, so I had a woman come and live here and take care of them. She was not Apostolic. One night I came home late. As soon as I crossed the threshold, I had this sensation, as though evil was in the house. I was very worried. The kids didn't hear me coming in. And I saw something horrible! All three of them, even Margarita who is only four, and the woman were watching disgusting images on the television. Horrible! I can't describe it. Pornography! And sinful things being committed between two men. The problem is that if you have television here, you get these terrible channels and the kids watch. After that incident, I spoke to my husband and we decided that I would stay home with my daughters. I am their mother, and in this house I am the only one who will protect them from sin. It is the parents' responsibility to ensure that the child knows the right path, but also that the child not be exposed to el mundo. In a second, the child can be corrupted, because he is like a parrot. What he see or hears, he repeats. If he hears swearing, for example, the kid will learn that. He grows, the bad habit

grows, the swear words multiply.

The children's behavior is very different in a home where a Christian lives, and the home of someone who does not know Christ. There is a difference in everything. You know, a lot of people, they come home from work or even from church, and they turn on the television. They watch soap operas. I know some women from the first Apostolic church who sometimes miss church to watch telenovelas. And the whole family watches! And they don't talk to each other. They just sit and watch, and they start admiring the world of sin which is in the telenovela. These are all about rich people and adultery, murder! And almost everybody in Nicaragua loves those shows. The pastor has warned us about the evils of those shows. He only watches the news and says that to let the telenovela into the home is like letting the world into the home. And the home is the one place outside the church that I can keep sacred. I let the kids watch some cartoons, sometimes there are shows about other churches. I don't let them watch the news because it is late but also because it is all about the terrible things in el mundo. They don't need to see that. There is already so much they are exposed to every day.

My daughters go to the public school. I would like to have enough money to send them to a private school. I have written to a woman who visited the church last year to ask if she would sponsor their education. It's not that I mind that not everyone is Apostolic. In fact very few are. It would be nice to have an Apostolic school, like the Assembleas de Dios have one. But what worries me is that my eldest daughter in particular has at least one friend who is a boy. I have warned her about boys in the world, and explained to her that our bodies are holy. And the pastor often mentions to the youth,

the teenagers, that they have to be more vigilant than other youth because they are part of the body of Christ. He told them just yesterday, that they are young, and the devil amuses himself with corruption. I'm almost certain another hermana must have expressed concern to him about a similar situation as my own. All my daughters have to come right home from school, and if they want to play, they know that their friends can come over here. Most of their friends are from the church. It is normal because the kids spend so much time there. Lisbeth, she is getting to an age where boys start acting like men. And, I don't know, I know she wouldn't do anything, but she could be touched in sin. Even as an adult, even though I always wear a long skirt, blouse, and dress very modestly, I am not always respected. Just the other morning, walking back from the market, a man in his car passed by and touched me indecently. I don't like thinking about it. It's not just that it is vulgar, a man you do not know touching you. It is worse when you are a daughter of God, because that is like the devil touching the body of Christ. I went home and fasted for the rest of the day and read the Bible. I am only safe in the house, because though I am much less bothered than when I was not Apostolic, there are still vulgar people on the streets and I have to go to the market, buy food, go see friends. There is always a risk as a woman. Some women stay indoors all day, but they have an empleada to go run their errands, or they send their sons out. But for me, the kids are in school all morning, and anyway, I wouldn't send my daughters into the market, full of degenerates and men of the world. It is too dangerous.

The other night my husband came home completely drunk. And I knew he had been wandering in the world. I know he sins. And I was very troubled. I was sleeping, but

coming in he woke me up. And he came to join me in bed. And I felt a force of revulsion. I said to God 'Please, don't let him touch me, don't let him touch your daughter, because he is in the world.' So I lay there next to my husband, praying: 'Please save me from the claws of the enemy, that he not touch me. Please don't let him use me. Or have you forsaken your daughter?' When I said that, a light appeared on the ceiling. It was so clear, so bright, there above. And I looked out the window to see if it could be the reflection of a light. No. 'Ah, it is you Holy Ghost. Thank-you God,' I said. You are with me. Thank you. And my husband fell asleep.

Body, home, and children are sites which Carmen feels are essential to defend in order to maintain her sacred world. She experiences all non-Apostolics and society outside the church and the home as the mundo, a threat to her soul, her children, and the safety (from corrupting influences) of her home. Through certain practices, such as fasting, prayer and Bible reading for the kids, limited television viewing, nightly church attendance, predominantly Apostolic and female friends for her daughters, Carmen orders her life to maintain its sanctity. Like all Apostolics, her personal fight against *el mundo* simultaneously serves to defend the congregation's status as a sacred body.

Carmen's fear of touch from all that is of the world, ranging from an aspirin to her husband, indicates that her body plays an essential role in her sense of sacredness. This is not unique to Carmen, nor to women in the Apostolic church. Most men in the church are not born Christian and have had to quit the sins of cigarette and drinking in order to be part of the church's and Christ's body. While some cannot believe they ever enjoyed these

activities of the world, others feel a need to avoid their friends from *el mundo* or places such as cantinas (renown for their alcohol and prostitutes) where temptation would be great. As will be seen in the following chapter on becoming Apostolic, men's addiction to alcohol renders control of this physical urge dominant to becoming and maintaining a Christian self.

Discipline of the body is central to Apostolic men and women's performances of their faith and maintenance of their sense of sacredness. Praying and fasting are two important religious disciplines practiced outside the church. Carmen and other Apostolic women with whom I spoke appeared to devote more time per week than their male counterparts to these activities⁸. All Apostolics with whom I spoke said that they prayed before every meal and often briefly before starting and ending the day. In addition to this, most married women consecrated between two and twelve hours, at least once a week, to praying for their family, economic situation, or for a close one's recovery from illness. Either separate from or in conjunction with these prayers, most women also fasted weekly. In contrast, male members generally fast only before Christmas and for Holy Week.

In Chapter six, I discuss the holy gift of speaking in tongues, manifested mainly amongst women in the Apostolic church. My female informants have suggested that less men speak in tongues because, amongst other factors, men are less obedient and do not maintain as close a relationship to God as do the women in the church. The greater intensity of women's disciplined religious devotion through fasting and prayer seem to support of this claim.

What is the social significance of Apostolics defending the body of Christ on a daily basis? Certain aspects of Apostolic being-in-the-world-but-not-of-it do embody productive critiques of Nicaraguan society. For one, avoiding that which the church defines as 'el mundo' may inform Apostolic children's adolescent and adult lifestyle choices positively. I was shocked and depressed when I began to notice male and, less frequently visible, female adolescents drunk, high, or selling their sexual services in broad daylight on Diriamba streets. The level of adolescent drug abuse, prostitution, and crime is reportedly rising in the town's region (Calero 1999a; 1999b). Carmen showed great concern for providing her children with strong moral guidelines and a safe home. This was manifested in her supervision of their Bible reading and prayers, control over her children's television viewing, and desire for an Apostolic school. I would hope that the structured lifestyle and divinely confident role models of parents such as Carmen may deter some Nicaraguan youth from getting involved in high-risk behavior.

Denouncing *el mundo* for Apostolic men often means reforming certain destructive habits. Common male practices in Nicaragua include getting drunk, being a womanizer, and fighting. These contribute to rising crime, consume a great deal of households' incomes, and often result in health problems, injuries, or even death. A detailed discussion of one Apostolic man's life outside *el mundo* and its potential social benefits is presented in the following chapter. Men who reject *el mundo* to become Apostolic must simultaneously reject these machista activities to the benefit of their personal well being, families, and Nicaraguan society as a whole.

From Carmen's narrative, it does not seem that her avoidance of *el mundo* harbors

a great potential for engaging with women's experiences of machismo. One way in which Carmen orders her life outside the sinful world is to adopt and impose on her daughters a conservative dress code. When Carmen tells her daughter that her tank top "would not please God", the implication is that a moral woman wears conservative clothes. This reproduces a dominant stereotype in Nicaragua that a woman's dress reflects her sexual disposition. As I found out for myself, wearing tank tops, pants, and skirts above the knee, is interpreted by men as an invitation to verbal and physical molestation in most parts of Nicaragua.

In another example, Carmen's performed defense from *el mundo* fails to challenge Nicaragua's machista gender order. This is problematic given that Carmen obviously experiences her position as a woman in this order as a social constraint. When she is touched indecently by a man on the street, Carmen is upset. While she experiences this abuse as normal given her gender ("There is always a risk as a woman"), Carmen does take action against this contamination from *el mundo*. She cleanses herself from the 'devil's touch' by fasting and reading the Bible. Through this religious defense, Carmen may succeed in healing herself from feeling violated. Based on my own experience, I think that such an ability for self-healing is valuable to any woman living in Nicaragua's machista society. It is in terms of transforming an environment in which women are always at risk that Carmen's actions are ineffective. Carmen battles being molested on the street in the privacy of her home. Her fasting and Bible reading is directed towards cleansing her body and soul, and no doubt Christ's body in the process, but not towards transforming Nicaragua's gender order.

Carmen is a woman who, because of a religious healing experience discussed in Chapter three, feels empowered: she feels she can overcome any challenge because of her relationship to the sacred. Despite Carmen's conviction of the strength she possesses through God, her actions do not transform that which may be the greatest constraining factor in her life: Nicaraguan machismo. This is not because her actions cannot potentially affect this system of gender relations, but because Carmen's does not direct these towards such a transformation.

While Apostolic men construct their sacredness outside *el mundo* through practices that critically engage with their experiences of machismo, Apostolic women's vigilance against *el mundo* does not similarly challenge dominant feminine experiences of machismo. No doubt this is because women's voices are excluded from the critique of Nicaraguan society on which Apostolic rejection of *el mundo* is based. As the exclusive leaders of the church, it is men alone who define what is wrong and sinful in Nicaragua. The male leaders of the church determine how faith is to be practiced by those who want to be saved in the body of Christ (the church) rather than perish in the world of sin. All Apostolics defend the sacred body of the church in their daily practices opposed to *el mundo*. Inevitably, women such as Carmen defend the church's patriarchal order in this process.

Asked to differentiate their church from the other Christian churches in Diriamba, I was repeatedly told by my Apostolic informants that while the Apostolics have organization, an order, the other churches were disorganized, had no order, and/or showed chaos. *El mundo*, the home of all non-Apostolics, is a land opposed by Apostolics to their

own disciplined lifestyle. Sinning is the activity of the world's inhabitants. It is not surprising that the physical plays such a role in Apostolics' sense of sacredness.

Avoidance and exercising of embodied practices are what separate Apostolics visibly and morally from non-Apostolics. In the predominantly Catholic society that is Nicaragua, the Apostolic is constantly exposed to *el mundo* whose sin is associated with spiritual death.

Having to be in this world, maybe even cohabiting with sinners, means that one's skin is often the only barrier between one's embodiment in Christ, and the devil's realm⁹.

BECOMING APOSTOLIC

Knowing life on earth as a duality of *el mundo* (sin) and a life in Christ, Pentecostals are expected to experience a complete transformation in their selves in order to call themselves Christian. Whereas in Catholicism or traditional Protestantism, being Christian is defined as a state of the inner self or the soul, in Evangelical Protestantism, the new self must be performed in everyday life through a number of practices which vary according to denomination (Laplantine 1999). This daily way of being-a-Christian-in-the-world is described by Apostolics as ‘building’ one’s self in Christ.

Members of all three evangelical Churches with whom I worked emphasized that their denomination differed from Catholicism and other evangelical Churches because of their emphasis on actions. Hijacking the President’s slogan plastered across Nicaragua on yellow and blue signs, I was told ‘Obras, no palabras’ (acts, not words) was the way to identify a *Cristiano* from their church. In accordance with this, practices form the core of Apostolics’ self identification as such. Socially, Apostolics’ practices also serve as markers of their Otherness for people outside their community.

In this chapter, I propose to further examine how becoming a *Cristiano* or *Cristiana* changes one’s lifeworld. Which bodily practices, other than those seen in Carmen’s narrative, serve to ‘build’ one’s life in Christ? How do these differ for men and

women? Because “following the Christian path” was defined as the core of Christian experience, it becomes essential to describe this path as performed discursively and physically by informants.

“If you make a pact with the Lord, you have to change completely. You cannot change only 90 degrees. It has to be 360 degrees, and you have to be a completely new person”
(Apostolic leader).

Certain anthropologists of Pentecostalism have defined the transformation from sinner to Christian as instantaneous, performed through Baptism in the Holy Spirit (Meyer 1998; Van Dijk 1998). Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ in the Apostolic Church represents a formal symbol of one’s membership in the church, and Baptism in the Holy Spirit is that moment in which one is “touched” by God. Apostolics readily explain that these are events in a gradual process of transformation. Manifested in daily observances, with faith challenged and fortified through temptations and tests, this process is hard work. It is a challenge to “remake the self”, as Csordas has called this process at the center of Pentecostalism (Csordas 1997: 65).

The two following narratives of transformations attest to this challenge while providing a glimpse of that which the process of becoming Apostolic entails. One of these is from a man, and the other is from a woman, whom I will refer to as Rafael and Julia respectively. Both these informants were not born into their current faith, but have worked to lead *Cristiano* lives for different reasons. Because non-*Cristiano* men and women live life quite differently in Nicaragua, becoming *Cristiano* does not constitute a rejection of the same past behaviors and attitudes for men and women. While these individuals’

stories are specific to their circumstances and experience, they nevertheless speak to the general experience of becoming Apostolic. Each narrative will be followed by an analysis of its social significance and representativity based on interviews with other informants and my own participant observation. In the case of Rafael, his narrative is based on one two hour interview which I have edited to focus on how he remakes himself as a *Cristiano* man. For Julia, this narrative construction emerges from three formal interviews plus numerous informal chats throughout December 2000 and January 2001. As I spent much more time with this latter key informant, my analysis is more in-depth for her case.

The narrative format is presented in the first person, as was the case in the interviews. This also echoes the testimonial form in which individuals share their experiences in the church and proselytization contexts.

El hombre nuevo: Rafael's freedom from the world

Rafael is in his early fifties. He is a professional, and has worked with the electrical company for over 30 years, a rather unique situation in Nicaragua where unemployment is over 50%, often unofficial, and rarely constant. Rafael lives alone with his wife now: his nine children are adults and have moved out. His wife is not Christian, nor are his friends outside the church. He has attended the Apostolic Church for just over one year now. He was never active in any other religious group.

"I used to be in the world. I was lost. It's a miracle that I accepted Jesus. It is true that I sinned a lot, for a long time. I never killed anybody, but I committed much adultery. I was doing those things blindly. And drinking so much, I almost died twice. I couldn't distinguish between good and bad. I didn't think when I acted. Going to church, I feel liberated of all that. In the year that I have been a member, I have only missed twice. Once it was raining, the other time...I don't remember. But when one goes, one feels as though a big burden has been lifted from one's shoulders. When I worship God, I feel light. But when I was in the world, I used to think 'Why would I go there?'

One day, the hermano Manuel came to visit. He came to speak to my wife, to share with her the Word. At the time, I was trying to stop drinking. I was struggling. The liquor provoked that encounter with Jesus. I had almost died for the second time, and I wanted to stop. I wanted to take control of myself. So when Manuel came, I listened. What he was saying made sense to me and at that moment Jesus touched me inside. My wife, she was not touched. A bit after that, I went to find a church because after I accepted I felt alone. The first day I got there, I felt happy. I felt like all the hermanos were my family, and they are still my family. We are one in Christ.

My family doesn't visit me much. I did not have good relations with my children. To tell you the truth, it's pretty much only my wife and I. Some of my kids and my friends were astonished by the transformation in me, to see that I didn't drink anymore, that I wasn't looking for women. Two of my kids visited recently, the first time in years and they were very happy with the path I am on. A friend of mine at work kept insisting he didn't believe me. 'No creo! No creo, Rafael!' I told him to come to church and see and he

laughed. My family is happy that I am on this path, even though they are not Christian. My wife, she can trust me now. If I say, at night, I am going to the culto or I am going to this house for an interview, like tonight, she just says 'Okay'. She knows that I am not lying, that she can trust me. She doesn't think I am going to be with another woman.

When God sees that you are tired of sin, and that you are fighting to move away from it, then God touches your heart and he changes you completely. But I do feel tempted at every opportunity. The temptation appears everywhere. In one word, one glance, it is there: an occasion to do wrong. For example, I meet someone on the street who I knew in the world and he says 'Let's go get a few drinks'. At the beginning, it was very hard. Drinking is a need which is not rational. But I would just say 'Yeah, sure, sure' and walk on. I leave it at that. I have to be strong and not succumb to temptation. Temptation is always accosting me because I spent so many years in the world. I have made a pact with God and I want to honor it. With colleagues at work, I could swear so easily. They tease me and call me 'el hombre nuevo' (the new man). But if they are happy calling me the hombre nuevo, I'm happy with that. If I become angry about it, I would be pleasing the devil. The devil would like me to lose control, to swear back or maybe fight. I used to fight, but that is not God's way.

Sometimes, when someone swears at work or insists we go drinking, I try to teach them. When they ask me to do something wrong, I explain, 'I'm evangelical' and I show them by example that that is not the way and that there is an alternative. My friends are not convinced that it changes who you are whether you drink or not. They say 'It's the same, a person who drinks and a person who doesn't!' I tell them it's not, but so far none

of them have come to church with me.

Except at work, I don't see my old friends anymore. I've distanced myself a bit from them because they don't believe me, because I was so perverse! I don't go to fiestas anymore either. Everyone goes there to drink, meet women. No, that's no longer for me. When I am not working, I'm at church, or I watch t.v., or I read the Bible. Every day I read the Bible for at least half an hour. I sit down and read one page or half a page, then maybe I get up and get something to drink, a glass of water, and then I continue. Half an hour to an hour a day. When I start work in the afternoons, I can do this in the morning, first thing. If I'm working early, I do it when I come home. I enjoy this. I really like it.

Sometimes I go with the hermana Lidia to evangelize. I know almost everyone in town, because I have been working here for so long. And when they see that I am Christian, people are shocked. I am proud of having accepted Christ in my heart. My life is changing. I don't expect to be perfect. I just ask Jesus to help me be a better person. To help me quench my thirst, my weakness for alcohol, for women. Going to a fiesta can be a need too, dancing is a need for some people, but I control that need now, with the help of Jesus. I think to myself 'do I want to be in the world? Was I happy in the world?' And I know I was not. Drinking, smoking, going with all sorts of women all the time, and afterwards I would feel empty inside. When I wasn't drunk and destructive I was unhappy. I almost died, my wife was very worried about me, my children couldn't respect me because I was so weak!

Now, I am careful not to hurt anyone, not to get into fights. I know that violence is wrong. I don't get upset if someone tries to insult me. Christ helped me out of sin. He

helped me out of alcoholism. He saved me from cigarettes. I used to smoke two packs per day! He changed me. He freed me from the world."

Rafael's situation is unusual in that his wife is not *Cristiana*, and he has decided to start on the Christian path at quite a late age. Otherwise, however, the life of sin he has left behind, characterized by alcohol, cigarettes, women and aggressiveness, is characteristic of my male informants' experiences in *el mundo*.

A most interesting aspect of Rafael's narrative is the way in which he characterizes his transformation from sinner to *Cristiano*. First of all, he establishes that he had already stopped drinking and was struggling with this change from alcoholism when Jesus touched him. Rafael, therefore, experiences his relationship with the divine as a partnership. Rafael has a goal, and a divine force aids him in this project. This is a typical description of the conversion by my male informants. There is a crucial contrast with the women's narratives I gathered. Typically for the women, Jesus or God makes them feel or tells them through a dream or voice that something they are doing in life is wrong. Whereas the men describe themselves as taking initiative in their transformation and therefore somewhat controlling their destiny, the women credit their transformation to the work of the divine.

This difference in men and women's narratives may stem from Nicaraguan society's expectations from men and women and gendered experiences of life. Though I would not say men are more often than women the financial heads of households in Diriamba, even unemployed they are expected to take the role of authority within the home. In terms of social expectations of behavior, Lancaster found that while women in

Nicaragua will be praised and exhibit self-abnegation, men tend to be self-promoting (Lancaster 1992: 93): this in itself could be a reason why men partially credit themselves for changing lifestyle in contrast to Apostolic women.

To overcome a physical addiction such as alcohol is to experience “a victory of the will over the body and of reason and rational choice over irrational drives” (Moriz 1998: 206). Most of my male informants named needing help with their alcoholism as the main motivation for becoming Christian. Perhaps Rafael describes himself as in control and strong in resisting temptation, because of the nature of the sins he is abandoning in this transformation. Cigarettes and alcohol, as Rafael himself states, are experienced as needs: they are chemically addictive and thus constitute irrational and physical hungers. Addicts feel their needs to quench the addiction as stemming from forces greater than themselves. Thus, addiction is felt as a loss of autonomy. This is clear in Rafael’s description of himself as previously weak and out of control. It is perhaps only normal, given the circumstance of addiction, that Rafael feels that while Jesus helps, he himself needs to be strong and in control. Because of the physical locus of the temptation for an alcoholic, it may be impossible to experience one’s resistance to the temptation as stemming entirely from a power outside one’s self associated with that body.

‘El hombre nuevo’ and social change

Alcohol and adultery are perhaps the most pervasive ‘sins’ amongst men in Nicaraguan society. Both are equated with masculinity, and excess in these domains symbolizes culturally-valued virility (Lancaster 1992). The work of staying the Christian

path for men can be particularly challenging, when, as Rafael describes is the case, old non-*Cristiano* friends present countless opportunities to re-enter the world, and do not necessarily respect one's conversion.

With respect to Nicaraguan or Latin American social life, the growth of evangelical religions can have a very positive effect. I am not speaking here in moral/salvation terms. In the system of machismo which continues to structure much of Nicaraguan social life (Lancaster 1992; Whisnant 1995), the physical body is central. Spousal abuse, sex, alcohol, and dare deviling are some of the manifestations seen as appropriate to a 'real' which equals 'dominating' man (Guttman 1996: 236). Urges to cheat and drink are widely accepted as 'natural' for men throughout Latin America by both men and women (Bustos 1980: 38; Lancaster 1992: 20). This is a result of what Lancaster called the 'productive relations' of machismo. As Lancaster states, machismo, "systematically produces values that are realized both 'ideologically' (as certain manifest notions about the nature of sex and gender) and 'materially' (in the most intimate experience of gender, sexuality, and the body)" (Lancaster 1992: 20).

What happens when the material productions of machismo, its body of 'real man' practices, are experienced as signs of weakness rather than strength? For this is exactly the way Rafael and men in the Pentecostal churches defined their lives and any lapses back into the 'sins' which are the pride of the macho man. The Apostolic Church, like other Christian churches in Nicaragua, is restructuring men's experiences of their bodies, locating pride if not pleasure in control of physical impulses rather than abandonment to these. Certainly, men like Rafael are inviting challenge to notions of the 'natural' man as

the 'machista' man.

In her study of evangelicals in Columbia, Elizabeth Brusco (1995) found that women used the Christian faith as a feminist strategy towards improving their own status and situation within the home. Family values are at the core of evangelical religions *everywhere*, and practices within the home a target for change. As the managers of the household, women's status is thus recognized as important by churches. By bringing their husbands and sons into the church where alcohol and adultery (principally) are declared sins, this also improved the material situation of the household (Brusco 1995). Another manner in which men's transformation can affect social life is thus by channeling less of the family's income into the maintenance of extra-marital relations and alcohol and cigarettes, and more into necessities such as children's education and food (Green 1993; Slootweg 1998: 60-61). In addition, where the husband ends adulterous behavior and feels a responsibility as a father, marital and family relations are bound to improve (Slootweg 1998: 57).

While Rafael's kids are grown, his narrative points to improved family relations. His wife trusts him when he says he is going somewhere, and does not suspect that he is with another woman. The implication is that his partner lacked confidence in him, and justifiably so as he admits being a "mujeriego" (womanizer), previous to his adoption of Christian ways. Rafael is estranged from his kids, but some have started to visit him again now that he is a Christian. Both of these changes are experienced as positive by Rafael. In terms of Nicaraguan society, such individual transformation in men's behavior does have a positive impact. 'New men' like Rafael embody a challenge to dominant concepts of

manhood through their renouncing of widespread machista practices such as drinking, sleeping around, and fighting.

Julia's redemption

Julia is 35 and hopes to have enough money someday to complete a commerce degree started at the University in Managua six years ago. She is currently looking for work as often there is not enough money for food in the home. She has four children, all from a previous marriage. Her two eldest are now young men and live with her ex-husband. For eight years she has been with her new husband, the matrimony being legalized in the Apostolic church five years ago. Julia is subject to domestic violence, physical and verbal, whenever her husband comes home, which is seldom: she herself admits that he is keeping another woman. This situation is an improvement on her first marriage wherein she was not trusted to leave the house, and saw her two sons thrown against the wall during one of her ex-'s tempers, resulting in a fractured skull and permanent brain damage for one boy.

My first night in the Primera Iglesia Apostolica, I noticed Julia. Deathly pale, yet standing tall with her chin up, and smiling with utter tranquility, she seemed an angelic queen. Her movements were calm and confident during the songs and prayers. When it came to the moment of healing, her pleas in Spanish and tongues were exuberant. The look of joy and calm on her face following her near-nightly speaking in tongues convinced me of the appeal of faith.

Julia's narrative is valuable in at least two respects for the current study. First, it

describes how processes of becoming Apostolic are unique for women, with particular importance attributed by Apostolic women to dress, prayer, and suffering. Julia's narrative also presents one woman's difficult life, a life of physical abuse and material shortage, a situation which contrasts dramatically with Julia's demeanor. Julia moves and talks as one who is powerful and can overcome anything. John Burdick has described how Pentecostalism grants confidence to women outside the church, this "against the habitus of deference and self-effacement" which, in his study, emerges from being non-white and a woman in Brazilian society (1998: 128). Julia's story supports Burdick's assessment of Pentecostalism transforming women's self-images, and yet underlines the complexity and difficulty of calling this religious-based transformation "empowering" for all women.

"Eight years ago, I left my husband to live with the man I call my husband today. My mother had just died. I was unhappy with myself, with my life, and with my new husband. So I asked God, 'Please, change my life'. I knew the Apostolic church because when I started seeing my husband, he brought me there. He was born into that church, but he has been in the world a long time. At that time, I believed that he was Cristiano. That was before I started living with him. He never came to church after those first few times. But I liked the Primera Iglesia.

So I started to go to church. Now, before the baptism, I used to wear pants. And the Bible says that women should not use men's dress. I was very vain with respect to my dress and I loved makeup. Ah, and I smoked! But I asked God to cleanse me. There are people who say that to wear earrings or jewelry is not offensive to God, but yes, it is. It

says in the Bible that women shouldn't use gold, shouldn't cut or style their hair. They should be natural. Thanks to God's work, I rid myself of vanity. I didn't own any skirts or dresses before. I loved tight pants. But I mean very very tight! And God performed a miracle. He changed me completely.

When I started to go to church, eight years ago, I saw all the women in the church dressed decently, according to God's will. I felt like a clown! With my earrings and makeup, even high heels. The Holy Spirit makes you feel it when you are doing something wrong. I didn't have even one pair of the low sandals you've see the women in the Apostolic church wearing. So, every time I went, I was feeling more and more ashamed and I would sit one pew further back every time. As a sinner, one feels shame. One day, I found myself in the last pew. And that shook me. No one could see me there, but I was still exposed. I cried like a child. And I told God 'I need you. I have problems with my compañero'. He had not married me then, and I said: 'I wasn't born to be a mistress. My husband forces me to drink'. He was already mistreating me then. That day I said, 'God, I will not come back to this church, because I don't have skirts and dresses, only pants. I will only come back if you let me come like the other women'. I was ashamed! And I didn't have the money to buy skirts.

The day after, look how God performs miracles! My father came by and said, 'I am here to bring you a blessing.' So I said 'Gloria to God!'. He stopped my daughter who was just leaving to pay an outstanding bill at the corner store and said 'What are you doing?' She explained, and he said 'Give that money back to your mother. Take this instead'. And he handed her 200 cordobas (20\$). 'Gloria to God!' I said. When my

daughter left, he explained to me that he had just won the lottery'⁰. And, he had promised the Lord to give each of his children 20,000 cordobas! That day, he gave me 5,000 c. And I remembered my promise, that if I had the clothes I would return to church. I told my father that, Gloria to God, I would now go to church. He was very happy, because he is a member of the Apostolic Church in Jinotepe and he never thought I would stop being so vain. 'Hija,' (daughter), he said, 'I am glad you are going to dress appropriately.' Because we must be humble to worship God, and how can you act humble in tight pants, with makeup and your hair done? So, that day I went to Jinotepe and I bought a pile of dresses and skirts. And I gave all my pants and tank tops away. And I took all the makeup, just keeping a few for the kids to paint their maps with, and some earrings for the kids' dolls, and I gave all the rest away. And that day, I went to church in my low sandals, long skirt and blouse.

When I left the house in those clothes, I felt strange. I was walking to the Church with my Bible under my arm, and I felt ashamed. I wanted to hide the Bible. I felt a ball in my throat, like fear. 'Help me God,' I said. 'People are staring at me.' Because I was not wearing makeup, and I was very pale. A woman selling barbecued meat at the corner said,

'You girl! You're crazy! What have you done? Those evangelicals are crazy!'

'No,' I said, but I felt ashamed. 'It's my decision. I want to search for God.'

'Go back! Don't be crazy. Let them be crazy. You look so beautiful in your pants. They really suit you. You are so pale without makeup. You look like a corpse!'

I hid behind my Bible and shook my head and kept walking. And everyone was

staring at me. All the people who knew me called out, 'What is going on? What happened to you?' and 'How those pants really suited you. You looked so beautiful!'

Finally I got to the church and there no one stared at me. It was the first and only time I was ashamed to be dressed like that and felt ashamed to be a Christian. That night, I still sat at the back, but I was glad to be like them. And by the end of the evening I felt like singing the Glory of God. See how God performs miracles?

After that, I was in a hurry to start my life in Christ. I read the Bible in every spare moment available. I prayed out loud and in my head all the time. I fasted at least once a week. At every moment I ask God to change me. When we are in the path of God, He says He is going to polish us. So I rely on that promise. When I accepted Christ, a year after attending the church, I asked Him for sanctity, sanctity, sanctity. I wanted to change the way I talked, my way of laughing, even the way I walked. Everything! I thank God because I feel the change.

God has performed many miracles in my life since I became Apostolic. Just the other day, we were without food. My husband, sometimes he forgets to bring us food. In early December, he came and brought 5 kg of rice, 5 kg of beans, and a big container of oil. That lasted a long time, but just the other day we finished it. For one day we didn't eat. The second day, the girls went to bed without dinner, and when we woke up, I told them to join me in prayer. I didn't want to send them to school hungry. I prayed to God to help me, to not let my daughters go hungry. And, you know what happened? The blessing came! We were praying at the table and I heard a knock at my door. It was my sister coming to visit from the North. And, thanks be to God, she had brought grocery bags full

of all sorts of foods: rice, beans, tomatoes, eggs! Sometimes God tests our faith and that is when he performs miracles. I thank God for His tests because they make me stronger and a better Christian.

In Nicaragua, the woman suffers. She works the whole day without rest. And without salary, because we don't get paid to work in the house, just food. And sometimes the husband is so heartless, he'll even emphasize that the food is something you owe him. Sometimes, if I'm asking my husband for money for soap, for example, my husband says 'If I give you food, what are you complaining about?' When he goes to get drunk, you have to open the door anytime he comes home. You have to listen to his nonsense, his insults. Here, almost all the men are like that and many women get mistreated. There is so much violence. I have to put up with a lot from my husband. My first husband was worse.. But I have to put up with a lot because I am a Christian woman. Even though the Bible says that when we are in the bondage from slavery, he will come and rescue us from that bondage. But the Bible also says 'Woman, you have to obey your husband in Everything'. It's very hard and sad to live with, when one in the couple is Christian and the other is not.

A few months ago, I couldn't take it anymore. I asked Him to change my husband. I wanted an answer that night. So I prayed and cried for three hours, then collapsed on the floor, waiting for the answer. My husband was sleeping, totally drunk. He had done what he wanted with me, and then fallen asleep, plastered. If He was changing my life, He should also change my marriage, no? That night, I said 'I am your servant God, don't let him mistreat me. Free me from the hands of this man.' And I prayed and prayed. From

that day on, the man does not beat me. I have been evangelical eight years, but it has only been eight months since He has changed this man into an obedient sheep. Now he comes home like a dove. He doesn't hit me anymore. And God has changed me too. Because I used to always ask my husband where he is going, when he is coming back, and that was bad for the marriage because he would get angry. Now, I don't speak a word. I have asked the Holy Spirit to seal my lips. When my husband comes home, after seeing the other woman, or drunk after many weeks, I pray 'Holy Spirit, let me be quiet, don't let me speak. Seal my lips God.' And my husband has noticed. He says 'How sweet you have become. I thank God to have such a pure and holy wife.'"

"... My husband hasn't been home in two weeks. A few days ago, the Pastor came to visit me. He had gone to visit the mother of the woman my husband is seeing. Apparently, my husband had promised to marry her. That woman, I don't want to speak badly of anyone, but she is not good. People say she sees many men. And she's a liar, because she told a woman at the church she doesn't want anything to do with my husband anymore, but then she goes to find him. So, the pastor came and said, 'If your husband comes to request a divorce, accept it.' Because in the Christian church, the woman is allowed to divorce if the union cannot be repaired. When I was not a Christian, I left my husband. I don't think that was the wrong thing to do, but I did not know the power of God. But, when the pastor spoke to me, I said 'No hermano. Thank God I have been doing a chain of fastings and thanks to Him that divorce won't happen. I believe in Jesus Christ, and the Bible says that what God puts together, none can separate except for Him.' I believe in that promise, and on the evangelical radio stations, I have heard many

testimonies of women with worse marriages, full of violence, awful! And their marriages are saved by God. God changes their husbands. And God says, 'Everything you ask in my name, it will be given to you. So I am trusting His word.'

"...If it weren't for the power from God, I would've done something bad the other day. About a week ago, a thought crossed my mind. I thought, 'I don't want to live anymore. I want to disappear'. But not alone, with the kids. Because I could not continue fighting. I feel so unhappy. I am not doing anything wrong, and yet the forces of evil are upon me. Immediately, the Holy Ghost and God answered 'No, you are not alone.' And that thought spread in my mind, and when I looked, I was smiling. And I said 'You're crazy, lying devil. I am Christ's daughter. Me? Killing myself?! No, Christ has chosen me for Him.'"

In contrast to Rafael's narrative, Julia identifies God, interchangeable with the Holy Spirit and Jesus in Apostolic doctrine, as the instigator of change in her life. God removes her vanity, even providing the miracle of her father winning the lottery so that she can afford new clothes. Divine power is also granted credit for "sealing her lips" and stopping her from committing suicide. Despite even the pastor recommending she divorce a cheating, alcoholic, and abusive man, Julia states that God is going to save her marriage.

Julia's narrative, constructed from three interviews, can be analyzed towards understanding various aspects of women's situation in Nicaragua and within the Apostolic faith. As these elements recurred in other women's narratives, and because Julia herself emphasizes these, I will focus on the following overlapping aspects: women's dress in the Apostolic church, tests and miracles, suffering, to which is linked living with a non-

practicing husband, and prayer. Following this examination on becoming an Apostolic woman, Julia's sense of her own power will be discussed.

The significance of Apostolic women's dress

The importance of dress was obvious for Julia and expressed through her critique of her former 'vain' self. Dress here will be taken to include not only clothing and accessories, but also behavior and bodily movements (Arthur 1999: 3), thus addressing not only the symbolic but also the practical and habitual transformations of women who become Apostolic. In speaking of how she became a Christian, Julia launched immediately into this description of the change in dress. Long skirt, blouse, no makeup or jewelry and low sandals: these are markers of Apostolic women in Diriamba. As Julia's story shows, these markers do not necessarily elicit social respect beyond the church. On her first walk to the church, many townspeople critiqued her transformation, one calling the evangelicals crazy. Within the church, however, Julia's tight pants and makeup is presented by herself as a major barrier in her feeling part of the Apostolic community, and she feels this barrier has come down when she enters the church for the first time in "modest" attire.

The Apostolic church harbors, to the best of my knowledge, the most formal rules for women's dress of all the churches in Diriamba. Strict dress codes are equated with strict religiosity and has been named a symbol of social control in American religious groups (Arthur 1999: 1). Amongst the Mennonite in the U.S., women's dress has been described as representative of their separation from the world (Arthur & Graybill 1999:

10). Certainly and as Julia's story relates, Apostolic women are noticed and set apart by their *Cristiano* and non-*Cristiano* audiences in daily life.

Arthur and Graybill state that when gender roles are restricted within a group, restrictions on women's dress serve to encourage an internalization of this role for women (1999: 10). Women within the Apostolic Church seem more devoted than men, a greater percentage of women attending every single night than their male counterparts: perhaps this is a result of the constant reminder of their faith and promise to God being against their skin. In the Apostolic church there are no rules of dress for the man. Correspondingly, the Apostolic man is more likely to participate in the world, through paid work, and is less restricted in his participation within the church. His undistinguishable dress permits unnoticed participation in the world when necessary (on Mennonites, Arthur and Graybill 1999: 17). The Apostolic man's worldliness which is opposed to (ideally) Apostolic women's domesticity corresponds to Nicaraguan norms of male and female activities (Lancaster 1992: 93).

Humility is highly valued by the women with whom I spoke, seen as essential to building a close relationship with God. In dress, this is most blatantly expressed in women's wearing of a head scarf during ritual worship (in the church or at home), explained as a symbol of woman's submission to God. Within minutes of my first entry into the church, I was lent a head scarf, making clear that even a visitor should not transgress this basic rule. Just as there exists norms of dress for the women, deviance is subject to informal methods of social control. Carmen felt shame at her early church participation in jeans and makeup. One night during my research, a young woman

accompanied her grandmother to the church in shorts and tank top. Despite her grandmother being welcomed through the customary handshake and words 'Paz de Cristo' ('Peace of Christ'), the young woman was ignored. She was not lent a head scarf, perhaps her 'immodesty' was perceived as too great to be aided by such a measure.

Julia does mention that she also wishes to change the way she talks, moves, and even laughs. While she does not state this, I suspect humility is expected in these aspects of "dress" also. How religious ideals such as women's humility inform movement is a topic that demands further investigation.

Tests and suffering, prayers and miracles

Through my interviews with Julia, it became evident that her story was dominated by a characteristic typical of women's narratives and some men's perception of their lives. This characteristic is what has been termed 'spiritualization', and refers to an experiencing of circumstances and options as controlled by divine will and power (Beckford 1999: 48). In the case of Julia, she credits God not only with her adherence to Apostolic rules of modesty: whether or not she and her children will eat, the outcome of her marriage, and her very will to live are located by Julia in divine hands. As will be further discussed towards the end of this chapter, despite this experiencing of divine influence over her daily problems, Julia does experience some control over her life through prayer.

Many of the Apostolic members struggle on a daily basis to pay rent, water and electric bills, and of course get food on the table. The challenge is greater for women,

most of whom in the Apostolic church work unpaid within the home, or receive very low wages working as domestic help (normal wage for domestic help in Diriamba is 10 cordobas/day: 1 Canadian dollar. An egg costs 1 Cordoba). As in Julia's situation, many women throughout Nicaragua are dependent on husbands' contributions to the household, and these are not consistent, especially when the man may have one or more other women and households to support, not to mention the costly addiction to alcohol.

Julia's description of a test of hunger and the miracle/blessing of her sister bringing food echoes the divine definition of hunger provided by the pastor during a January sermon:

“God punishes those he loves. The Lord is the father and his nation must survive tests. When your house is collapsing above your head, when you feel you have no strength left, when you need food, when there is no bread, not even beans or rice, you must think the People of God go through tests. And God is there with you.”

Instead of accusing her husband of negligence or identifying a need to become financially independent from him, Julia cheerfully recounts the “miracle” of escaping hunger that time.

Despite the energy Apostolics devote to separating themselves from *el mundo*, as seen in Chapter four, the reproduction of Nicaraguan society's dominant gender order within the church represents an ironic intrusion of *el mundo* into Apostolics' lives. The Apostolic church, its expectations of submissiveness for women, literal readings of the Bible (Ephesians 5; book of Timothy), and framework of life in terms of God's will, encourages women's submissiveness to men in daily life. This includes taking abuse from spouses for some women. It certainly is not the official mandate of the church for women to accept such behavior: the pastor recommends Julia seek a divorce (though seemingly

because of her husband's involvement with another woman and not for the abuse she has suffered). Nor is it the interpretation of every Apostolic woman; however, Julia does state that she "put up with a lot" from her husband because she is Christian. Julia is praying and fasting for her marriage, and believes her husband will be brought by God to the Church. Her husband promised to come to church in January 2001, but had not done so when I left in February of that year. Julia maintains her faith: "If He was changing my life, He should also change my marriage, no?" For Julia, her faith is aimed at a double salvation/liberation: in the afterlife, and in the home (see Kamsteeg 1998: 88).

Mentioned by Julia as influencing her faith in fighting for her marriage are the testimonies of women on the evangelical radio stations, attesting to God's power in changing husbands and matrimony. Such testimonies are also exchanged amongst women in the church. While not addressed by the male leaders or pastor, women in the church talk about the difficulty of being Christian without husbands' support. Gossiping one night on this topic in the Church pews, a friend shared with me the following story of God's miraculous conversion of one abusive husband. It is worth including, for while I did not meet women who had experienced such "happy endings", like legends such tales are exchanged amongst *Cristiana* women aiming to transform their husbands in all three churches with which I worked:

"I knew a woman whose husband was not Christian, and he made his wife's life hell because of her faith. And, as he is a man of the countryside, he had a machete. And he would use the machete to hit her. And this woman is so devoted, but her husband wouldn't allow her to go to Church. When she tried, he would chase her with the machete and beat her. So every night, the woman would put a sheet over head and go pray in the living room. He got annoyed because he couldn't sleep with her praying

there. One night, her husband got up and decided he was going to make his wife shut up. He got his machete and was standing over her in the living room, machete raised above his head, ready to strike, when some force made him look back at the bed. And there, in the bed, was his wife sleeping! Well, he was shocked and frightened and he fell to his knees and started to cry. His wife came out from under the sheet and he told her that he had seen in two places at once. And she said 'that's God's angel taking care of me'. That's when her husband realized the power of God and he asked her to pray for him, which she did."

While offering hope for husbands' transformations, such narratives also feed the Christian notion of suffering being rewarded in a divine scheme. Suffering is of course a Christian ideal glorified by Christ and bringing salvation. According to Melhuus, in machista societies of Latin America, suffering is a female virtue and does actually empower women by increasing their self esteem: "the more you suffer the better you are" (Melhuus 1996: 247). Such a social valuation of suffering in Latin American women can be located in the continent's religiosity where the Virgin/mother are feminine ideals, exemplary in self denial (Slootweg 1998: 59) and write female suffering as sacred (Bohman 1984: 316). Julia does seem to gain strength from surviving constant challenges. Her suffering, extreme to the point where she considers killing herself and her children, is experienced as tests whose successful overcoming bring her close to God. The life of challenges is therefore experienced as a road towards increasing personal redemption, a status of sacredness being gained in the process. In her proud stature, confident relating of her life, and certainty that she is one of the chosen ones, Julia seems very aware of the religious power she has gained through her role in the "sacred drama of redemption" (Griffith 1997: 208).

That suffering through “tests” brings her closer to God does not mean that Julia enjoys being mistreated. Nor does it mean that women in the Apostolic church seek suffering. For women whose husbands are kind, helpful, *Cristiano*, and whose lives are heading in the direction they wish them to, this is equally if not more valued as a sign of God’s blessing of their lives and God’s signs that they are on the right path. Julia, however, thanks to her faith and spiritualization of circumstances, manages to know her self as much more than a victim or battered wife. She is God’s daughter, and her suffering is part of a divine plan. This spiritual empowerment keeps her alive and imbues the way she talks, moves, and interprets her life with confidence.

The practice of prayer is Julia’s main resource for the changes she seeks. In her study *Women of the Barrio*, Bohman speaks of magic as a female resource for women when no alternative of that which Bohman refers to as “legitimate” power is available (Bohman 1984: 184). Prayer amongst women can also be a resource for change when few alternatives for action are available. While bearing children is the essence of womanhood in Nicaragua, this is only valued in women who are married. One cannot gain the status of motherhood without first being a legal wife (Bohman 1984: 210). Julia does not want to be divorced, because “no one can separate what God puts together”, but also perhaps because not having a husband in Latin America is not a socially popular option for women, though a common circumstance. Indeed while marriage is socially constructed as a sacrifice for men, it can be understood as an expectation and even necessity for women (Bohman 1984: 192). Julia does not work: she is economically dependent on her husband. With the exception of her father’s lottery win seven years ago and occasional gifts from

her sister who works in Northern Nicaragua, she does not receive financial support from any other source.

In these circumstances, prayer has become Julia's tool. Its apparent success in bringing about material changes cannot be denied as accounted by Julia. Aside from the clothes gained when needed for attending church, the food brought by her sister, and Julia's claims that the physical abuse from her husband has ended recently, Julia has not paid rent recently. She owes four months, 200\$ U.S., in rent. According to her, it is thanks to prayers that the landlord has not come by for the money. This is very unusual as tenants in Nicaragua can not usually avoid their landlords more than a week. In an even more 'miraculous' story, Julia did not pay electricity for several months last year. She owed over 1000 cordobas (about 110 Canadian \$) for six months' electricity. Usually, without fail and in contrast to other services in Nicaragua, an employee from the electric company cuts a home's current after a month without paying. Not for Julia. Every day for the six months she did not have the money to pay, she prayed that the light would not be cut. The bills kept coming, bigger and more impossible to pay. Finally, at the end of six months, she decided that as a Cristiana she had to go speak to the company and explain to them her financial situation, hoping to negotiate some payment plan. While she had been receiving bills, in her name at her home address, the electric company did not have her on their files. They requested she come back the next day while they conducted an extensive search of their data base and filing cabinets. The following day, again, no record. According to Julia: "This was a great blessing. God had erased my name from the computer!".

Julia is spiritually at peace and feels powerful. She walks with chin up, her back is straight: her demeanor is one of pride and confidence. Despite living with no material security and being in a situation of deference to both the authority within the church and within her home, the habitus of submission and meekness one might expect from her life is not apparent in her presentation of her self. Julia's strength comes from experiencing her life's challenges as divine tests. She experiences her daily suffering as an opportunity to strengthen her devotion and know God's power in His eventual response to her prayers.

Leading lives in Christ: Closing remarks

The case studies of Rafael and Julia illustrate that what it means and looks like to practice Apostolic religiosity is contingent on personal life circumstances, many of which are related to gender. Assessing the social impact of Apostolic engagements in the world is challenging considering the multiplicity of Apostolic lifeworlds.

Rafael's faith has transformed him into 'a new man'. Like most Apostolic men, he has abandoned a life of drinking, cheating on his wife, and fighting. Relations with his wife have improved, and most likely the household's income has increased as Rafael has broken free from his previous addictions. In Nicaragua, this embodiment of *el hombre nuevo* is a major reformation of male gender expectations (Brusco 1995).

Habitus is the conditioning of the body through those practices and dominant expectations for experience that make up one's everyday actions as a member of society with a certain status (Bourdieu 1990: 54; Jackson 1989). Apostolic men such as Rafael are changing their "system of dispositions" for future experiences through their *Cristiano*

practices. It is not yet clear how this transformation may alter dominant experiences of masculinity in Nicaragua in the long term. That which seems certain is that corporeally and intellectually redefining what it is to feel good as a man, experiences such as Rafael's harbor great potential for the reformation of a society characterized by machismo and associated violence.

While prayer has brought some "blessings" on Julia's homes, it is concerning when this religious tool is one's only defense against mundane chaos. In terms of the confidence Julia derives from the challenges in her life, there are limitations to this empowering sense. Assagioli has written on the value of pain when it moves us to action, and is directed to transforming those situations that have caused us suffering (1994). While opening up the possibility of "good" pain, Assagioli warns us that "pain is not an end in itself": it "has a value if it leads to its own elimination, to overcoming it" (1994: 9). Julia does experience suffering as a source of strength, but she does not direct this strength to transforming the marital and economic circumstances that cause her suffering. Though Julia's suffering is certainly meaningful in terms of increasing her sense of personal power and sacredness, its constructive value is undeniably limited. Indeed, Julia's spiritualization of suffering is serving as a justification for her subjection to domestic violence.

Listening to Julia, I began to share Levine's concern at the limitations of Pentecostal religion's ability to change daily life, particularly for women. With 30 years of research experience, Levine is an authority on Protestant and Pentecostal movements in Latin America. He has noted that which has become increasingly evident in the present

study: the sense of empowerment church members gain through religious experiences is not always directed to achieving material or long-term improvements for themselves, their families, and their communities (Levine 1995: 15).

SPEAKING IN TONGUES: GENDERED KNOWLEDGE OF THE DIVINE

“there appeared to them tongues like flames of fire, dispersed among them and resting on each one. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to talk in other tongues, as the Spirit gave them power of utterance.”

(Acts 2: 3-4)

“Some people think receiving the Holy Ghost is like human experiences, to feel, to see. They are expecting emotions. But if you know that the Holy Ghost is power, you know the experience is different. You don’t know what God is going to do. You might hear music, have a dream, fall down. The Holy Ghost is a person, not a human emotion. It is a part of God. God has no rules. He’ll do anything He wants.”

(Hermana Chipita, 60-year-old Apostolic woman)

In this chapter, I propose to examine one manifestation of the Holy Ghost in the Apostolic Church: speaking in tongues. Otherwise known as glossolalia, this is widespread in Pentecostal churches and refers to utterances by a member in a language foreign to them. Those who have known glossolalia describe the event as a result of divine presence within them. This is experienced as a gift from God, a “charism” which, along with healing, divination, and prophecy, allows human bodies to become instruments of divine power (Csordas 1997: 133).

There are several reasons I have decided to focus on glossolalia in my exploration of Apostolic experiences. First, I visited numerous churches before selecting the Apostolic

as the site for my research. The Apostolic church impressed me in the sheer number of participants, far more than in any of the other churches I attended. I was also intrigued by the high percentage of the congregation who spoke in tongues on a near nightly basis.

Whereas this was an occasional event in other denominations, glossolalia, accompanied by shaking, trembling arms, and crying was seemingly central and normal to the Apostolic *culto* (non-Catholic service). What did these embodiments of the sacred mean to Apostolics, and how did this physical relationship with God relate to daily lives?

One of the historical tenets of Pentecostalism is that, contrary to the mediative role of the Catholic hierarchy, all Pentecostals have equal access to the divine. As a possession of one's body and vocal chords by divine powers, speaking in tongues is considered evidence of achieving this contact. With its prominence in the nightly services, glossolalia presented an opportunity to study whether this gift was equally accessible and meaningful to all. Differences in men and women's glossalalic performances constituted an excellent site for further exploring how different bodies, due to their different habituses, may experience/know the divine differently.

Much of the academic literature over the last 30 years has adopted a linguistic and/or psychological approach to speaking in tongues (Adams & Newton 1985; Goodman 1969, 1972a & b; Kildahl 1972; Samarin 1972 & 1979; Taves' critique of this 1999). I aim to avoid judgment of glossalalic performers' emotional stability (Adams & Newton 1985: 62; Kildahl 1972: 59; critiqued by Martin 1991), discussions of altered mental state (Goodman 1972a & b; Horwatt 1988), and phonetic/grammatical explorations of the glossalalic language (Adams & Newton 1985; Goodman 1969 & 1972b; Samarin 1972).

For the Apostolics with whom I worked, it is the full body¹¹, and not just a mode of speech or mind that is involved in ‘speaking in tongues’. My exploration of glossolalia (speaking in tongues) as a full-body experience and performance contributes to filling phenomenological gaps in the literature on this phenomenon.

Finally, for Apostolics glossolalia is performed within the church, during *culto*. Whereas particular dress and speech acts are performances of religiosity to which *el mundo* is audience, glossolalia is experienced before a predominantly Apostolic congregation. From the perspective of performance theory, speaking in tongues is thus a site for the contestation, re-iteration, and possible transformation of social relations within the church (Fabian 1990: 12).

The chapter is broken down as follows. A brief history of Pentecostalism and speaking in tongues locates the charism as a possible embodied rebellion to dominant forces in society. This, juxtaposed to Apostolic descriptions of conditions for receiving this gift, will emphasize the location of this gift as a reward to a series of practices which may be regarded as a “Christian way of being”.

Next, glossolalia will be described for the Apostolic context in depth and with the aid of short narratives from members. What does it feel like to speak in tongues? What different forms does this charismatic action take? How are physical and auditory components of the performance different for men and women?

Having concluded in my observation and interviews that glossolalia is a largely female experience, I address the significance of this finding. Is this a result of gendered bodies socialized in everyday life? Are men’s ability to enter into this experience limited

due to a culturally specific habitus? Does glossolalia constitute, in Grosz's terms, a feminine knowledge of the divine? I felt that there existed a definite possibility that women's performances of this divine gift might challenge the church's all-male leadership and formal authority. Speaking in tongues, after all, is highly valued in Pentecostalism worldwide (Csordas 1997: 54). Receiving this gift from God seemingly harbors potential for the augmentation of the performer's social prestige. As was discussed in Chapter two, the social power of any performance resides in its recognition and valuation by the audience (Csordas 1997: 161). Towards illuminating the socially transformative potential and limits of women experiencing charisms (divine gifts), I examine how male and female audiences within the church respond to women's performances of this gift.

In addition to the potential altering of social relations within the church, I address the significance of women's physicality within their glossolalic performances. An argument is made that the socially transformative power of Apostolic women speaking in tongues emerges from the sensual dimension of this action. In posit that women transgress their Nicaraguan feminine habituses in the instance of their glossolalic action.

Finally, I conclude by asking is glossolalia a form of empowerment to women? Women do gain a sense of their own power through this religious experience. How does this sense of power differ from that gained by women such as Julia through their suffering, or Carmen through her healing?

Significance of sacred gifts in Pentecostalism

Charisms, sacred gifts experienced as the working of the Holy Spirit, are central to Pentecostal experiences around the world (Anderson 1999: 20). These are generally manifested through the body, and as such render Pentecostalism unique in the panoply of Christian options.

In great part due to Weber's famous work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Protestants are persistently characterized as anti-sensual in academic literature (Weber 1992: 105). Protestantism has recently been homogeneously described as a religion wherein emotions are superfluous (Mellor & Shilling 1999: 100), perpetuating the myth that in Protestantism, "God only speaks when the flesh is silent" (Weber 1992: 149). Perhaps this misleading presentation of Protestantism as a 'rational', carnally ignorant religion explains the minimal phenomenological discussions of Protestantism¹².

Contrary to such generalizations, there exists an extensive historical basis for the Pentecostal belief in consecration as an experience for the entire body (Taves 1999: 336). While one key founder in the Protestant church, Calvin, viewed nearly all feeling with suspicion, the equally influential Luther promoted the possibility of feeling the Holy Ghost in a sort of religious ecstasy (Taves 1999: 114 & 130). Evangelical Protestantism, led by John Wesley and Jonathan Edwards in the 18th century critiqued the traditional Protestant belief that the divine could not be witnessed through anything but Scripture (Taves 1999: 55). Agreeing with critiques of enthusiasm (excessive or false experience) dominating certain churches, both leaders emphasized the possibility of direct experiences

of God. Edwards referred to this as the 'indwelling of the Spirit of God', and Wesley described this event as "witnessing the Spirit of God" (Taves 1999: 47).

Wesley founded the Methodist church. The Methodists did place a great emphasis on an ascetic type of conduct. The 'true Christian' following this way of life would be granted the 'true experience' of 'witnessing' the Holy Spirit (Taves 1999: 52). 19th century Methodism was famous for the formation of independent African Methodist churches, starting in the Northern U.S. in 1816 (O'Neal 1999: 118). The popularity of Methodism amongst American slaves may be attributed to Wesley's acknowledgment of both natural and supernatural systems at work in daily life (Hollenweger 1999b: 165). It also would have been an alternative to the white-dominated traditional Protestant options. The Methodist church was used as a moral and organizational basis for the building of black schools, banks, and job creation. In accordance with evangelical Protestant belief, even the Methodists considered the biblically familiar charisms as limited to the ancient past (Hollenweger 1999b: 166).

It is at the turn of the 20th century that Pentecostalism was born, unique in its doctrine that "evidences" and "miracles" could be experienced as much today as they once were in Biblical times. Speaking in tongues was the most prominent "evidence" which the movement's members pointed to as proof of a unique relationship with God. Charles Parham, founder of the Apostolic Faith Movement in Houston, was the first person to promote the doctrine of baptism of the Spirit. With speaking in a foreign tongue as an 'initial sign' (Taves 1999; Hollenweger 1999a: 41), this doctrine stated that after asking God for forgiveness of one's sins, the Holy Spirit touches you and allows a

complete transformation marked by a knowledge of good and evil (Slootweg 1998: 67).

It is the black ecumenist, William J. Seymour, however, who is generally proclaimed as leader of the Pentecostal movement (Hollenweger 1999a: 36). From outside the all-white classroom, Seymour had listened in on Parham's Bible lessons and accepted the idea of Baptism in the Spirit. In 1906, he started the Azusa Street Mission in Los Angeles. Many elements of Pentecostalism have been attributed to African American slave religion: this particular cultural influence was in evidence from the start at the ethnically diverse Azusa Revival. Included were oral liturgy, testimony as a form of narrative theology, maximum lay participation in administration and worship, the prominence of dreams and visions to public worship, and a system of healing wherein body and mind are treated as one (in Anderson 1999: 23). Seymour integrated spirituals and music, despite these being regarded as superficial additions by both traditional churches and the Los Angeles press (Hollenweger 1999a: 41). It is Seymour and not Parham who harbored the ecumenical vision which became a stereotype of Pentecostalism and emphasized glossolalia's value as a form of adoration. Today, glossolalia is considered the key image of the universal charismatic community (Csordas 1997: 54). Indeed, along with the gift of music¹³, this was the only charism or spiritual gift I witnessed in every Pentecostal church I visited in Diriamba.

Glossolalia in the First Apostolic church, Diriamba

The following description is based on my field notes and memories of the Apostolic church and is intended to grant readers a hint of the intensity and

multisensoriality presented by glossolalia in this particular church¹⁴.

October. Still the rainy season, it is hot and humid. No breeze. I wonder if the fans above the men's section are granting them any relief. The church is packed with about one hundred and sixty bodies. Directing in white shirt, tie, and navy dress pants, tonight's preacher looks perhaps 18-years-old. It is a Saturday, and therefore youth night. He is wiry and moves as though he is not yet accustomed to his height, back arched forward in a stoop. Confidently, his voice deplores moral leprosy as he paces across the front. Respectfully, we get to our feet for San Mateo 8: 14-17. Jesus heals the mother of Pedro's wife. Jesus heals many who are sick. I offer to share my Bible with an elderly woman: "Gracias, no leo." (I don't read). As I stumble with the Spanish, she gently recites the passage flawlessly.

"I know the power of God! God is all powerful!", declares our leader. One woman across from me raises rigid hands before her closed eyes and starts clapping loudly. Within seconds, the women at her sides, in front of her, behind her, are following suit, their staccato movements interrupted at moments by imploring voices: "Oh Jesus!", "Lord, help me, Lord!", "Don't leave me Lord. I need your help!". A roar of eighty voices is swallowing me. My neighbor's right hand rises shaking towards the ceiling. Her fingers are extended and taut, blue veins line vibrating bones. She is trembling all over. Without looking, I know that trembling is intensifying. The hairs rise on my arm as I sense the space around her become charged. I feel that I too could start, open my palms, join in. A young woman collapses to her knees in the aisle. She quakes, crying out and wiping her

face with corners of her lace shawl. She seems overwhelmed by intense sobbing. Her perhaps five-year-old boy is apparently accustomed to this. Kneeling next to her, he runs a peeling blue toy car across the back of the pew.

“Tittit Arabtii!!” “Alalalalal!” “Gaalalcalitititit!”. Strings of foreign words emerge like darts or energy, filling the air in a polyphony of high pitched sound. Hands flutter up and down, tears gush, bodies sway forward and back, curl into prayer and extend open again in supplication. One woman in the front pew has both hands up above her head and is spinning slowly. Another moves her hand quickly before her o-shaped mouth in scooping gestures, the speed dizzying. What invisible valuable is she desperately attempting to swallow? The Holy Ghost? A few women have gone into the aisle and fallen prostrate to the cold tile floor. The air is electric. Mimicking the strain visible in every arm, back, face around me, my tensed neck and shoulders ache.

In the men's section, one young man kneels in the aisle, head leaning on the pew in apparent prayer. Another two raise their arms repeatedly in demanding aggressive gestures. They are shouting, look angry. I cannot hear their words but the tone seems unforgiving. I watch as another señor claps for perhaps 15 seconds and then resumes a position of hands open to the sky and quiet prayer. Most men stand quiet, palms turned upwards, eyes closed, or sit reading the Bible. The preacher stands in front of the señoras' section. He too has his left arm raised above his head, eyes scrunched shut. He speaks alternatively in tongues and in Spanish. The confidence of the previous sermon is maintained.

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, the high frequency of glossalalic experiences is a unique characteristic of the Apostolic church. I did meet Apostolic men, one woman, and many youth and children who had not yet known glossolalia; however, the vast majority of members claimed to have experienced speaking in tongues at some point. This experience was much more widespread than in, for example, the Cuadrangular church where only one in three adults had been granted this gift (according to informal interviews with its 20 adult members)¹⁵.

While most men and women had at some point partaken in glossalalic action, the frequency of these experiences were very different for both genders. Many women experienced glossolalia once a month, once a week, and some almost nightly. With the exception of some prayer leaders or pastor during their direction of a *culto*, it was rare for me to hear a man speak in tongues. The men's section was generally quiet during prayer, with much less movement than that occurring in the señoras' area. Exceptions were those men, normally two to four and usually the same individuals, who would aggressively demand in Spanish that God change their lives or heal a family member. I thought it possible that men might speak in tongues more quietly. I recognized that with the clamor of the señoras' section in which I usually sat, often I was not able to decipher the origins of whichever language the men on the other side of the temple were uttering. However, those times I did sit with the youth (next to the married men's section) and other nights when my partner was sent into the men's section as my ears and eyes, we heard five men perform glossolalia. Once, two neighboring men spoke in tongues at once, and the others

received this gift on separate occasions.

This apparent bias in the distribution of a divine gift grabbed my interest early on in the research. Given the overwhelmingly gendered atmosphere of the Apostolic church in comparison to other Diriambino Pentecostal groups I visited, it did not seem surprising that charisms would also be distributed along gender lines. That which intrigued me most about the glossolalia problem, however, was that more women than men seemed to have access to this experience. Glossolalia is generally highly valued in Pentecostalism. Men in the Apostolic church dominated the prestigious role of preacher and musician: why would they not also be more likely to speak in tongues?

Performers speak on their gift: The articulation of sacred power to gendered lives

“When the Holy Ghost lets you speak in tongues, the Holy Ghost is purifying the soul. That is beautiful. And there is a time when we are speaking in tongues and we realize it. And we can even decipher these. And through those words sometimes I realize what I need, what I am asking God through those tongues.”

(Hermana Valeria, 35-years-old)

“God builds us through tongues. I feel that the Holy Ghost gives me life, fills me when I am in times of tribulation.”

(Hermana Jesusa, 67-years-old)

“I am blessed to speak in tongues. Because those who are in danger of falling down in God, of going back to the world, are those who don’t have that promise of the Holy Ghost. Because those who don’t speak in tongues don’t have the promise of the Holy Ghost and those who don’t have the promise of the Holy Ghost succumb to temptation, to sin.”

(Hermana Carmen, 32-years-old)

“I love going to church. It is the best time of the day. It is a time to relax in

God. And when I receive the Holy Ghost, a warmth fills my entire body. It is so lovely. And I feel, like, rejuvenated. Like I haven't worked all day cleaning, cooking the food, doing the laundry, ironing. When the Holy Ghost comes to me, my body feels very light, weightless. It is wonderful.”
(Hermana Raquel, 40-years-old)

Speaking in tongues is a gift from the Holy Ghost. Women described this gift to me as a promise for protection, as a purification of the soul, as a source of physical enjoyment, as a revelatory tool for uncovering inner needs, and as a charge of energy that allows some women to persist in their lives. In all cases, it was described as a desirable thing and an enriching aspect of their lives.

Glossolalia does not occur as an isolated religious experience. In its first occurrence, it is considered proof of Baptism in the Holy Spirit. This may occur before or after the baptism in the name of Jesus (performed through full immersion in water in the Pentecostal churches with whom I worked). Pentecostals believe that when they are spiritually ready, the Holy Spirit or Ghost will ‘touch’ them and transform their souls suddenly and permanently. According to Apostolics, the immediate evidence of ‘receiving’ the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues¹⁶. Longer-term, one who has received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is expected to manifest their soul’s transformation through a transformation in their daily life. The Christian path is adopted, characterized by those practices discussed in chapters four and five, including praying at various intervals throughout the day, reading the Bible daily, attending church regularly. Emotionally, recipients are also ‘touched’. In accordance with definitions of what it is to be a “good” *Cristiano*, after receiving the Holy Spirit, individuals may be guided by the Holy Spirit to

not feel anger but only compassion, to turn the other cheek rather than enter into argument with another human, and to refrain from judgement. These emotions are united in their shared ideal of Christian love: one touched by the Holy Ghost tries to love all of God's creatures, leaving judgement to the higher order.

Cross-culturally, experiences socially defined as direct contact with the divine, whether these be dreams, possession, or glossolalia have been shown to be sought out by the deprived or frustrated (Kearney 1977: 322; Kildahl 1972). The common explanation for this is one of compensation. With no legitimate area in which to contest their social position and increase prestige, these acts becomes a site for the creation of new social identities based on the manipulation of human and divine roles and powers (Kearney 1977).

Compensation is the mainstream framework for analyzing what religious experiences represent for marginalized groups (Martin 1991). There are two major problems with employing this model for my analysis of glossolalia in the Apostolic church. First of all, I think it would be to perform too great a violence on my informants to assume that they use glossolalia consciously towards altering their social position. This would be to dismiss their experience of glossolalia as divinely inspired action. For Pentecostals everywhere, glossolalia is a divine gift, a reward for a certain Christian being-in-the-world. If anybody could set out to experience glossolalia, as a functionalist perspective would have it, then its value would evaporate. In fact, glossolalia in this scheme becomes a labeling sign of 'needy'/low status. The second problem with the

compensation-marginalization perspective is that it reproduces Western/modernist associations of marginalized groups with 'irrational' experiences. The low status of each of these categories, within the 'scientific' Western perspective, is reinforced through this association (Martin 1991: 555).

Moving away from the compensation model for the above reasons, I nevertheless wish to discuss possibilities within glossolalic experiences for social change and empowerment. Approaching this question through the body, I will explore how performances of glossolalia may or may not challenge dominant experiences of the gendered corporeal being in a Nicaraguan context. A performative approach to this problem demands attention to the performance itself, the performers' experience of their actions, and audience reaction.

The critical dimension of performance resides in its emergent quality (Csordas 1997: 161; Fabian 1990: 12). In contrast to Mary Douglas' proclamation that the social is inscribed on passive bodies, phenomenology recognizes that events in their very performance constitute meaning. Accordingly, some room is left for the agency of individual bodies in action, while recognized is the socio-historical situatedness and thus constraining forces (social, physical, psychological, political) on performed actions. "Genuine novelty" and "creativity" are "able to emerge from the freedom of the performance situation" (Turner 1979: 66-7). Subversion of social assumptions and transformation of social positions can result when bodies are performed in "transgressive ways" (Shildrick 1997: 60). With a focus on the role of bodies in religion and social

change, I ask are Apostolic women gaining status through their performances and are they performing their bodies in transgressive ways when they speak in tongues?

The audience

Being divine, ritual performance invites its own validation (Csordas 1997: 198). The potential for a charism to alter social relations, however, depends on its recognition by others, as audience– performer relations structure social relations (Csordas 1997: 161). This section deals with audience reactions to women’s gift of glossolalia within the First Apostolic Church of Faith in Jesus Christ.

One could identify a multiplicity of audiences for each performer of glossolalia in the Apostolic. For my purposes here, I will focus on the two dominant groups within the church: men and married women. The *señoras* (this term embodies an important social distinction and so will be used throughout this chapter to refer to married, as opposed to unmarried, women) are the principal actors in glossolalia. Nevertheless, as many do not perform nightly and as *señoras* may be audience to other women’s performances before receiving the Holy Spirit themselves, I consider them as an audience. As will be demonstrated, there is a significant discrepancy between the *señoras*’ and the men’s reaction to women’s glossalalic gifts.

Bauman has written extensively on the subject of performance. Previously in Chapter two, I refer to Bauman towards explaining how positive audience reactions during a performance result in an increase in the performer’s power. In short, if an

audience becomes “caught up in” the performance, then the performer gains control over the situation, and a prestige because s/he has succeeded in gaining the audience’s attention (Bauman 1975: 305, see also Csordas 1997: 161).

Through my observations of and interviews with women in the church, it became clear that glossolalia was a sought after and respected experience for these women (see above). As an audience, the *señoras* were attentive to their neighbors’ gifts and would indeed become ‘caught up’ in their performances. More often than not, after one woman began to show signs of receiving the Holy Spirit such as shaking or crying, those women around her would also become ‘touched’. Every night, many *señoras* would not be touched, as it is rare to experience the Holy Spirit nightly. These women would generally pray in Spanish, asking the Holy Spirit to come to them and standing or kneeling with one or both palms turned upwards. This stance was described to me as one which welcomes the Holy Spirit, and can thus be understood as a request for reception. In this embodiment, the women express their own desire for this gift, identifying it as valuable of which possession is a privilege. While many of the *señoras* discuss and exchange gossip during men’s preaching and songs, none do so when the Holy Spirit is manifesting itself in another woman. In Bauman’s sense of the phrase, the *señoras* are ‘caught up’ in the performance of their female neighbors.

Church leader: Why do women speak in tongues more often? That’s easy. They have more time.

Me: More time? In the church? At home?

Church leader: Look here. Men work. We have jobs. We come home, eat, go to church. We don't have all the time women have to think of God, to do God's work.

The reaction of men to the women speaking in tongues is different. Men in the church with whom I spoke outside the cultos acknowledged that glossolalia is valued gift. They admitted that women manifest glossolalia more often than men, and some did explain this in terms of women possessing a closer relationship to God. A certain cynicism towards this predominantly feminine gift, however, appears to be shared by many of the men. Looking out at the *señoras'* section, twice in the four months of my research the pastor warned the congregation against the sin of giving false testimony of the Holy Spirit and the sin of faking tears. One young preacher did face the *señoras'* section during an intense prayer session, as though conceding to the power being manifested through the women's quaking bodies. During all other *cultos*, the other preachers (all of which are male) did not ever recognize, verbally or in their bodily stance, women's experiences of the divine as they were occurring. One night, following a healing session in which those wanting to be cured came to the front, one woman remained speaking loudly and rapidly in tongues before the podium. Where the pastor might have praised the divine for this particularly long and energetic manifestation, he turned up his microphone instead. The woman continued, her voice barely audible as the pastor blasted his sermon, occasionally looking over at the woman in apparent annoyance. Did the pastor doubt the veracity of her gift? Would his reaction have been the same were it a man speaking in tongues?

What are the activities of the male audience that is not partaking in the *culto*'s leadership? Most of the men sit quietly, reading the Bible or praying very softly. As described in the earlier narrative passage, usually between one and three men would shake their arms demanding at the ceiling, aggressively shouting for God to help them this night. I never saw any of these men speak in tongues.

Asked how one physically prepares for the Holy Spirit, the Apostolic *señoras* speak of 'being open' and would show me by turning their palms upwards and holding these at chest or forehead level. Within the *culto*, this 'openness' is assumed through much more than upward turned palms. The women stretch their arms up above their heads or extend these straight out ahead of them, often moving fluidly between these two positions as they sway. Their faces are usually turned upwards. Loud praising and invitations for the divine are accompanied by rapid clapping which persists for minutes.

Only a minority of the men, at most one out of ten, would position themselves to receive the Holy Spirit. This they would do by holding their hands in front of them, palms up. The physical likeness to the women's preparation for the Holy Spirit would end there. These men would most often be looking down, quietly praying if verbally expressing themselves at all. In contrast to the dynamism of the women's bodies, these men stand almost completely still. If they do clap it is two or three times as opposed to the frenzied clapping in the *señoras*' section. In short, their stance expresses less 'openness' or 'receptivity' than do the women's. As has already been mentioned, I only rarely saw a man speak in tongues. It does seem plausible that men may not receive glossolalia as

often, in part because they do not adequately ‘open up’ during prayer. This theory will be elaborated later on. For the current discussion, let it suffice to say that only a small number of Apostolic men aim to join the *señoras* in their glossalalic performance. That so few will extend their palms upwards and/or invite the Holy Spirit seems to express a general lack of desire and perhaps value for this experience amongst the male audience.

The very set-up for the women’s glossalalic performances places them at a disadvantage for recognition of its value. While men come to the front of the church to share their divinely inspired poems, visions, preaching, or healing gift, affirming their authority at a podium, the women do not in this way face the rest of the church and position themselves as its head. Whereas the credibility and rationality of the men’s words is affirmed by male and female audiences’ shouting out of ‘Amen!’, ‘Gloria a Jesus!’, or ‘Hallelujah!’, not even this verbal response is granted by the men to women’s performance of their gift. On the other hand, the women are not performing their faith in a manner marginal to Pentecostalism, but rather accessing one of the most important divine knowledges in Pentecostal doctrine. Without men’s recognition in the patriarchal church, can it be argued that the women’s spiritual power from the Holy Ghost is affecting structures of social or political power?

The reaction of the male audience to women’s glossalalic gifts shows an unwillingness to recognize the *señoras*’ divinely sanctioned power. From this reaction, it cannot be said that women are gaining prestige in the male-run church when they speak in tongues. On the contrary, it may be that through their nightly glossalalic performances,

the women's status as other to the Apostolic men is reinforced. Bearing this in mind, in what follows I will argue that in the instance of speaking in tongues, women experience their bodies in ways that transgress their Nicaraguan feminine habitus. It is my view that the socially transformative power of women's glossolalic action resides at the sensual level of their performances.

Glossolalia as a feminine knowledge of the divine

Glossalalic performances are very physical. Informants had difficulty remembering their experiences, suggesting the absence of consciousness during glossolalia. Others described these experiences in tactile terms, something felt in the body. The tactility of this spiritual gift and its practice being overwhelmingly by women is not without symbolic social meaning and critique. I will posit that the unconscious, tactile experience of glossolalia corresponds to Christian/Western stereotypes of undervalued feminine knowledges. At the same time, I will argue that overcome in these performances is an opposition between the moral and the sensual female which characterizes machista polar categorizations of women.

Uncontrolled sensuality has long been associated with the feminine and opposed to the rational non-sensual male (Classen 1998; Grontkowski & Keller 1983: 207). Until recent feminist work in this century, one could not find reference to female 'knowledge' as such in Western philosophy. This is because 'knowledge' in Western history has long been defined as a truth to be named, contained and tamed by the scientific 'objective'

mind. 'Knowledge' was to be defended against flesh-based and thus feminine desire (Grontkowski & Keller 1983: 220): epistemology was a domain exclusively for the noble a-sensual male cogito.

The notion that one cannot 'know' through the body has become a tenet of Western modernist philosophy. In the 17th century, Descartes instituted the dualism between mind and body. He located the mind/soul outside and above the physical subject. Recognizing the centrality of vision to scientific study, he resolved the problem of this tool's location on the sinful and corrupt body by declaring that "It is the soul that sees, not the eye" (Grontkowski & Keller 1983: 215). Thus, vision along with hearing became the higher senses, while touch, taste, and smell were relegated to the soul-less, unconscious, and thus epistemologically incompetent corpus.

In accordance with the sexist hierarchy of modern Europe, the higher senses of vision and hearing were declared phallic while the 'lower' senses of touch and taste were female (Classen 1998: 1). These associations were reinforced by daily practices. As Classen points out, women kept their eyes down, worked within the home granting them a limited field of vision, reinforcing the cultural value that vision was not for women (1998: 72). Ideally, while the woman, inextricably bound to the family and home, sewed, cared for the children, and prepared food all with a woman's touch, the men would broaden their horizons, exploring, dominating and analyzing the world as autonomous and detached individuals.

Western Christianity is partly responsible for the negative and feminine

connotations of the sensual found throughout Western history. Man's fall in the Bible is blamed on Eve's surrendering to her senses. Redemption in Western Christian is largely achieved through a regulation of these (Classen 1998: 3). While Pentecostalism does reconcile mind and body, united experiences such as that of illness and healing, control of the senses remains central to the practices of a 'good Cristiano' in the Apostolic church. As was seen in the previous chapter, a 'good Christian' man will not give in to his desires to sleep with many women. Fasting, discussed in Chapter four, is frequently practiced amongst women in the church and demands will power to overcome the body's desire for food. Even the very form of Apostolic cultos, lasting two and a half hours minimum in length and on special occasions going far into the night, demand a resistance to the body's needs for sleep and rest.

Despite Corinthians claims that "Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit... Glorify God in your body" (I Corinthians 6: 19-20), the overarching organizing principle of behavior amongst Apostolics, as defined by the church's male hierarchy, seems to be based on control and will-power over the body. In this way, the Apostolic church maintains the Christian definition of the body as threatening and dangerous if not controlled and regulated (Turner 1997: 20). This context complicates claims of glossolalia constituting a performance which transgresses normalized expectations of the female body. Is not 'feeling' God rather than knowing Him rationally reproducing stereotypes of the woman as incapable of reflection, an emotional sensual being in opposition to the socially superior rational man?

The sensuousness of women's performed knowledge of God does not seem transgressive from this perspective; however, this is a non-local Western philosophical interpretation. Nicaragua, as is the case in many Latin American countries, harbors socially strict definitions of women which are lived out daily in bodies (Lancaster 1992: 20). Within this ideological scheme which arguably exists for women throughout many parts of the world, women fall into one of two categories: the virgin, sister, mother category or that of the lover, prostitute, sexual fiend. Arguably, these categories are based in Western history, wherein female sexuality was rigorously controlled to reduce the number of children amongst which scarce land would be distributed. In this account, marriage served to ensure legitimate heirs and the social taboo of wives feeling desire and copulating with any one but their husbands ensured this legitimacy (Turner 1997: 27). Constructing the "moral" woman/wife as empty of sexual desire, a target project of the Christian church, men/husbands were encouraged and expected to seek romance outside this institution. In Nicaraguan society, men are expected to seek extra-marital sexual relations. Such physical relations do not tarnish the partner's reputation, as adultery is a normalized practice for the "real man". Women, on the other hand, cannot be sexually needy or demonstrative if they wish to be respected. This is a result of the duality of the categories mentioned above. Mothers/sisters/virgins are constructed as morally flawless. Their moral righteousness exists in opposition to the sinning femme fatale. The locus of this opposition resides in the physicality and sexuality of these women. While the prostitute/loose/sinner is bursting with lust, the mother/sister/virgin is expected to either

not possess or be in complete control of her physical urges.

Given these male-defined extremes of womanhood, Apostolic *señoras*' glossalalic performances serve as critiques of antithetical realities. The split between dematerialized moral wife and materialized sinning prostitute is invalidated in the face of women's experiences receiving the Holy Spirit. Reconciling the opposing normative definitions of Nicaraguan femininity, Apostolic women are rewarded for their moral righteousness in a physically intense and enjoyable moment.

This leads us to a very interesting aspect of this divine gift: the physicality or sensual dimension of its performance. While divinely inspired poetry and discernment can emerge from still and conscious individuals, I did not once witness glossalalic action in a member totally in control of their body. As described and physicalized by Apostolic women, speaking in tongues is the final stage in a full body possession by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**“You cannot know exactly when you are going to speak in tongues. I do not go to church and know that, for example, tonight I am going to speak in tongues. I can be praying one night, and the power of the Holy Spirit enters my body. It starts usually in my feet. It is an intense heat. Like a burning sensation. But hot hot hot. It is so hot but it doesn't hurt. And this heat moves up the legs, moves up, and my whole body becomes infused with this heat which is the power of the Holy Spirit. And I can feel my hands and my arms shaking. And when that power comes up up, into my throat, then I am speaking in tongues.”
(Hermana Raquel)**

When asked what it felt like to speak in tongues, many Apostolic members responded that they could not explain this to me. “It is not like human emotions. It is not

something you feel or see or hear”, said Chipita who had experienced singing in tongues. Another woman told me it was “something supernatural. It is like nothing else. I cannot explain”. Others could not remember what this felt like, even though I would ask them within days of their experience. These latter answers are not surprising: intense spiritual experiences such as spirit possession have been documented as resulting in trance-like states. Women’s glossolalic experiences may involve such a loss of reflexive awareness, a state of which no memory can necessarily be expected (Kearney 1977: 317).

Four women did recall the moments prior to speaking in tongues. They shared an experience of heat as power, described as entering either through the head, palms of the hands, or feet, and gradually taking over the entire body. Two of the women had experienced the power of the Holy Spirit as entering at a different one of these points on different occasions.

There were two commonalities to the descriptions. One was that the heat’s gradual movement into all parts of the body would be accompanied by a loss of control over those parts of the body. This was explained in possession-like terms, with the women *surrendering* control to the Holy Ghost. In one case, the Holy Ghost was described as a person “who does what He wants”, though a constant to all descriptions was a depersonalization of this “possession” through an indication that it was power felt as heat, and not a person, that was entering and moving the women’s bodies. The second commonality to the women’s description was that when power/heat reaches the vocal chords, the tongue starts moving and a language not their own emerges. Glossolalia is thus

definitely defined as part of a full body experience, during which the Holy Spirit or its power enters the recipient's body.

Most *señoras* in the Apostolic Church experienced glossolalia frequently. This, they explained, is normal. Having known this ability the first time as proof of their Baptism in the Holy Spirit, the gift of speaking in tongues had never been revoked from their lives. Could it be revoked? Hermana Valeria defined the risk of this as follows:

“This is a gift. Of course, God can take it back. The person has to believe, has to remain obedient because the Bible says that God will give His Spirit to those who obey. If a person stops listening to God's words, they cannot receive His Spirit and then they will not speak in tongues. I do not know anyone who has lost this gift.”

If it was normal for the women in the Apostolic church to maintain the gift of speaking in tongues after Baptism in the Holy Spirit, why was it that many men in the Apostolic did not experience glossolalia often if ever after one occurrence? Posed this question, women would not hesitate to emphasize the differences between men and women, Christian or not.

**“Women speak in tongues more because we are more sensitive. The man, he is harder, it is not easy for him to come to the Lord, because he is proud. Obeying is not natural for him. If you don't obey, you cannot speak in tongues.”
(Hermana Valeria)**

**“To speak in tongues you have to be submissive. You have to submit yourself to the Holy Spirit. This is not easy for men. Men resist being submissive. It is not natural for them.”
(Hermana Raquel)**

“You have to remember that when Jesus was preaching, the people in front were women. Martha and Maria, and don't forget the mother of Jesus. So,

in history women are closer to God. We are more sensitive to the word of God. When women speak in tongues, it is a sign of their closeness to God. Men do not have this same relationship to God.”
(Hermana Jacqueline)

While women describe themselves as having a “natural” propensity towards the sensitivity and submissiveness necessary to receiving glossolalia, men’s sinful nature was also cited as a reason for men losing or never receiving the gift of tongues in the first place.

“There is a man there, he preached yesterday, he says he’s been fighting for 20 years to receive the Holy Ghost and he hasn’t been able to receive it. Jesus is the only one to judge, but I can see the fruit. That brother, he is always scolding people during the sermon. Saying this and that about one person or another. How could you think God will give you the Holy Ghost? He has to clean himself. He knows how to do good, but he is always speaking badly.”
(Hermana Carmen)

“Christian men are very difficult because they don’t adhere to the path of God. And the Holy Ghost does not manifest itself often in men. Some because they don’t ask. And some because they always want more women, even though they know it to be a sin. We women, we have our husbands whom we love and cherish and that is enough. But man, no. He is different. He is looking for more, always. If they can be with more than one woman, they will be. Women, no, we are afraid of the power of God.”
(Hermana Julia)

The women’s explanations of why men were less likely than women to receive and/or maintain glossolalia exhibited a consensus that women’s relationship with the divine was not only different, but better than that which men generally possessed. Submissiveness, obedience and sensitivity, were categorized as inherently ‘feminine’ attributes. According to these women, any person male or female who wishes to lead a Christian life in which

this spiritual gift has its place must harbor these attributes. For Apostolic women, their submissiveness is power. Their ability to experience the Holy Ghost's tongues is directly linked by them to their femininity. A brief review of the socialized male and female body in Latin America suggests that these women are constructing their spiritual gift as something which a 'real man' would not be able to experience while maintaining his masculinity in the Nicaraguan context.

Autonomous, active and unyielding, the 'real man' in Nicaragua is always in control of his emotions and actions (Melhuus 1996: 240). Central to a macho's identity as such are daily acts of control and domination. The control, domination, and autonomy that define the machista male is opposed to the sensual, uncontrolled, and dominated feminine body. As Melhuus states for power in urban Mexican society: "The powerless are those who are penetrable, passive – in a word, feminine" (Melhuus 1996: 240).

Sensitive, obedient, the Apostolic woman surrenders control of her body and is invaded by a force greater than her self. This description by the glossalalic performers coincides with expectations of the woman as penetrable and passive in machista society. This raises the question of what it means for a man to speak in tongues and whether this is even possible for men.

**"If a man were to regard himself as a closed being, while enthusiasm, a possible precondition of worship (which from the old English means also to value), requires an 'open' body, a susceptible body, a vulnerable body, how would or could such a man stand before God?"
(Gordon 1996: 235)**

Is it possible for a Nicaraguan man to experience God in this way?

In response to this question, I think that there may be a habitual barrier for men receiving the Holy Ghost. On habitus, Bourdieu states that “what is ‘learned by the body’ is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is” (1977: 73). Gender is part of that habitus which is ‘naturalized’ in its unspoken inscription on the body through everyday practices throughout one’s life (Lancaster 1992). In a machista society, “impenetrability” stands for male power (Lancaster 1992; Melhuss 1996; Prieur 1996). Studying gender relations in Nicaragua, Lancaster found that men often joked about symbolic rape with other men. Being penetrated represented the ultimate symbol of humiliation for the Nicaragua macho man: this act would make him into a woman. Beyond the jokes, homosexual sex was a ‘real man’s’ activity for the penetrator: the penetrated in this relationship would be treated as a worthless woman.

Having one’s bodily boundaries crossed, being the passive one, renders one a homosexual in such a scheme (Prieur 1996: 87), and indeed the experience of being the active penetrator in sex is central to feeling like a man in Nicaragua (Lancaster 1992). While I wouldn’t go so far as Gordon in saying that there is something ‘homoerotic’ about letting God ‘in’ (1996: 236), anxiety surrounding Holy Ghost invasion for men in Nicaragua may exist based on a habitus which specifically includes not having one’s bodily boundaries transgressed. This would not be the first time that Christian experiences for men in Latin America are seen as stunted by machista practices. For Catholicism in Columbia, it has been posited that men cannot identify with the meek Christ, and thus are less likely to be religious. The author suggests that this is because Jesus, while a hero,

does not possess machista hero qualities such as aggressiveness and domination over women (Bohman 1984: 314).

Elizabeth Grosz has suggested that the etching of bodies through cultural and sexual practices, creates a certain body type that “excludes or makes difficult other possibilities” of being (1994: 191, Chapter 8). If embodied practices “form a precondition for varieties of religious experience” then “the inability to ‘enter into communion with God’ becomes a function of untaught bodies” (Asad 1997: 48). On a daily basis, it is likely that men would not know their bodies as anything but closed and autonomous.

Through my research, I did not encounter any example of Apostolic men escaping this aspect of habitus, developed through the daily experience of being a man in a machista society. This is not to deny that Apostolic men are challenging masculine norms of experience. Through their faith, men like Rafael are experiencing their bodies in new ways. As was seen in Chapter five, to the benefit of Nicaraguan society, these Apostolic men feel strong in their abandonment of widespread machista male practices such as drinking, womanizing, and fighting. Sustained in Apostolic men’s departure from ‘el mundo’, however, is control of bodily characteristic of the masculine habitus in machista societies. Many men are in Rafael’s situation of fighting the temptation of previous addictions to alcohol or cigarettes, for example. This corporeal discipline is a constant practice, and success in keeping the substances of ‘el mundo’ out of one’s body is a positive experience. I believe that most Apostolic men experience their bodies as closed and autonomous, not only because this is the Nicaraguan norm, but also because this is

reinforced through their practiced separation from *el mundo*.

Earlier in this chapter, I described how even those men who are seemingly attempting to receive the Holy Spirit, do not physically assume that ‘openness’ seen in female members. Perhaps this is a conscious choice, but the development of a masculine habitus in the context of Nicaragua must limit how one moves, senses, and knows the world. Somatically and psychologically, these being interpenetrating realms, it is likely there is a barrier for men to experience glossolalia.

Pushing the boundaries of gendered experience: Social change through transformed habituses

Experience cannot be “a raw mode of access to some truth” (Grosz 1994: 20), for we experience the world through culturally, habitually differentiated bodies. As Grosz states,

“Knowledges, like all other forms of social production, are at least partially effects of the sexualized positioning of their producers and users; knowledges must themselves be acknowledged as sexually determinate, limited, finite.”
(Grosz 1994: 20)

Phenomenologically, knowledge is inseparable from bodily experience. Thus, it follows that men and women experience and thus know the sacred differently due to the cultural gendering of bodies. Based on my research, I am proposing that glossolalia can be understood as a feminine knowledge in its Nicaraguan Apostolic context. It is a knowledge emerging from a certain type of corporeal being.

In describing their experiences of the Holy Ghost, my informants appeared to be re-producing the value of sensitive, obedient, submissive femininity associated with their gender in a patriarchal system found both in Nicaraguan society, but also within the church. Corporeally, however, these women have developed a knowledge of themselves that usurps machista Nicaraguan expectations. Their glossalalic action challenges social norms of the “proper” mother/daughter/woman as detached from her sensual being. In the space of the church, Apostolic women experience a divinely sanctioned uncontrolled and exuberant physicality.

Apostolic women definitely feel empowered through their glossalalic performances. In association with this divine gift, they describe being energized, feeling closer to God, and spiritually superior to male members. Often linked to the ‘compensation’ framework, cross-culturally women have described feeling ‘empowered’ by their direct contact with the divine in a social context of gender and/or race-based subordination (Burdick 1998; Griffith 1997; March 1986; Patai 1993: 122; Rosenbaum 1993).

The sense of empowerment gained by women through glossolalia is more effective, in terms of social change, than that gained by Carmen through her healing, or Julia in her suffering. Glossolalia is not, to the best of my knowledge, making women seek economic control in their households, leave abusive husbands, or directly challenge their position of subordination in a machista society. Nor is Apostolic women’s propensity to this gift challenging women’s subordinate status within the church, as evidenced

through the male audience's reaction. Nevertheless, a socially significant change is taking place through the Apostolic women's experience of glossolalia. Living their bodies as simultaneously sacred and sensual, Apostolic *señoras* are fleshing out a new femininity. As the Holy Spirit enters their bodies, these women experience the divine through their physically awakened corporeal selves. This embodiment represents a certain challenge to dominant expectations of feminine practice as either sinful and sensual, or moral and void of any physicality. The power of the Apostolic *señoras*' glossolalic performances resides in a transgression of expected gendered experiences, and more importantly in the divine sanctioning of that transgression.

What of the few men who do experience glossolalia? This is a question for future research. Unfortunately, I did not have the opportunity to interview the male members who have experienced speaking in tongues. Given the dominant Nicaraguan masculine habitus of a closed and autonomous body, I would expect that these men's lives differ in some way from other men, granting them a propensity to the seemingly uncommon masculine experience of 'letting God in'. Or, perhaps some of these men's experiences of their bodies and their habituses have been changed through glossolalia. The divine's power is, after all, without limits. As one elderly woman confided to me, "You don't know what God is going to do".

CONCLUSION

When I began attending *Cristiano* congregations in Diriamba last October (2000), immediately I became interested in the first Apostolic church of Faith in Jesus Christ. Asked why this was the fastest growing denomination in town, non-Apostolic *Cristianos* shrugged their shoulders and shook their heads: the 'legalista' church's popularity was a mystery. Add to this the literature gap on experiences of 'fundamentalist' Protestantism in Latin America, and I was determined to focus my attention on the experiences of Apostolics.

Between 1980 and 1990, Nicaraguan charismatic Protestant membership jumped from 5 to 15% (Freston 1998). Focusing on experiences of the divine and everyday practices, this study has aimed to provide a phenomenological account of Pentecostal religiosity. Throughout I have sought to address how different bodily experiences of the sacred (i.e. healing and glossolalia) within one church may be articulated to social change in Nicaragua.

As was explained in Chapter one, while many Nicaraguans feel hopeless and powerless faced with government corruption and post-revolutionary worsening poverty, Apostolics practice their church-defined morality and discipline towards ensuring that

God improve their life. Daily engagement “in *el mundo* but not of it” along with the experiences of sacredness through healing, suffering, and speaking in tongues, all grant Apostolics a sense of personal power.

Preoccupying me throughout this project has been the question of how Apostolics’ sense of power derived from religious experiences may impact Nicaraguan society. There definitely exist aspects of the Apostolic church that serve to support rather than challenge hegemonic aspects of Nicaraguan society. Apostolic women must abide by strict dress codes, and leadership roles are not available to female members. Members’ attribution of illness to divine causes in a context of nutritional and health service scarcity allows the Nicaraguan government to evade responsibility for its citizens’ well being. Julia is determined to make her marriage work in spite of her abusive husband, experiencing this situation of suffering as divinely significant. Prayer is Julia’s principal tool for the salvation of her marriage and for economic survival. She embodies the strength of one who has access to an unlimited source of power, yet long-term material improvement in her or her family’s situation as a result of her religiosity seems unlikely.

A phenomenological approach to religion, enhanced by theoretical instances of performance theory, allows for the multiple meanings and manifold social impacts of being Pentecostal in Nicaragua to emerge. Had I simply asked Apostolics how they practice their faith without exploring what it feels like and means on a personal level to experience sacredness, I do not think I would have been able to recognize any empowering or socially transformative energies within the Apostolic church. I had always

associated improvement in one's material circumstances and/or social status as *the* indication of achieving empowerment or socially significant change. By granting prominence to my informants' religious beings-in-the-world, my notions of social change and social impact were forced to broaden. With my informants' insistence on their transformations in daily practices, bodily sensations, and sense of personal power, I came to recognize these personal transformations as important avenues for exploring how one Pentecostal church is changing lives.

Knowledge of the divine is gained through the body in Pentecostalism worldwide. The centrality of the body as a source of knowledge and medium for the sacred emerges in the specifics of Apostolic members' experiences. In Chapter three, one woman's narrative of her illness and divine healing relates how Apostolics experience the state of their bodies and souls as one. Following a richly described moment of sensing and thus knowing the sacred, Carmen recovers from near-fatal leukemia and kidney disorder committed to serving God. In the Apostolic lifeworld, falling short of divine expectations can result in severe illness. Similarly, disease, as a complete transformation in one's corporeal being, can also succeed in a complete transformation of one's soul.

Chapter four continues with Carmen's narrative, as she describes how she devotes herself daily to avoiding *el mundo*, the non-Apostolic society of sin. Through a number of practices such as conforming to church rules of 'modest' dress, prayer, fasting, Bible reading, and regular church attendance, Carmen orders her life to maintain its sanctity. One's state of sacredness is contingent on everyday practices and linked bodily discipline.

All Apostolic members are expected to attend church nightly, pray a minimum of five times daily, and read the Bible at home. Being Apostolic for a man, as we saw in the case of Rafael, often means battling physical addictions to alcohol and cigarettes, as well as changing one's sexual and aggressive habits. For Apostolic women, one's dress and consequent demeanour is part of a daily performance of sacredness. Fasting, praying, and accepting suffering in everyday life deny comfort to the flesh as a sacrifice and means to a strength-granting relationship with God. Performing a complex of practices builds Apostolics' sense of their own sacredness, while separating them visibly from non-Apostolics in Diriamba.

That knowledge of the divine is experienced in one's corporeal being is not a new proposition in phenomenological studies of religion (Burdick 1998; Csordas 1997; Desjarlais 1996; Jackson 1989). I have endeavoured to push the discussion of religious experience further, in asking how one's habitus informs experiences of the sacred. We know the world through our bodies, but this knowledge is not "a raw mode of access to some truth" (Grosz 1994: 20). It is gained through culturally, habitually differentiated bodies. Modalities of feeling, being, and knowing emerge based on gender, class, ethnicity, age, and personal history.

If we recognize that different bodies, because of their habitus, know the divine differently, then it becomes crucial to ask how different experiences of the divine may alter habituses. Informed by performance theory and its argument that performances are sites for the contestation of power relations and social structures, I am suggesting that at

times the limits on experience set by the habitus can be pushed and habituses may be transformed as a result.

Following my description of how Apostolic epistemologies of the divine are based in bodily experience, evidence for religious practices altering habituses and potentially affecting social relations is explored in the last two chapters of my study. In Chapter five on becoming Apostolic, Rafael relates how his faith has transformed him into a 'new man'. In his daily actions as a *Cristiano*, Rafael is experiencing his body in new ways. He feels strength in denying himself the excessive drinking, aggressiveness, and promiscuity to which he was once addicted, practices that have reproduced the values of machismo on Nicaraguan men's flesh for decades (Lancaster 1992).

In Chapter six, I explore the social impact of Apostolic women knowing their bodies as sacred and sensual during glossolalia. This divinely-sanctioned sensuality transgresses gendered expectations, challenging normative stereotypes of Nicaraguan women as either physically wild and immoral or pious and physically detached. By 'sensing' their irrefutable closeness to God in uncontrolled physicality, these women are transforming their habituses. How this alternative feminine self-knowledge informs women's everyday life constitutes an interesting topic for future investigation. The significance of men experiencing glossolalia, while doing so with much lesser frequency than women, also demands further exploration. If glossolalia is experienced by Apostolic men as submissiveness and openness, how does this impact other aspects of these men's lifeworlds?

Men like Rafael and women performing glossolalia are altering gendered aspects of their habituses, challenging Nicaraguan machista definitions of gender roles and experiences in the process.

**“If bodies are inscribed in particular ways... then these kinds of inscriptions are capable of reinscription, of transformation, are capable of being lived and represented in quite different terms”
(Grosz 1994: xiii)**

Within Apostolic religiosity, there is a space for social critique and change opening up through members' living their bodies in new ways. In their self-representation, these men and women may reproduce dominant gender expectations : men stemming addictions are 'strong', women performing glossolalia 'obedient'. While rendering its social impact ambiguous, this does not eliminate the possibility of sensing oneself as a man or a woman in ways that transgress social norms for one's gender. By multiplying socially acceptable ways of being-in-the-world as a woman or man, Apostolic religiosity is, in my opinion, instigating undeniable socially significant change in Nicaragua.

QUESTIONS FOR FUTURE EXPLORATION

As I come to an end of this stage in my investigation, I realize that there is not a smooth correspondence between the subject of my study, Apostolics' experiencing of sacredness, and one of my central goals, which has been to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on Pentecostalism's social impact in Latin America (Brusco 1995; Burdick 1998; Levine 1995). At the core of Apostolics' being-in-the-world is *el mundo*, that sinful world that includes all non-Apostolic Nicaraguan society. Apostolics critique *el mundo* for its corrupt government, inadequate hospital services, lack of values for children, and machismo. Despite these criticisms, and the challenge to machista norms for gendered experiences embodied through certain religious practices, my informants actively seek avoidance, and not transformation of Nicaraguan society. This is not based in apathy, but in religiosity: for Apostolics, no matter how many Nicaraguans join their church, *el mundo* will always be there in the form of fleshed temptation to deviate from God's path. Apostolic actions are most significant as flagstones set down by my informants in their journeying towards spiritual reward. The final destination envisioned by my informants for their lives in Christ is salvation.

Given many Apostolics' apparent lack of interest in the fate of *el mundo*, are

Apostolics agents in the social shifts I claim they are producing? Can social change arise in the absence of self-reflexive agency? How knowledges that are beyond words and intimate in their embodiment, such as the feminine knowledge of the divine discussed in Chapter six, become significant beyond that subjective experience? Does the knower intellectualize his/her bodily knowledge at some point? Must s/he do so in order for social change to emerge from that knowledge? What about the spiritual basis of knowledges that transgress norms and expectations? Can one leave open the possibility of experiences being divinely inspired, and then characterize these experiences in terms of social action? For example, when Apostolic women speak in tongues, is the Holy Ghost responsible for the women's altered bodily states and transformed feminine habituses? Can agency and social change be attributed to a religious experience, and not to the performer of that experience?

These questions are important in a discussion of social change, and bound to emerge I think in response to phenomenological studies of religion. There is a certain blurriness to how social transformation emerges from a religious experience in which the devotee is not seeking such an outcome. Through the current study, I do not doubt that the physical/sensual is an arena for a particular form of agency (see also Herzfeld 2001: 243). This agency resides in doing, feeling, and being, rather than in conscious intellectual choice. It is on this level that it is not immediately relevant whether or not Apostolic men and women have intellectually intended to critique and transform their Nicaraguan gendered systems of dispositions. Their agency is sensual, and through specific religious

practices and experiences, change is effected.

As Herzfeld notes with respect to the constant expansion of anthropological knowledge, “the pragmatics of the field experience open up our readiness to accept and embrace surprising concatenations” (Herzfeld 2001: 53). Through my encounter with Apostolic experiences of their faith, social change, knowledge, and agency have assumed shapes particular to that context. These terms have become associated with “doing”, “being”, and “feeling”, rather than “meaning”. In the incarnations of Nicaraguan lives in Christ, I have come to accept that knowledge is not necessarily self-reflexive when it is bodily, agency may be sensual and not ‘conscious’ (i.e. intellectual), and social transformation can and does emerge from actions that are not consciously directed towards such change.

There is exciting research ahead in terms of understanding how examples of sensual agency impact the context of their emergence. It is still unclear to me by what process Apostolic women knowledge of their bodies as sacred and sensual during glossolalia will become or is at present engaged in transforming norms for Nicaraguan women’s experience beyond the church. Future research exploring how these women’s glossolalic experiences may or may not inform other aspects of their lives, hopefully can illuminate this process.

ENDNOTES

¹ In retrospect it was significant that a man, and not a woman, came as an emissary of religious authority to instruct me in the ways of the church. As will be discussed at instances throughout this study, the Apostolic church harbors a formal patriarchal order.

² There were no corresponding rules for men. Chapters five and six elaborate on how men and women experience major aspects of faith, conversion and religious gifts in what I will argue to be gendered forms. With more time, and certainly in the future, it would be valuable to explore the impact of class, ethnicity, and age on experiences of the divine.

³ These properties had belonged to Somoza and his friends before 1979, and seized by the Sandinistas upon their revolutionary victory. While la Pinata is critiqued by the anti-Sandinistas in Nicaragua, and I do not deny that certain high Sandinista officials are corrupt, this capital has allowed the Sandinista party's existence to continue. While the opposition parties can always receive funding from the country's elite and their international partners, there is no such guarantee for the Sandinistas.

⁴ Of the thirteen who did informally discuss politics with me, the majority were Sandinista (9 were). Three voted for the conservative party, and one supported the governing liberal party. None voted or intended to vote for the Camino Cristiano or the MUC. This was explained through reference to the party leaders' failure to give their testimony in public as to how Jesus changed his life and/or a feeling that these parties were power-hungry and should not use the "Christian" name as a result.

⁵ Silvia Stoller (2000) disagrees with Sullivan (1997) that Merleau-Ponty presents the body as gender neutral. According to Stoller, Merleau-Ponty's does leave room for different bodies and gendered experiences through his idea of processes of differentiation.

⁶ While Jackson provides a recent anthropological definition of the lifeworld that is best suited to my study's objectives, the term harks back to far earlier roots. Husserl introduced the *Lebenswelt*, literally the world of human existence, as a precultural world of immediate experience in The crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental phenomenology (1976). In the social sciences since that time, notable scholars to discuss and define the lifeworld include Bidney (1973) and Schutz (1973).

⁷ The hymn "Somos el pueblo de Dios, Somos el pueblo Especial" best translates as follows: "We are God's People, We are the Chosen People".

⁸ With the exception of perhaps 5-10% of the congregation that is illiterate, to the best of my knowledge, bible-reading is practiced in the home daily by almost all church members, regardless of gender. Unfortunately, I did not gather members' opinions on these differences which I noted after leaving the field.

⁹ The 'touch' of *el mundo* exists as a negative experience. Interestingly and as will be seen in Chapter 5, 'touch' also permeates the discourse on becoming Apostolic : touched by God, having Jesus touch one's heart are cited as moments of transformation. The varieties of tactility in Apostolic beings-in-the-world might constitute an interesting topic for further investigation.

¹⁰ Julia's father is a member of an Apostolic church, yet plays the lottery, a sin of gambling within the first Apostolic church of Faith in Jesus Christ. This is an example of how church and individual definitions of sin can vary greatly, even within the same denomination.

¹¹ I am of course persisting in my usage of the body as phenomenological ly inextricable from the mind

¹² François Laplantine (1998) and John Burdick (1998) are two theorists who adopt phenomenological perspectives, but sociological and symbolic interpretations neglecting the particularities of Protestant experiences are much more prevalent

¹³ Amongst all churches in Diriamba the gift of music is used to refer to the talent of the musicians who accompany the church in song with most often, a guitar, electric piano, and/or drum set. In the Apostolic church, all the musicians were men. The gift of music can also be attributed to a member of the church who is thought to have an excellent voice.

¹⁴ Throughout my research, my body, its experienced sensations, postures, changes, was instrumental to my approaching understanding of what it feels like to be Apostolic. In *Body and Emotion* (1990), Desjarlais attests to this phenomenological method through narrative passages in which his own bodily knowledges are described.

¹⁵ That I am aware, only four Apostolic members, all male, said they possessed other gifts including dreams and the gift of poetry.

¹⁶ It does happen that Christians experience the Baptism in the Holy Ghost, but do not speak in tongues. The following quote provides one explanation for this situation given by one *señora* with such an experience :
“The Holy Ghost comes to me, but I have not developed tongues. The tongues are there, I can feel them in my mouth, my tongue is moving, but nobody can hear. I am, like, scared. I want to, my tongue is moving, the pressure is on my throat, but I have a fear. But I think that little by little, with patience, I will acquire this gift”

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