



Chapter Six

Christian Students, Sex and Disciplined Bodies

Christian activity at the UZ plays itself out daily in the campus chapel, which caters to a variety of Christian groups, ranging from Seventh Day Adventists to Anglicans to various Pentecostal groups. Every Sunday between 7am and 6pm, different denominations meet in the chapel for hour-long services, while on Saturday, the chapel is solely reserved for use by the Seventh Day Adventist church. During the week, countless church groups hold prayer meetings at the chapel and in the various residence-hall common rooms. During fieldwork, I observed that church groups dominated the use of these common rooms and that the latter often had to be booked well in advance due to high demand.

On one occasion while attending a slam poetry group meeting on campus, I noted that a church group had just vacated the common room that we were now using and that a church choir was meeting in a separate section of the common room that had been partitioned off. Our poetry meeting was disrupted each time the choir broke out into loud prayer or began singing. When the poetry meeting concluded, an hour later, I noted two more church groups preparing to use the room that we had been in. Furthermore, three of the six members of the poetry group were en route to church meetings being held elsewhere on campus. It was also not uncommon to see church meetings being held outdoors—in the chapel gardens, on the sports fields or in other secluded open spaces. Indeed, a visitor to the institution would be forgiven for thinking that the UZ was a decidedly Christian campus.

In this chapter I turn my attention to the specific experiences of Christian students on the UZ campus in order to examine how Christianity operates as a ‘technology of the self’ (Foucault 1990:58) in the management and regulation of Christian sexualities. More specifically, this chapter will focus on the following: students’ struggles against sexual temptation; the strategies that different church groups use to encourage and enforce ‘Christian’ sexual subjectivities among students; and how these strategies inform the Christian groups’ approach to HIV prevention on campus. I centre most of my discussions on one Christian group, the interdenominational Celebration Church, which attracted hundreds of students to its weekly services. In fact, a large part of the Celebration church’s appeal on campus, besides its ‘prosperity’ and ‘modernity’ messages, was its interdenominational character.

Christianity and HIV in Zimbabwe

The majority of Zimbabweans consider themselves to be Christians. According to the most recent statistics released by the Central Statistics Office in 2006, sixty-six percent of men and eighty-nine percent of women reported that they were Christians (*Zimbabwe Demographic Health Survey 2005-6*; see also Chitando 2002). The distribution according to specific denominations was as follows: Apostolic Sect (30% women and 22% men); Protestants (26% and 17% respectively); Pentecostals (18% and 13% respectively); Roman Catholics (10% for both women and men) and ‘Other Christian’ (6% and 4% respectively) (*Zimbabwe Demographic Health Survey 2005-6*). Only two percent of women and eight percent of men indicated that they were ‘Traditionalists’ and less than

one percent of all respondents indicated that they were ‘Muslim’. While these statistics obscure a lot, such as the fact that in reality many individuals who claim to be Christian also occasionally practice certain aspects of ‘traditionalist’ religion, they do clearly show that most Zimbabweans think of themselves as Christian. Given the recent rise in Pentecostalism in the country, many Christians now also belong to more than one denomination at a time. Similar patterns can be assumed to exist on the UZ campus, with perhaps much smaller proportions of students who belong to the Apostolic Sect and practice traditional religious rituals.

There are major differences in the origins and theologies of the Christian denominations listed above. Here I would like to highlight a few differences between so-called mission-oriented churches, Apostolic Sects and Pentecostal churches. Mission-oriented churches include Protestant groups such as the Dutch Reformed, Methodist and Lutheran churches and also the Roman Catholics. They date back to the late 1800s (Zvobgo 1996; Bhebhe 1979) and represent the earliest presence of Christianity in the country, except for a brief encounter with Jesuit missionaries in the 1600s. Despite being seen as the precursors to Africa’s colonialism, mission-oriented churches were historically associated with ‘progress’ and ‘modernity’ and the schools they established ‘provided access to high salaries in white collar work, and also access to politics and power’ (Bourdillon 1990: 285; see also Dachs 1973 and Comaroff and Comaroff 1997). Apostolic sects started to grow in the early twentieth century, and were often led by former members of mission-churches, who integrated local rituals and processes with Christian ideas. They tend to fashion themselves like Old Testament communities, and focus more on faith healing than complex doctrine (Engelke 2007; Sundkler 1961). They

also often resist certain trappings of ‘modernity’, and sometime explicitly oppose involvement with government and employment by Europeans. Members of one particularly prominent sect, Johan Marange, are not allowed to seek ‘Western’ medical care (Jules-Rosette 1975). All Apostolics wear some kind of uniform to church—the most typical being a completely white tunic, and most prefer to meet in open places rather than in special buildings.

In contrast to both mission and Apostolic churches, Pentecostal churches in the country are predominantly a feature of independent Zimbabwe. In fact, Meyer (2004: 453) traces the rise of Pentecostal churches in Africa to ‘the crisis of the post-colonial nation-state...and mass-mediated popular culture’. The first key difference is therefore that mission-oriented churches have a longer history in the country than do Pentecostal churches. The second major difference that is relevant for my purposes in this chapter pertains to theology. Most mission-oriented churches are guided by what Weber termed ‘the Protestant ethic’, which is based on the principle of prosperity, but without the corresponding excessive shows of wealth. Mission churches promote frugality and discourage compulsive enjoyment. By contrast, Meyer (2004:459) that Pentecostals ‘present themselves as the ultimate embodiments of modernity’ as illustrated by the ‘huge churches’ that they build for their congregations as well as by the very glitzy lifestyles of the pastors from these churches. The Pentecostal theology also posits that prosperity is a blessing from God and that outward displays of prosperity are perfectly fine as long as one continues to be led by the Holy Spirit (*ibid*). I will show in the latter parts of the chapter how these ideas feed into Pentecostal churches’ messages to students regarding morality and sexuality.

Mission-oriented churches and Pentecostal churches also approach the issues of sexuality and HIV in contrasting ways. Garner (2000:51) argues that the former ‘ask few questions’ about the private lives of their members, while in the latter, ‘the romantic and financial aspects of members lives are monitored—if not controlled—by church leaders’. In their study of mission-type churches and what they called ‘spirit-type’ churches (i.e. Pentecostals and African Independent churches) in Zimbabwe, Gregson et al (1999) noted that the former believe that the avoidance of sin is best left to individual conscience and prayer, while in the latter, ‘church leaders teach that sin can lead to sickness and often operate systems of checks and punishments for offenders’. Some studies suggest that HIV prevalence is lower among Pentecostals precisely because of these regulatory systems (see Sadgrove 2007; Gregson et al 1999). Other studies merely point to the protective effect of religion. In Zimbabwe, for instance, individuals who reported that they were not religious had higher rates of HIV compared to their more religious counterparts (Zimbabwe Demographic Health Survey 2005-6). In the same study, Muslims had the lowest infection rates among religious individuals, reflecting trends elsewhere on the continent (Epstein 2007). It must be noted, however, that the relationship between religious affiliation and sexual behaviour is much more complex. Furthermore, there are numerous differences in the extent to which Pentecostal churches actually monitor and regulate the romantic and sexual lives of their members.

There is general consensus in the literature that the church has in Africa greatly contributed to HIV and AIDS-related stigma and discrimination (Delius and Glaser 2005; Robins 2004). The tendency to associate infection with promiscuity is often cited as the main reason. It is important, however, to realize that the church’s response has not been

homogenous. In her study of the role of Christianity in promoting democracy in Zimbabwe, Mukonyora (2008:135), for instance, distinguishes between two groups of Christians: those who are ‘other worldly’ and ‘are reluctant to reflect on the way their beliefs shape their politics and who reinforce the status quo’. In contrast, she argues that ‘this worldly’ Christians believe that they have a key role to play in challenging inequities in society and they try to draw on Christian principles to accomplish this. Mukonyora’s analysis is useful for examining how Pentecostal and mission churches in Zimbabwe have responded to the HIV and AIDS epidemic.

According to Chiweza (1997:117), some church groups in the country treat the problem of HIV and AIDS as an ‘earthly one’ and ‘believe that God shall resolve the problem at his own time’. Such groups can be said to conform to Mukonyora’s ‘other worldly’ classification because they place emphasis on prayer and belief in God as the only viable approaches to HIV prevention. These churches seldom discuss the issues of HIV and AIDS and when they do, they associate the epidemic with sin. Pentecostal churches in Zimbabwe have placed adverts in the media claiming that they have the ability to ‘cure’ AIDS through prayer. A Zimbabwean columnist received the following response from a Christian after she had written an article criticizing some church groups for their over-emphasis on prayer as an HIV prevention strategy. The response read, ‘Christians should be preaching salvation...it’s up to God to cure them of Aids when they ask Him. Believe me God is still in the business of healing people even today’. The national press ran a story in January 2004 on the upsurge of so-called ‘miracle cures’ that were being offered by some church groups and traditional healers. In the article, some Pentecostal churches were said to be providing ‘holy water’ which they claimed cured all

ailments, including HIV infection (*The Herald*, 14 January 2004). These particular responses encourage passivity in the face of the epidemic. The director of a women's organisation in Zimbabwe captured this idea perfectly at a conference held on gender violence and HIV last year. She explained that many married women had told her that they did not see the need for them to use condoms with their husbands because 'God was their condom' (*The Standard*, 1 May 2010). For these women, Christianity offered immunity against the virus.

Other churches, however, view HIV and AIDS as problems that must be addressed in the here and now. Most mission churches fall into this group and regularly talk about the epidemic in their sermons, although they tend to promote abstinence and fidelity as the only acceptable prevention methods. Ministers associate condoms with sin and discourage their use as a way to stamp out pre-marital and extra-marital sex. Kelly, a Catholic priest based in Zambia, acknowledges that 'the explicit teaching of the Church [i.e. Catholic] is that it is unlawful for a married couple to use condoms when they engage in sex...' (Kelly 2001:10). A major limitation with abstinence-only programmes as an HIV prevention strategy is that they foreclose any opportunity for comprehensive sex education with young people (Marindo et al 2003). In fact, church groups only talk about sex and sexuality with those young people who are about to get married; until then, youth are virtually treated as if they are asexual beings. Fidelity, on the other hand, is said to be ineffective against HIV infection because it ignores—and often reinforces—gender inequities that make it impossible for many married women, especially, to enforce. For instance, church groups reinforce cultural beliefs that all decision-making, including sexual decision-making, is the prerogative of the husband. Many church groups in

Zimbabwe stress that obedience, subservience and respect to husbands are important attributes of a Christian wife (*The Standard*, 1 May 2010). Feldman and Maposhere (2003) and Njovana and Watts (1996) have argued that this makes it very difficult for Zimbabwean women to confront their husbands about the latter's infidelity. It also makes it hard for them to enforce condom use in their marriages.

The church's response to HIV and AIDS continues to be disjointed and inadequate even though heads of denominations from close to two hundred church groups developed an HIV and AIDS policy in 2005. A number of church groups are also now encouraging pre-marital HIV testing for young couples (*The Herald*, 9 June 2005). Some Apostolic and Zionist churches have decided to end the practice of polygamy as a way of stemming the spread of HIV among their members (*The Herald* 21 September 2005). The Pentecostal Assemblies of Zimbabwe, which incorporates one hundred church groups, has introduced mandatory testing for all its pastors, marriage officers and would-be couples. In addition, many churches have vibrant home-based care programmes in which church members provide care and support to the sick, many of whom are often suffering from HIV and AIDS-related illnesses. Church groups generally find it easier to provide care and support to the infected than to talk openly about the epidemic, because they have always traditionally cared for the sick (Rodlach 2009). Churches have also been instrumental in providing care and support, in the form of food packages and school fees, to children orphaned by the epidemic.

Christian Students' Struggles against Sexual Temptation

In the preceding chapter I briefly introduced two friends, Leonard and Nhlanhla, who were both in their final year. I did not mention, however, that both were devout Pentecostal Christians. The two rarely went through a whole conversation without making reference to the Bible or declaring their Christian commitment. Both claimed that they had never had sex nor dated because this was against the teachings of their church groups. Whenever I was in their company, they talked incessantly about girls and dating and about female students they were romantically interested in but had never asked out. Leonard and Nhlanhla were particularly interesting research participants because they readily discussed the challenges they faced as ‘male virgins’. Both attributed their success at retaining their virginity to the fact that they were not resident on campus. Leonard had grown up in a low-income neighbourhood in the capital city and hence commuted daily between the university and home, where he stayed with both parents and four siblings. Nhlanhla, on the other hand, was from a small town located hundreds of kilometers away in the southern part of the country. When the university was in session he stayed in a middle-income neighbourhood with his paternal uncle, the latter’s wife and their two children.

One Friday morning, and at my prompting, Leonard and Nhlanhla described some of the most challenging sexual temptations that they had faced on and off campus and which they had almost given in to. We also discussed the role that Christianity had played in helping them ‘triumph’ over these various temptations. Leonard claimed that a tenant’s daughter had made several sexual overtures towards him and that, at one point, he had come ‘dangerously close’ to succumbing to them:



“If there was anyone I was ever going to have sex with, it was that lady. I think she was sent by the Devil! There [must be] a demon for sex [because] I was not thinking straight. You are like in a mood, you know, like at a waterfall and the current is strong, you can’t resist and God, you are about to do it [have sex] then, Hallelujah, an angel stops you. Or someone knocks on the door! Then you are back to your senses!”

Leonard described how he had felt completely out of control—like a waterfall—when he kissed the tenant. He claimed that this was the first time that he had ever kissed a woman in his life. Although Leonard admitted that he had found the kiss extremely pleasurable, he immediately attempted to diminish his feelings of guilt and to reconcile his actions with his Christian ethics by blaming his temporary loss of control on the woman—she was the devil incarnate—and to an even greater force—demonic spirits. He also tried to distance himself further from his actions by drawing on the waterfall analogy in order to draw attention to the fact that it was humanly impossible to resist the kind of temptation that he had faced. Attributing certain types of ‘un-Christian’ behaviour to extra-terrestrial forces, particularly demons, is a common strategy that many Christians use to assuage their guilt (Robbins 2004). By framing his experiences in the context of the supernatural Leonard managed to downplay his culpability while simultaneously highlighting the important role that divine intervention had played in ‘saving’ him from committing a sinful act.

Nhlanhla reinforced his friend’s views and pointed out that even the greatest men in the Bible had ‘fallen’ because of sexual temptation:

“The more you start getting closer to God, the more women start appearing from nowhere...and if you are not careful, you will fall. Abstaining is difficult. It is very, very difficult and it is only through God’s grace that we are able to overcome [sexual temptation].”

Nhlanhla's most recent encounter with sexual temptation involved a neighbour's wife. He alleged that on several occasions the neighbour's wife had come over to his house asking for assistance for a malfunctioning television set. His parents had sent him over to look at it and each time the 'problem' would turn out to be something minor that she and her husband could easily have fixed themselves. Nhlanhla claimed that on one occasion he had found the neighbour's wife clad in a revealing 'zambia', ostensibly about to take a bath. A 'zambia' is a special type of boldly printed cloth, approximately 2m x 1.5 m in length, which women in the country wrap over their regular clothes in order to cover as much of their lower body as possible. The 'zambia' is considered a sign of feminine modesty and respectability, especially among older and married women (Jacobson-Widding 2000). Sometimes, when women prepare to take a bath, they wrap a zambia much higher up so that it covers the breasts. However, wearing it this way leaves the shoulders completely exposed as well as shortens the length of the cloth to just below or above the knees, which many men find seductive. In fact, Jacob Zuma, the President of South Africa, cited the 'kanga' (as the 'zambia' is called in South Africa), as his reason for having sex with a woman who had brought rape charges against him in 2008 (Motsei 2008; Robins 2008). He claimed that 'kanga' constituted sexually 'provocative' dressing. Just like Jacob Zuma, Nhlanhla had found the neighbour's wife's zambia-clad body sexually enticing. Unlike Zuma, however, Nhlanhla had successfully resisted the temptation.

Both Leonard and Nhlanhla took little personal credit for their success at sexual abstinence and instead attributed it to their relationship with God and to God's direct intervention. For Leonard 'an angel' had appeared in the nick of time, while Nhlanhla

attributed his success to ‘God’s grace’. Christianity thus acts as a protective force against the more serious types of sexual temptation. In this particular instance, Christianity prevented the two friends from having actual sexual intercourse. It had not, however, prevented them from committing other sexual sins, admittedly of a much lesser magnitude, such as kissing. Again, Nhlanhla’s experiences are illustrative.

“I have kissed many people in my life. I have this problem that when I meet a girl, I will end up kissing her. I can’t help it. One time I kissed a girl within an hour of meeting her! For three days we met at a park and kissed. She disappeared after three days and I have not seen her since. To this day, I don’t even know if she was a demon or what...”

Nhlanhla characterised his love for kissing in terms of an addiction. It is also quite clear that he felt terribly conflicted about this particular personal weakness.

In contrast to their male counterparts, only a small number of the female Christian students I interviewed described the sexual advances they received from men in terms of temptation. However, they did acknowledge being pressured for sex by boyfriends. ‘Even if you have agreed with your boyfriend to abstain, guys have a way of luring you and you end up doing it [i.e. having sex]’, a female Christian student observed. Most, however, considered the desire for material consumption goods to be a much greater temptation than pre-marital sex. It was this desire, they pointed out, that made many female students ‘compromise’ their standards by engaging in transactional sex relationships. ‘Being Christian is hard’, a female student admitted in an interview, ‘When I first came here [to the UZ] I was tempted...you know...Some people seemed to be always having fun. But after some time I realized that they have to pay...’ She proceeded to give the example of

a friend who had been infected with HIV by an older man that she had been dating, not because she loved him, but because he provided for her financially.

Another Christian student, who was part of a Christian women's fellowship group on campus, explained that all women faced the challenge of 'looking good' and 'having better clothes' throughout their stay on campus although the pressure was greatest for first year students. 'In [your] first year you want to fit in and to be accepted. You are concerned about your looks and this can lead to low self esteem if you cannot afford to buy what is in fashion'. The women's fellowship group that she belonged to used examples of powerful women in the Bible to help members develop high self-esteem. 'We try to show female students that they have so much potential in them and that they too can be powerful. We also encourage each other to study hard as there will be plenty of time to look good after graduation'.

There were other ways that female Christian students' dating experiences differed from those of their male counterparts. Women seemed to be confronted with much greater, and contradictory, challenges. For instance, many indicated that Christian peers pressured them to become engaged and be in serious relationships. They also observed that female students who were not in relationships were often suspected of engaging in clandestine promiscuous behaviour. Charity, a Catholic student explained:

"People respect you when you are in a relationship. People refer to you as '*madam wa ningi*' [i.e. so and so's woman] and they do not mess around with you. It was only after I broke up with my boyfriend that I realized that single women are not respected here [on campus]."

Rather than avoiding intimate relationships, therefore, many female Christian students were actively pursuing them. The idea that married women or women in long-term relationships are more respectable than single women is fairly common in Christianity (Brusco 1995). In her study of femininity and Pentecostalism in Zimbabwe, for instance, Mate (2002:557) observed that single women and widowed women were ‘routinely prayed for so that they would get married and have long lasting relationships’. Once in relationships, female Christian students faced an even greater dilemma, which was how to maintain non-sexual relationships while allowing limited forms of physical intimacy, which did not conflict fundamentally with their Christian faith. The experiences of the three female students I discuss next are illustrative of this dilemma.

The three students, who were friends, belonged to the Seventh Day Adventist church. Like the two male students discussed earlier, they too claimed to be sexually abstinent. However, each held a different view regarding non-sexual forms of physical intimacy in relationships. Miriam, for instance, was dating a fellow Seventh Day Adventist and there was no physical intimacy whatsoever in the relationship. ‘I have never had sex and I have never kissed a guy’. She attributed this to the fact that her boyfriend belonged to the same church and was exposed to the same messages regarding sexual abstinence. He had thus never made any sexual advances towards her. The second student, Langa, was also dating within the same church but her relationship involved limited forms of physical intimacy: ‘I am still a virgin, but my boyfriend and I hug and kiss’. The last student, Chipso, was dating someone from a different church and she stated, ‘We do everything but sex’. She proceeded to explain,

“I think people use the word virgin wrongly. Most of us have kissed and done almost everything. We have even experienced what an orgasm feels like even though there was no penetration. Can such a person still be called a virgin?”

Because they had not had actual penetrative intercourse, Chipo and Langa were convinced that their actions fell within the ambit of an acceptable Christian response. They were also of the view that physical intimacy was a necessary aspect of relationships, ‘otherwise you are just brother and sister’. Furthermore, they felt that a total ban on all forms of physical intimacy was unrealistic in contemporary Zimbabwe. The three students mentioned that some of the female Christian students they knew were responding to sexual temptation in the following ways: engaging in mutual masturbation with their male partners, setting clear ground rules regarding premarital sex at the start of a new relationship, avoiding isolated places when they were with their boyfriends and always keeping their clothes on when making out. ‘Once the clothes start coming off, you know that you are in trouble. It’s harder to stop at that point’, Chipo explained. When I asked Miriam, whose relationship involved no physical intimacy whatsoever, to give me some actual examples of how she managed to overcome sexual temptation, she responded: ‘Just think of your mother when you find yourself in such a situation [i.e. sexually tempted]’.

In her study of ‘born-again’ (i.e. Pentecostal) Christian students at Makerere University in Uganda, Sadgrove (2007) showed that there were often more similarities, than differences, between the sexual behaviours of ‘born-again’ students and their non-born again (i.e. mission churches) counterparts. The only difference was that the former seemed more conflicted and experienced a lot of guilt with regards their sexual behaviour than the latter.

Dating, Courtship and other Christian Responses to Sexuality on Campus

If Christian groups at the UZ shared one thing in common, it was their condemnation of premarital sex. However, they were less unanimous in their views on the propriety of intimate relations among students. Some groups supported these relations but only under very strict conditions. For instance, they required that dating couples belong to the same church, that romantic liaisons be made public to the rest of the church and that marriage should be the intended outcome of any such relations. In contrast, other churches did not discourage dating at all. I noted during fieldwork that most Christian groups, especially Pentecostals, maintained a strict differentiation between ‘dating’ and ‘courtship’. One such group was the Celebration Ministries International, which I discuss in much greater detail later in the chapter. A brief description of the church group is necessary at this point.

Celebration Church, as it was popularly known in the country, marketed itself as an interdenominational church and was located within walking distance of the UZ campus. The church’s headquarters constituted of a flamboyant building complex and was described in a website as a ‘glamorous, multi-billion dollar building’. It housed, among other things, a theatre that could accommodate as many as three thousand people, a coffee bar, a bookstore, and ‘high tech’ children’s play centre. Although membership was open to all, Celebration Church typically attracted the upper middle-class and the

truly wealthy²⁵. However, students who participated in the weekly meetings organized by Celebration on campus were not necessarily from wealthy backgrounds, although many tried to project an aura of success, mostly through their dress code. I was often amazed at how spectacularly dressed and made up some of the female ushers who served at the weekly Tuesday meetings were. The male leaders, in turn, dressed formally in trendy suits and ties as though going for a job interview.

At one of its weekly meetings on campus, the young and newly wed pastor who had been invited to speak on ‘Marriage and Courtship’ described dating as ‘trying out something before you buy it’ and as ‘a preparation for breakup’. To drive his point home, the pastor held up a sheet of paper and, tearing it up piece by piece, declared:

“Ladies, each time you let a guy into your panties [he paused to tear off a couple of pieces], you lose a part of yourself! Marriage is about *wholes* coming together. By the time you are done with your studies in three or four year’s time, what will be left of you? [He paused again and tore off a huge chunk of paper]. Stop enjoying the benefits of marriage when you are not married! Ladies, keep those legs crossed! Guys, check yourselves before you wreck yourselves!”

The pastor associated dating with premarital sex and sexual promiscuity, which were not only considered sinful, but were also seen as indicative of a much greater spiritual malaise: the improper pursuit of pleasure and an inability to delay gratification until the proper time and place. The pastor explained that dating allowed students to ‘enjoy the benefits of marriage’ without being married. It was, in a sense therefore, a ‘trial run’ of marriage without any real intention of eventually marrying the person that one was dating. Consequently, dating was seen as an undisciplined giving in to bodily desires,

²⁵ E.g. Nigel Chanakira who owns an Investment Banking enterprise and who was named ‘one of the world’s 100 future leaders under the global body, World Economic Forum in 2005’ or Gary Thompson, ‘an advertising mogul’.

which represented a worldly and un-Christian response to sexual temptation. In contrast, courtship was perceived as an approach that was based on the idea of deferring pleasure to the ‘proper place and time’. Courtship required individuals to exercise great self-control and discipline regarding their bodily desires, all of which were regarded as being essential to spiritual development. In fact, as Marshall (2009:173) points out in her study of ‘born again’ evangelism in Nigeria, ‘...control and channeling of desire [is] central to the problem of salvation’. This is one main reason why most church groups on campus stressed the importance of delayed gratification when they addressed the issue of sex.

Consider the sermon below, which was held during the 2006 orientation week and was directed at first year students. The sermon was held in an overflowing chapel and to an interdenominational audience:

“Does anyone want to share this sandwich with me?” the pastor offered, as he unwrapped a modest looking sandwich. The audience of mostly first year students exchanged glances, unsure of how to respond. ‘Anyone?’ the pastor prompted. Again, an uncomfortable silence followed. The pastor held up his sandwich invitingly and after what felt like an eternity of silence, a hand shot up. ‘Ah!’ the pastor exclaimed happily, ‘Come to the front young man!’ Everyone watched with heightening interest as a male student made his way to the front. Unexpectedly, the pastor then proceeded to take a bite out of the sandwich before handing it over to the male student. The latter hesitated and withdrew his extended hand. The audience laughed. Next, the pastor dropped the partly eaten sandwich to the ground, trampled on it, picked it up and once again offered it to the student. This time, the student declined verbally. The pastor then turned to the rest of the audience and again asked, ‘Does anyone want this piece of bread?’. Satisfied that there were no takers, he delivered his punchline: ‘Ladies, this is what happens to you when you engage in premarital sex! You become like a dirty piece of bread that no one wants. You cheapen yourself!’”

The message of the sermon was very similar to the one given by the pastor from Celebration Church. Both spoke strongly against pre-marital sex and they emphasised its destructive effects—‘cheapening oneself’; ‘losing a part of oneself’; ‘dirtying oneself’—

for those who did not have the discipline to do things the ‘proper’ way. In his sermon, the Celebration Church pastor offered himself as a case study in the art of discipline and delayed gratification. He pointed out that he had not given in to sexual temptation during his stay on campus and that after graduating ten years earlier, he had focused on his relationship with God. It was only after doing this that he had decided to pursue a romantic relationship, which culminated in his marriage in 2006.

Courtship was considered to be a more appropriate Christian approach to relationships because it represented a clear and firm assertion of a couple’s preparation for and commitment to marriage. Courtship was therefore more than just a search for a suitable marriage partner. The Celebration Church pastor offered the following advice to male students, ‘The first words out of your mouth when you court a girl should be ‘will you marry me?’ If she says yes then you immediately start to prepare for married life together’. It is this clarity of intention that appears to give courtship an edge over dating in Christian circles. The second reason why Pentecostal churches on campus preferred courtship to dating was that the former forced relations between members of the opposite sex out into the open and made them easier to regulate. As Foucault (1977:193) noted, ‘visibility assures the hold of power [and] it is the fact of constantly being seen that maintains the disciplined individual within his subjection’. For instance, courtships in many churches are publicly announced, often during main services, and the couple involved is displayed before the whole congregation. In many churches, too, courting couples are immediately enrolled in some form of ‘marriage preparation’ programme. In other denominations, individuals who are courting are required to interact only in the presence of a third person who acts as a chaperone. Again, this appears to be a strategy

for keeping relationships under public scrutiny and for ensuring that the courting couple does not give in to sexual temptation should it arise. Dating relationships, in contrast, are associated with the furtive and hidden.

Some churches' regulatory mechanisms bordered on the absurd. In 2003, when I worked at SHAPE, a female student named Martha, who had trained as a peer counselor, approached the organisation for assistance regarding a problem that she was experiencing within her church group. Martha belonged to a Pentecostal group known as the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God in Africa (ZAOGA), which had elaborate systems for 'disciplining' Christian bodies. As in most churches, external discipline for females included strict dress codes and Martha adhered to this requirement by always wearing ankle-length skirts and loose fitting, long-sleeved blouses. In addition, her hair was always tied or pulled back in a simple style and she never wore pants or high-heeled shoes. Besides dressing, ZAOGA also believed in keeping contact between female and male students at an absolute minimum. Where such contact could not be avoided, the parties involved were expected to have a third person present. This applied to all members of the church and not just to courting couples.

On the day in question, Martha had come to SHAPE for assistance because the church leadership was unhappy with the fact that she was not observing this particular rule. However, as one of only two girls in her Engineering class, Martha could not always ensure that she was never in the company of a male student alone. Neither could she stop male classmates from visiting her room. Furthermore, Martha felt that it was unrealistic for her to always have a chaperone on stand by, so to speak, in case a male classmate paid her a visit. Martha had been summoned to numerous 'hearings' and had even been

‘temporarily suspended’ from participating in some church events as a result and also because of her association with SHAPE. The latter’s pro-condoms stance was seen as a tacit approval of pre-marital sex.

Although many churches supported courtship rather than dating, few actively enforced it in the manner that ZAOGA did. This therefore left Christian students with plenty of room to oscillate between the two approaches, as illustrated in my discussion in the previous section. In the next section, I examine the specific messages and strategies that were used by Celebration church to promote an acceptable Christian sexuality among its members on campus. In particular I seek to highlight how Celebration pastors appropriated business metaphors to make their messages attractive and relevant to students.

Sexual ‘Investments’ and Creating ‘Disciplined’ Bodies in an ‘Undisciplined’ Space

Much of my fieldwork involved attending meetings and discussion forums that I saw advertised on various notice boards around campus. This is how I came to know about the ‘Get Wisdom’ lecture series organized by a group of Christian students who referred to themselves as ‘Campus Ignite’. Campus Ignite was the campus branch of Celebration Church and its services were held every Tuesday evening from 7pm to 8pm in a lecture theatre that sat four hundred students. The services always started off with announcements from the Campus Ignite leadership and some singing, after which the pastor of the day would be introduced and invited to speak. More often than not, the pastors arrived ten to fifteen minutes late and were welcomed with standing ovations and

screams of delight initiated by the Campus Ignite leadership. The cheering and applause would continue as the pastors made their way from the back of the lecture theatre, where the main entrance was, to the front, where the podium was located. The relative importance of each pastor could often be judged by the duration and intensity of the ovations. The second key ritual performed at these services was the reciting of Campus Ignite Vision, which was referred to as ‘the affirmation statement’. The statement went as follows: ‘We seek to reach tomorrow’s leaders today and to build them up into a Godly generation that will impact and influence diverse spheres of life thereby ushering in God’s Kingdom, reforming communities and reviving nations’. A close reading illustrates how it underscored many of the ideals, such as personal success and leadership, which characterised the Celebration Church theology.

Pastors from the church used a subtle brand of persuasion, which was based on the clever appropriation of the business concepts of ‘investment’, ‘efficiency’ and ‘dividends’ and which was meant to be both inspirational and intellectually stimulating for a university audience. Between April and May 2007, for instance, four out of the six Celebration Church services I attended on campus were on the following business related topics: Success, Entrepreneurship, Mentorship and Wisdom. The remaining two were on ‘God’s Universe’ and ‘Marriage and Courtship’. Regardless of the topic under discussion, however, all the pastors who were invited to speak on these topics had two characteristics in common that made them especially appealing. First, they were relatively young by Zimbabwean church standards (i.e. in their thirties and early forties) and secondly, they were all very successful entrepreneurs and appeared to be living the kinds of successful lifestyles that many students aspired towards. I observed that in all six

sermons mentioned above, every one of the pastors referred to their personal wealth and attributed it to God. For example, the pastor who preached on Success mentioned, as a key part of his sermon, that he had eventually succeeded in taking his family of four on a ‘dream trip’ to Disneyland in the USA. He pointed out that he and his family had traveled business class, not economy. The pastor who preached on Entrepreneurship explained his recent absence on campus by pointing out that he had been holidaying in the United Kingdom with his wife. In response to the applause and cheering that greeted his reference to the UK—which represents all things modern and successful for many students at the UZ—the pastor declared that ‘money and wealth are a by-product of faith’ thus implying that students could enjoy similar success by developing their faith. This is what many (e.g. Mate 2002; x) refer to as the ‘gospel of prosperity’ among Pentecostal groups in Zimbabwe.

Students seemed equally inspired by the persons of the pastors, all of whom were young and successful. The pastors were also close enough in age to most students to serve as realistic examples that self-discipline was indeed practical and rewarding. Furthermore, the fact that these were lay pastors meant that they were not considered religious authorities in the same way that a fully ordained pastor would have been. These various factors made it possible for Celebration church pastors to assume the roles of empathetic older brothers or benevolent uncles, as opposed to that of strict parents, as many other churches seemed to rely on. Consider the tone adopted by the pastor in the excerpt below, which was empathetic, acknowledging the sexual pressures that students encountered on campus, and also mildly chastising:

“It is very easy to feel quite isolated when you are here on campus and you may feel pressured to be in a relationship. You may feel that you need to secure yourself a man while you are still marketable. I say do it the proper way! Find out who you are first... Focus on your career and on your relationship with God first... What’s the rush, guys? Ladies, why are you restricting yourself to the five thousand guys here on campus when you could choose from a million? Make right your relationship with God and He will pull through for you!”

This model was extremely popular on campus, judging from the large number of students who attended the services and the fact that the majority of them belonged to entirely different denominations. Because it marketed itself as an interdenominational organisation, Celebration church attracted a wide variety of students who ranged from those who were merely looking for inspiration to those who were between churches and were thus looking for a ‘new’ home.

The pastor who gave the sermon on Wisdom employed the metaphor of a *franchise* to describe the ideal relationship that students were supposed to have with God: ‘You are operating a franchise of God on earth. You are God’s advertising space. You are His billboard’. He then offered the following guidelines on how students were to ‘manage this franchise’:

“The Holy Spirit should be your tutor, your instructor and your trainer here on campus... You need to do three things to increase the activity of the Holy Spirit in your life: *pray* in secret—you need personal time with God because God speaks to us at a personal level; *fast* in secret—learn to discipline your flesh and desires and don’t let your body tell you what to do; and *give* in secret. As young people you need to understand the following: one, God works on the inside; two, channel your attention to God not to yourself; three, God resists the proud.”

The pastor stressed three things—prayer, fasting and giving—as necessary *investments* that each Christian had to make in order to achieve spiritual growth. He also provided a



road map on how students should go about making ‘investments’ in the self. The main thing was to be well versed in the Bible and he referred to this as constituting an ‘input’, in much the same way that an individual going into business would make certain inputs in order to get a business off the ground. The pastor was adamant about the importance of knowing Bible verses, as the Bible formed the bedrock of one’s faith: ‘Guys, you have to memorise the Bible! How come you know all the words to Shakira’s song about ‘shaking your booty’. Surely you can remember a few verses. The flesh wants you to think that it is too difficult to read your Bible’. Fasting was the second major investment, or input, that students had to make. He explained that fasting was how Christians nurtured the inner person—the self. Fasting was also an important way of disciplining the flesh and resisting temptation. Giving money to the church was the last investment that students had to make in order to realize material and spiritual success. What is significant about the three things that the pastor highlighted, and this was a common theme in all the sermons that I attended, was that while investments take time to mature they were well worth the wait.

The pastor who gave the sermon on ‘Success’ followed more or less the same script. He emphasized the business principles of goal setting, strategic thinking and planning. To illustrate his point, he shared the story of a shrewd entrepreneur who had decided to go into wine making. ‘Do you know that it takes seven years before a vineyard starts bearing fruit? But vineyards will continue bearing fruit for the next two hundred years. This man had a bigger vision for his future and he was not afraid to wait a while before he could enjoy the fruits of his labour’. The pastor explained that this entrepreneur had a long-term vision and placed emphasis on the future rather than on immediate

gratification. The same pastor proceeded to give a real life the example of John Goddard, an American motivational speaker who, when he was just fifteen, came up with a list of 127 things that he wanted to do in his lifetime. The pastor explained that, to date, Walsh had already achieved 122 of these, and had since added more items to his original list.²⁶ The take home message was that material and spiritual success was the outcome of self-discipline as well as an ability to orient oneself to the future.

From the above, it is easy to see why students found the Celebration church theology both intellectually stimulating and inspirational. The emphasis on personal success corresponded with the personal ambitions and perceived life trajectories of most students. It is indeed no exaggeration to state that a significant proportion of male students who attended these services hoped to get guidelines on how to become successful entrepreneurs or professionals and also on how to achieve economic success. Furthermore, Celebration church's focus on the inner person and the lack of group-based forms of surveillance appealed to many students. It meant that they could participate without the added pressure of committing themselves fully to the mundane aspects of the church. Netsai, a first year female student who served as an usher at the Campus Ignite Tuesday meetings explained in an interview that Celebration Church offered students guidelines on how to survive on campus. 'If I need someone to confide in, or if I need help with anything, I go to Celebration church. I trust them and I know that they have my interest at heart. Celebration church is the only organization that is interested in students' welfare. They will not stand by and watch you make mistakes. And anyway, we have a

²⁶For more details on John Goddard's achievements, visit <http://www.johngoddard.info/index.htm>

lot of fun there as well’. It is significant that in all six sermons that I attended, Celebration Church never addressed the issue of HIV and AIDS directly. Instead, the church group was more interested in the effects of premarital sex on the spiritual self rather than its effects on the physical person. One possible reason for this can be traced back to Celebration Church’s notion of ‘investment’, which primarily emphasizes first preventing sin and only later attending to the effects of sinful behaviour. HIV and AIDS are considered to be the effects of sinful behaviour while pre-marital sex is seen as the cause of sinful behaviour and which must be immediately rectified. Furthermore, as earlier discussions in the chapter have shown, sexual immorality is viewed as leading to more than just HIV infection. It detracts from the attainment of broader life goals, which can ultimately lead to personal success. Another key reason that HIV and AIDS is not addressed directly by organisations like Celebration Church is the simple fact that the epidemic is simply not openly discussed in Zimbabwe’s public spaces. Many people still refer to HIV and AIDS using euphemisms such as ‘the illness of today’ [*chirwere chamuzuva ano*] or ‘the plague’ [*mukondombera*] despite over two decades of intense awareness and educational campaigns aimed at breaking the social stigma attached to the epidemic in the country. Individuals who die of AIDS-related infections are often said to have died of ‘a long illness’. Sometimes the immediate cause of death (e.g. cerebral malaria, severe headache, pneumonia) is given. Hardly is HIV infection publicly acknowledged even though privately most people will speculate that the death of a loved one or neighbour may have been caused by ‘the illness of today’.

Conclusion

Many of the church events that I attended on campus were concerned, in one way or another, with the central question of self-discipline and they offered it as a key tool for navigating the world and, more specifically, for navigating the undisciplined world of the UZ campus. Christianity on the UZ campus thus offered a specific way for students to orient themselves to the world. ‘Christian theodicy’, as Giddens (in Weber 1992:xvii) pointed out, ‘enjoins the believer to achieve his own salvation by refashioning the world in accordance with Divine Purpose’. Christianity offered students an alternative model for experiencing university, a model based on discipline and disciplined bodies, as opposed to the standard liminality model, which thrived on the lack of discipline and unbridled freedom. In the Christian model, an undisciplined body was seen as both vulnerable and prone to sin. It also caused others to sin. A disciplined body, on the other hand, was considered to be self-aware and able to resist temptation because it possessed the maturity and ‘necessary qualities’—e.g. patience and a sense of purpose—to successfully do so. In this chapter I have tried to show that Christian groups on campus approached the issue of discipline from two perspectives. For groups like the Celebration Church, discipline referred to an internal quality, hence the emphasis they placed on developing the ‘inner person’. In contrast, for group like ZAOGA, discipline was not just internal, it was also an external trait that could be imprinted on the body and which was open to public scrutiny. In the latter case, individuals were not only accountable to God, but they were also accountable to the group, hence it required both individual and group effort to produce a disciplined body. In contrast, groups like Celebration Church believed that disciplining the body was a private affair involving one’s conscience and God.

Another key point that is highlighted in this chapter pertains to the place of Christian students on the UZ campus. Christianity required that students remain fundamentally *unaffected* by the university encounter, which most considered to be corrupting and detrimental to their spiritual and academic growth. Devout Christian students did not believe that university should *only* be experienced liminally and were thus seen as bringing the ‘outside in’, thereby disrupting the boundaries that needed to be maintained if university was to offer a truly liminal experience. It is therefore not surprising that Christian students were unpopular on campus and they were caricatured conservative, backward and indoctrinated.

Lastly, Christianity served to regulate and structure Christian students use of space and time on campus. For instance, a considerable segment of Christian students spent most of their leisure time in those spaces that were considered to be less corrupting to the Christian soul, such as the campus chapel, residence hall common rooms, student rooms, the library and the lecture rooms. Church activities were time consuming and most Christian students I knew did not have enough time to participate in campus activities offered by other organisations. As a result, many Christian students participated minimally in the broader social life of the university and they often did not belong to non-religious student associations, such as student politics, sports clubs, entrepreneurial groups or even HIV prevention groups. This helps explain why Martha’s association with SHAPE and her un-chaperoned interactions with members of the opposite sex were frowned upon by her church group; they were seen as reflecting a lack of discipline regarding the proper use of time and space. They also reflected a different aspect of

indiscipline, in this case foolhardiness, because she was seen as unnecessarily exposing herself to temptation.