

Not You

Hoping for Deliverance in Kampala's Pentecostal Churches

DANIELLA

Pastor John's church lies in a rapidly developing suburban area just south of Kampala. Outside the church, people crowd the street selling steamed cobs of maize and other snacks by the roadside. There are lines of white *matatu* taxis ready to ferry passengers to and from the central taxi parks of Kampala. In fact, there are so many taxis that this church could nearly be a taxi park in its own right. Across the road from the church is an open field; it is packed with cars, most of them large and in good repair.

On our first visit to the fellowship in 2018, all of this was new to George and China, but none of it was new to Sarah. She had been coming to this fellowship since she was a child. In those days, the place was still small. Pastor John established the fellowship as a Friday night home cell meeting in 1992. Just prior to this, in 1990, Pastor John had been living in London as a migrant worker. He says that while he was there he received a calling from God to return to Uganda to start a fellowship ministry that would be focused on deliverance and on building an army for God that could fight battles during the end times. Over the next ten years, the fellowship outgrew the garage where it met, and several other spaces after that. Eventually, the fellowship grew so large that its members decided to construct the building where it presently meets.

Upon reaching the church, we had to pass through a security checkpoint where a row of men and women were ready to check the contents of our bags (see Maxwell 2005). Behind the security checkpoint there was a large brick church, and through its open doors we could see rows and rows of white plastic chairs filling its floor and the balcony above. In front of the church, and all around it, were

tents filled with more chairs to hold the people who come here each day to hear Pastor John's teachings.

On this day, we did not enter the church, but instead turned to the right, toward the administrative building. We entered the building and went up a narrow staircase to an office with two desks and a glass radio booth. Down the hall were other offices for the pastors, which have wood and glass windows instead of interior walls.

We waited for a while in the reception area. The chairs were scarce as there were many other people also waiting to see the pastors. Eventually, a young woman named Daniella came out to meet us. She was impeccably attired in a dress with a full skirt that stopped just past her knee, along with a red sweater and red high heels matching the red accents on her dress. Sarah introduced Daniella to George and China, and Daniella quickly took us all back down the narrow stairs to the hall below, her high heels clicking as she went.

We sat in the corner of the hall to talk, and there was a strong cool breeze coming in through an open window. Near the door, there was a large pile of luggage, maybe eight feet high and ten feet wide—suitcases, jerry cans, and sacks. Over the course of the conversation, China slowly realized that the luggage belonged to the people Daniella spoke about, people who sleep Monday through Friday at the church, leaving only on the weekend to go somewhere else.

Daniella told us that she herself had spent over two years sleeping at Pastor John's after having been referred to the church by a friend. When she first arrived, she had come to pray for a visa so that she could start her life over again in another country. At that time, Daniella was drinking very heavily. She had started drinking during her last year of secondary school. She started slowly, but by the time she reached university there was little she felt she could do without first taking a drink of the potent distilled spirit waragi. She would take it to class, serve it to friends, study while drinking, discuss while drinking. She was drinking in taxis, at home, cooking, washing. She was rarely without a bottle. Over time, alcohol started to create problems for her, and she found that she could not avoid drinking even when she knew she should. She missed job interviews or arrived drunk. Old friends were embarrassed to be seen with her. Her fiancé tried to help her to stop, but he eventually left her too.

When Daniella arrived at Pastor John's in 2014, she found that the teachings were very different from what she had expected, and she loved the way the pastors taught about forgiveness, anger, desperation, and frustration. Over time, Daniella came to think that even if she did go abroad, she would gain nothing, and so she decided to wait for God to change her, thinking that only then she would get somewhere in her life. She was still drinking at this time, but no one ever sent her away from church. She would come to church drunk to listen to the sermons and then leave to go back to her drinking. But over time she settled in and began listening to the teachings with more seriousness.

Eventually, in 2015, she decided to follow Pastor John's advice "to approach the altar of grace and mercy with boldness," to tell God that she was tired of drinking. In prayer she said, "You know what, God, I didn't want to become born again, but I came here. God, my life is a mess because of A, B, C, D. I've lost everything because of alcohol. I have discovered that I can't leave it on my own. You say, 'Come to me, you who were weary, and I shall carry the burden for you.' I don't want money. I don't want a husband. I want you to change me, to give me a new heart and to put your spirit in me."

She stayed in church and cried to God for ten days, praying and fasting. On the tenth day of this fast, Pastor John was at the pulpit. It was around two in the morning. Daniella had been crying and praying to God to change her when Pastor John began to speak, addressing no one in particular. He said, "You girl, you are here, and you always feel something is asking you for alcohol and you cannot contain it. You cannot contain it because it is *not you*. It is a spirit. Come up to the pulpit here. I will pray for you, for today is your day."

Even that day, Daniella had been drinking alone at home before coming to church, but nevertheless she went up to the altar and Pastor John prayed for her. The church was full to capacity, but she said she was not afraid of anyone. Daniella said that as Pastor John prayed, she felt something heavy moving from her toes upward until it went out of her. She said that on this same day, God also visited her in a dream. In the dream, God came in the form of Pastor John. She was very dirty and tired, and Pastor John looked at her. He did not touch her, but he looked at her, and the more he looked at her the more she became clean. Her clothes began to change too, and she saw herself transforming into a different person. When she woke up, she felt very happy and had no desire to drink.

"NOT YOU"

When Ugandan Pentecostals like Daniella and Pastor John speak of the pain and suffering of addiction as being caused by a spirit, they are not speaking metaphorically. For many of these Ugandan Christians, addictions are not *like* spirit possession, or slavery for that matter, in the sense that one has metaphorically lost control of one's agency to another. To be addicted is *literally* to be under the control of a being that comes from outside the self. As will be true in the stories of those who visit the shrines of the spiritual healers in the next chapter, many Christian practitioners of spiritual warfare see problem drinking as caused by spiritual forces,¹ or what some have called intangible persons (Thornton 2017). For these Christians, moving beyond problems with alcohol requires them to exorcise the spirit that is causing the problem through deliverance. As we will see in the next chapter, for participants in the mediumship rites carried out in shrines dedicated to the balubaale spirits, the task is not deliverance, but rather finding ways to better accommodate the spirits by recognizing them and moving into a more productive relationship of reciprocity with them.

At both the church and the shrine, this way of understanding problem drinking as something that results from the actions of spiritual others—others that are fundamentally non-self and separable from the self—also gives people a way of understanding and addressing problem drinking that offers them real hope, and this hope for the future offers different possibilities for engaging in the tasks of the present. As we noted in the introduction, Angela Garcia (2010) has powerfully described the devastating stakes of disease models that seem only to replicate the melancholic chronicity of endless loss in places where life has been shaped by acts of dispossession for generations. This chapter responds to Garcia's analysis of melancholic chronicity by exploring the lives of people who have understood their problems with alcohol in a radically different way. We seek to understand what these alternative framings of addiction—and the spiritual experiences and the new orientations toward life that accompany them—mean for people who have faced problems related to alcohol and how these understandings shape their relationships with others, both inside and outside of the church.

In so doing, this chapter builds directly on Helena Hansen's ethnography of Pentecostal addiction ministries in Puerto Rico (2018). Drawing on Cheryl Mattingly's writings on hope as a practice of actively trying to create a life worth living (2010), Hansen writes of these ministries as social technologies that see themselves as capable of effecting profound forms of transformation.² Building on this work, we argue that Pastor John's church allowed for new forms of hope that gave people like Daniella the capacity to act and endure.³ The model of atonement that underlies the practices of spiritual warfare (Robbins 2020; Aulén 2010) also led the people of Pastor John's church to see Daniella, and others like her, as fundamentally separable from the spiritual forces that had caused her to drink. This gave Daniella, and those around her, hope for the future and opened a space for building trusting interpersonal relationships. In short, the fact that her problematic drinking was seen as having been caused by agents who were both non-self and separable from the self afforded Daniella an opportunity to begin again (Scherz, Mpanga, and Namirembe 2022; Kirmayer 2004). The language of spiritual warfare and the practices of some Pentecostal addiction ministries can involve acts of violence or force that stretch our definitions of care to their limits (O'Neill 2019; Goldstone 2017). Yet the forms of spiritual experience and models of atonement fostered at Pastor John's were focused not on punishment and captivity, but instead on fostering hope and creating spaces for practicing that hope through the formation of new social ties.

ETHICS BEYOND THE INDIVIDUAL

The fellowship's chief administrator, Pastor M., often took it upon himself to make time to chat with us when we came to visit the church. On an afternoon in July, Sarah and China went to visit him in his office on the second floor of the administrative building. He was behind his desk working between two computer screens, preparing to give a lecture for his other job at a university where he teaches

mathematics. On a large sheet of paper taped to the wall was a diagram showing many boxes of text lettered with a fine red pen. The boxes were joined together by lines with arrows showing the flow from one box to the next. The writing was so precise that it could have been an illustration for the mathematics lecture he was about to give at the university.

Sarah asked what the drawing was, and Pastor M. eagerly began to explain. “I was teaching when a certain military group came in here. They could relate to what I was teaching, for I was teaching about war. I was teaching them about the war in heaven and how it comes here. How the devils found themselves in this world. That’s the structure of the war,” he said, pointing to the diagram on the wall. He said that there had been a war in heaven, and in this war the devil was cast out into the world. Jesus then came to the world to fight the devil. In this way, the spiritual battle they had been fighting was extended from heaven down to earth. He explained, “America, Europe, Asia, Africa all have their demons. We can’t tell the number we have on earth. The Bible tells us a third of the angels in heaven were cast out down here to earth, but we don’t know the magnitude. Jesus was sent to fight them. That is why salvation is a spiritual warfare. Evil spirits actually affect all of us. Jesus refers to them as unclean spirits and by unclean he means that these spirits can do anything that’s dirty, from promiscuity, murder, stealing, drinking and all sorts of sins that defile man. Poverty, sicknesses, and addiction all are caused by unclean spirits, but when you defeat that spirit, you become free.”

He went on to explain that the world is just a mirror of what is happening in the spiritual realm and that spirits must be defeated in the spiritual realm before they can be defeated in our earthly realm. Since our world is just a reflection, we cannot change it by trying to fix it directly. It would be as if a man stood in front of the mirror trying to button his shirt by trying to manipulate the buttons that appeared in his reflection. “All of the problems here, you have to first fight them in the spirit. That’s why you have to intercede through prayer. If you have a meaningful prayer of intercession, then you can change the whole world.”

The metaphor of the mirror and Pastor M’s diagram both point to a view of personhood, agency, atonement, and moral culpability that sees everything—from problems of world historical significance to issues like problem drinking—as being caused by the workings of demons. While a person’s actions might unintentionally create openings for such non-human others to act in that person’s life, or in the lives of other people related to that person, these non-human others can cause people to act in ways that quickly exceed their control and culpability. These demons are fundamentally “not me” and practitioners of this form of prayer believe that they can be defeated through ongoing intercession.

In both the churches and in the shrines, this way of thinking about problem drinking involves an understanding of the person as a relational (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001; Klaitis 2010; Zigon 2021), passionate (Lienhardt 1961), permeable (Werbner 2011), exposed (Thornton 2017), dividual (Strathern 1988, Mosko

2010) being. Despite their subtle differences, these various heuristics overlap and intermingle and have all been used to describe a vision of the person that highlights the role other people, substances, and spiritual forces play in their constitution. While these concepts were developed in explicit contrast to individualism, it is perhaps more useful to think about this suite of concepts as existing in a more complex relationship with individualism, as terms in complex processes of negotiation, as modes of being that can entwine and alternate with one another depending on the situation (Bialecki and Daswani 2015; Daswani 2015, 2011; Pype 2011; Coleman 2011).

In this way, spiritual warfare discourse points to a radically different view of agency and moral responsibility from that contained in other Christian discourses of sin. For example, in the model of sin that theologians call the penal substitution model, humans are cast as fundamentally sinful beings whose sins would be rightfully punished by God, but for the death of Jesus (Robbins and Williams Green 2017; Robbins 2020). By contrast, what has been called the *Christus victor* model of atonement, commonly found in spiritual warfare discourse, attributes sinful actions to the workings of demons that come from outside the self, and that can be defeated through ongoing prayer and intercession (Gibson 2017; Gifford 2004; Aulén 2010; Robbins and Williams Green 2017; Robbins 2020). While the penal substitution model of sin attributes a strong sense of moral culpability to the “sinner”—to the persons themselves—the *Christus victor* model of atonement found at churches like Pastor John’s places the blame on these non-human spiritual others.

Further, this way of thinking about addiction as resulting from the interventions of malevolent spiritual others who can be driven out through prayer and deliverance challenges scholars to think beyond the framework of disciplined self-cultivation. Following Amira Mittermaier’s (2012, 2011) analysis of the limits of the self-cultivation paradigm in relation to how Shaykh Qusi’s followers understand some dreams to be acts of divine intervention, in this chapter and the one that follows we aim to open the anthropology of ethics to a deeper analysis of the place of relationality and the “role of an Elsewhere” in ethical life. Mittermaier draws on Godfrey Lienhardt’s (1961) notion of an ethics of passion in an effort to illuminate an “ethics of relationality, one that recognizes that humans are always embedded in webs of relationships” (2012, 249). She writes that “the ethics of passion that emerges from my interlocutors’ dream stories not only undoes the notion of a unified subject but also draws attention to the role of an Elsewhere in constituting the subject, and with it to elements of unpredictability and contingency” (249).

While such a perspective on personhood resonates with the works in African studies that we discussed earlier in this chapter, most of these works do not take ethics as their focus. One exception to this is Michael Lambek, whose work on ethics has questioned the priority Western thinkers have given to a “pure and unitary state of mind” as “the necessary source of ethical action and commitment”

(2010, 722). In exploring forms of ethics founded on a more “porous, passionate, or relational self” (729), Lambek breaks down moralized dichotomies between reason and passion and between the mind and the body. Like Mittermaier and Lambek’s interlocutors, Daniella’s life was shaped through a dialogue with beings eclipsed by the boundaries of secular thought. As will be true for those you will meet in the following chapter on spirit possession, Daniella interpreted her dreams as coming from an “Elsewhere,” as messages (*obubaka*), as instructions to be interpreted carefully and taken seriously.⁴

In our efforts to understand the effects of receiving a message from God in a dream or of experiencing the embodied sensation of being delivered from a spirit, we are also moving away from an effort to understand what causes believers to hear God speaking to them and toward an effort to understand what hearing God *does* in their lives. By contrast, we might think about the way Tanya Luhrmann approaches both miraculous and mundane moments of hearing God’s voice in her widely read book *When God Talks Back* (2012). In this book, Luhrmann argues that members of the Vineyard churches she studied in Chicago and California come to hear the voice of God through an engagement with a series of imaginative practices, or “cultural kindling,” which cause them not only to have unusual sensory experiences more often but also to interpret these experiences as spiritually significant (see also Cassaniti and Luhrmann 2014). In contrast to Luhrmann, in this chapter we focus less on explaining the origins of Daniella’s spiritual experiences and instead seek to describe these experiences as she and others at Pastor John’s church did. We have asked not why these things occur, but what effects these experiences had in their lives going forward. This stance shifts our focus away from exploring the causes that might lead to the effect of a spiritual experience, and instead opens up space to explore how these experiences figure in processes of ethical-moral transformation.

DELIVERANCE

As we talked with Daniella on that first cool morning at Pastor John’s, we could hear the voices of others scattered about the hall, talking in small groups. Some were talking quietly, but in the back, there was a man who was speaking loudly and sharply to a woman as he put his hands on her head. Every once in a while, her body jerked and rolled as his speech became punctuated with loud shouts.

Noticing this pair and wondering about this scene of what looked to her like what she imagined when she heard the word deliverance, China asked, “I hope this question doesn’t offend you, but there is something I am wondering about that I hope you can help me with. Behind you, there’s a man that has been praying for a woman. He is speaking very sharply, and she is shaking and making noises. What is that all about? Is it related to what we are talking about, or is it something different?”

"It is related, and it's called deliverance. That man is trying to cast a spirit out. The spirit is shouting for it is being sent out of its home and it is fighting to remain within the woman."

"Did people do that to you when you were being prayed for?" China asked.

"They did. There was a time when I even jumped off my chair. And the pastor doesn't need to touch you. When the place is filled with the Holy Spirit, when God's presence is there, you will see people jumping, yelling, making noise, because God is working on them. Those kinds of things stopped for me after the dream, but that doesn't mean that I stopped being delivered. . . . Deliverance is a process. It is not a one-day thing. It's a process where you go to God and confess your sins. First of all, you have to accept that you are a sinner. You have to confess to whatever led you into that curse. Or you may not have sinned, but your parents might have done something that brought that curse. Or your heart may be dirty, filled with bitterness, anger, and worry. . . . The Bible says, 'If my people called by my name confess their sins, I will hear from heaven and heal their land.'"

As Daniella puts it here, deliverance is not a one-day thing. Battles on the spiritual plane are processes that can involve years of repentance, prayer and fasting—a slow sedimentation of sacrifice. Furthermore, while her drinking was not necessarily something she could be held accountable for, she had to search her history for the sinful actions that might have opened her life to the spirits that had caused her problem drinking. Importantly, the history that she needed to access was not hers alone. Within this deeply relational conception of spiritual warfare, one's life can be opened to curses and the actions of spirits by the actions of family members, friends, or people with whom one has sexual relations. The possibility that one's life and one's salvation could be influenced by the actions of others whose sins could open a whole network of people to Satanic influence has sometimes led people to attempt to break ties with their extended families (Meyer 1998), but more often it leads to efforts to pray for the healing of the whole family as an unbreakable totality.

In addition, during the early stages of this process, before her experience of deliverance, Daniella continued to drink heavily. She was preparing herself in other ways, but sobriety was not a requirement. While relapses are expected in AA, people are also expected to leave alcohol behind right at the beginning of their effort to change. In contrast, following the logic of spiritual warfare Daniella could not be expected to stop drinking without deliverance, as the drinking was literally not under her control. There is also, again in contrast to AA, a radical break that separates a person from the possibility of relapse that takes place at the moment of deliverance. In AA, someone who has been sober for twenty years is thought to be as likely to relapse as someone who has been sober for a day. At Pastor John's, once a person is delivered, they are thought to be free of the thing that was causing them to drink. They are now fundamentally different from how they had been prior to the moment of deliverance. Those who have been delivered

must still work to live righteously so as to avoid any activities that might re-invite demons into their lives. They must fill their hearts with the Holy Spirit so that the demon, if it tries to return, will not find a spiritual vacuum where it can easily take up residence again. All must be vigilant, making addiction no different from the other maladies that bring people to the church's crowded taxi stage.

RICHARD

On a cold rainy morning in May 2018, Sarah went back to Pastor John's to pay a visit to one of the other people whom we had come to know at the fellowship. It had been a few weeks since Sarah had last seen Richard, but she had heard someone say that he had been assigned to manage the parking lot. Sarah set off by *boda boda*, and by the time she reached Pastor John's the rain had stopped and the sun was strong. Since it was a public holiday, the parking lot was already full of cars despite the early hour. Over the tops of the cars, Sarah could see Richard, looking even thinner than he really was in his long green jacket, army boots, pale blue trousers, and a faded black t-shirt under the jacket. As he caught sight of her, Richard smiled broadly. "Praise God! Who told you that I am here in the parking?" Fumbling with his large black registration book and pen, he tried to find a chair where Sarah could sit. She refused the seat and so instead he handed her the black counter book and blue pen he was using to register the cars. "Sarah, today, it's you registering. Thanks for coming," he said with a smile as he jogged off to give instructions to one of the other men he was working with.

Left with the book and pen, Sarah tried to follow what she had seen him doing. A car came in and she noted down its license plate number, the owner's contact number, and gave the owner a card to be returned when coming to collect the car. Much to Sarah's relief, Richard soon returned and took back his book. Unlike Sarah, who was new on the job, Richard interacted freely and happily with all the people coming in to park their cars. Some were extremely friendly, and it was clear that they had become attached to him. Children came by and Richard played with them, giving one small boy some money to buy lunch. It was growing hot, and Richard persuaded Sarah to sit next to him in the shade. He gave her a mango. From time to time, cars came in and Richard jumped up to register them.

"This seems like a hard job, being out here from morning until late," Sarah said.

"Yes, but I have to serve the Lord," said Richard. "It is through service and humility that he helps me. You never know, sometimes I even get what I never expected. I've made a lot of friends, some tip me. Recently, I've even met a lady who works at Makerere University. She promised to get me forms so that I can go back to school on a government sponsorship. We are now planning for the 2020 intake."

Richard went on to explain that on Wednesdays he leaves from Pastor John's to go directly to another church on the other side of Kampala. There he sleeps a few

hours and then gets up early in the morning to join in their door-to-door preaching ministry. “I believe God is training me for something big in ministry, for I teach the congregants and pray with them. Then afterwards I come back here and resume my work at the parking.” As he talked, Sarah was sweating. It had become extremely hot and neither of them had any water to drink. Their conversation was also punctuated by cars coming in and out. One car broke down while it was coming in and Richard had to help push it.

“Seems you barely get free time these days,” Sarah said. “Do you still get any time to learn from the teachings in the church? Or have you surpassed them now?”

“No,” Richard said laughing. “Of course, I still attend. I usually attend the night ones. Those teachings are very helpful. I wouldn’t have been what I am today without them. I used to try to do everything on my own, but I failed. Now I just listen, serve, and all is well.”

On that morning in the parking lot, Richard had been sober for two years and had been living at the church for the better part of that time. Richard grew up in a family of distillers in a village in Central Uganda. He started drinking tonto when he was only seven and shifted to waragi and marijuana when he was fifteen, which he attributes to a sense of loneliness and isolation after his mother died when he was ten. Richard also started singing, and as he looks and sounds almost exactly like the Ugandan pop star—and now internationally-known politician—Bobi Wine, he found it easy to move through the clubs and ghettos of Kampala.

Richard first came to Pastor John’s church in 2011. He had woken up to smoke but instead followed the music to the church. He continued to drink and smoke marijuana, but despite his substance use, he was embraced by the pastors, easily moving between church and ghetto. He eventually stopped smoking and drinking for seven months by moving onto the church property but started using again when a friend in the church, who was also still using, took him back to the ghetto over the weekend. Five years passed during which he wanted nothing to do with church. During this period of his life, he also spent seven months in the compound of a spirit medium, but eventually stole the money from the basket of offerings in the shrine and escaped.

On New Year’s Eve 2016, as he was just about to enter a club to perform with some friends, Richard heard God tell him to throw down his cigarettes and marijuana and get born again. He didn’t perform that night, but instead went to a crusade that was happening nearby to get saved. A month later he returned to Pastor John’s church and has been living on the property, and been sober, ever since.

As is true for others attempting to move beyond alcohol by taking up residence at Pastor John’s church, Richard has been given a series of small jobs with increasing levels of responsibility and visibility, the job in the parking lot being the most recent. While this job checking license plates might not seem like a big deal, this opportunity has given Richard a chance to interact with all the car-owning people

who come to Pastor John's church. These people have come to admire Richard's positive attitude and the new system he developed for registering the plates and organizing the cars. This small job has given Richard a way of proving his trustworthiness over a long period of time. It has also provided a means for him to increase his visibility to, and relationships with, others who might be able to offer a pathway toward other opportunities. And such connections seemed to be a vital part of his recovery process.

For Richard, then, Pastor John's was both the physical place where jobs and opportunities manifested themselves as well as the source of his belief that God is training him for something big. Together, these orient him toward this work and toward his future. Rather than feeling stuck in a difficult low-status job, far from the central action of the church office, Richard sees his work in the parking lot as a step on a divinely given pathway that is leading him to bigger and better things. While Richard is naturally a friendly, hardworking man, his hope that blessings would come to him through his work at the church changed the way he interacted with people and approached his work. This sense of possibility and hope probably made such blessings even more likely to come his way.

RADICAL HOPES

In his book *Radical Hope* (2006), the philosopher Jonathan Lear writes about the process through which the Crow chief Plenty Coups found the ability to respond to a situation of near total cultural collapse with what Lear calls "radical hope." "What makes this hope *radical*," Lear explains, "is that it is directed toward a future goodness that transcends the current ability to understand what [the goodness] is" (103). In Lear's book, radical hope is what ultimately allowed Plenty Coups to stretch the Crow virtue of courage in a way that enabled him to face up to the reality of catastrophic loss and to lead his people through it. While the importance of Lear's book is often framed in terms of the relevance of this type of hope when thinking about other situations of pending cultural collapse, here we want to attend to the *means* through which Plenty Coups managed to acquire the hope necessary to face, and cross over, this abyss and its relation to Richard and Daniella's stories.

In Lear's account, Plenty Coups acquires his radical hope through his reception of prophetic dreams. These dreams, the most important of which occurred when he was only nine or ten, warned him of the coming collapse of his way of life; confirmed that God's divine promise to the Crow would be sustained; and gave him direction about how to move forward through this collapse. Lear argues that these prophetic dreams, which became significant due to Plenty Coups's belief in their divine sanction, gave him the psychological resources he needed to avoid despair and allowed him to respond to the events that followed with remarkable creativity and courage.

While standing at the ethical abyss of sobriety differs in important ways from the abyss of civilizational collapse that Plenty Coups faced, stepping into any life that fundamentally differs from the life one has been living requires tremendous hope and courage. While we want to avoid stretching Lear's concept of radical hope beyond its limits, the means through which Daniella and Richard acquired the hope necessary to reach out toward new forms of life has striking similarities to what Lear describes. Like Plenty Coups, their hopes were founded on experiences of divine guidance. These experiences assured them of their place in God's plan and of the divine warrant for the difficult actions they would later undertake. Like Lear, we can be agnostic about the source of these experiences while still acknowledging the crucial role that dreams, words, visions, and embodied experiences played in their ethical lives. At one level, we can think of these experiences as giving them the psychological resources necessary to do what they did.

Joel Robbins's (2020) discussion of Christian theologies of interruption takes us one step closer to the emic terms that have been used by other Christians to think about these radical, hope-filled experiences of transformation. For Robbins and the theologians he engages, Christian interruptions both confront a person with an existential threat and promise that one will be returned to an enhanced continuity of life. In addressing his earlier writings on the conversion of the Urapmin in Papua New Guinea, Robbins brings together theological writings on interruption with his earlier arguments about the threatening prospects of non-being that the Urapmin collectively faced as the world around them began to shift through processes of colonialism and missionization. While the endangered ritual prestige that threatened the Urapmin is different from the threat posed by the experiences of despair and isolation that confronted Richard and Daniella in their addictions, there is a similar sense of an existential threat serving as the ground upon which God's interruption worked. The aim of this latter interruption, God's interruption, is not return, but newness, or rather a restoration to being the person that God originally created. Further, as Robbins discusses in a later chapter on passivity, such an interruption is not the result of the person's own efforts but is the effect of God's action in the world (see Scherz 2018a).

As Robbins notes, this way of thinking about transformation is quite different from many other ways of thinking about trauma as something which requires a slow and perhaps unending process of rebuilding. This contrast is crucial to Robbins's project, as he is committed to a form of anthropology that asks how our models of and for the world shape our experiences. In thinking about interruption in relation to trauma, Robbins is asking what difference it might make for people experiencing situations in which their very being seems to be at stake if they have a theory of that situation that gives them reason to hope that they will be restored to an enhanced continuity with the self they are meant to be.

As is clear in Richard and Daniella's stories, this hope extends well beyond the perceptions of a given individual. Richard's faith that God is "preparing him for something big" certainly gave him the energy he needed to face the many long scorching afternoons he spent in the parking lot, but the hope that his fellow church members had in the possibility that he was fundamentally separable from the spiritual forces that had caused him to drink also played a critical role in transforming his life. The same was true for Daniella. Nearly two years after being delivered, Daniella started serving at the church by voluntarily checking people's bags. She did this diligently for over two months from Monday to Saturday, and then was given an opportunity to work at the church radio. While she did not have any training in radio presenting, she was asked to present an early morning program. At first, this work was voluntary. The church was just beginning the radio programs and had no money to support this ministry, but after a while leadership began giving her an allowance. Since she stopped drinking, her relationship with her family has also been restored. A few months after she stopped drinking, she began staying at the home of one of her sisters on the weekends, often babysitting for her sister's children when she was there. Her father is also happy about her transformation. She has found many new friends through church, though she is not close to many of them. Among those she has come to know through the church was a man whom she met at a church-organized singles gathering in August 2018. The two married five months later and celebrated the marriage with a reception at a five-star hotel in grand style.

The early months of Daniella's marriage were somewhat difficult for her, as she adjusted to the work required to manage a home and a husband with the scrupulous attention to detail expected in many Ugandan families. During these first months she stopped her work at the radio station, and while she did not return to drinking, she found herself frustrated with the isolation of staying at home. She and her husband were also stressed by the financial pressures that followed the production of such an extravagant wedding. But time passed, and in the years that followed she was able to resume her work at the radio station and at the main reception desk at the church. She continues to describe this work and her physical presence in the space where she was healed as an important part of her life after alcohol, and she continues to pray and to attend to the ways that God is acting in her life. She also cares for her deceased sister's children. While this is a major responsibility, it is one she has taken on with joy, and these children are now a vital part of her life.

Richard has also continued with his work in the church since we first met him there in the parking lot, eventually rising in the ranks of those who work as ushers to the point where he has his own assistant. He also met a woman while working in the parking lot, and the two married in 2019. To Richard's great disappointment, however, she left him just weeks after the wedding. She had money and a job, and Richard suspects that she was disappointed by his relative poverty and limited

ability to provide the sort of lifestyle to which she was accustomed. Her departure pushed Richard into a deep depression, and he even began to doubt God, but he continued going to church and his friends there encouraged him.

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, a member of the church gave him a job overseeing construction projects at his home and gave him a place to stay and land where he could grow food. Unfortunately, he accidentally sprayed herbicide on the corn and cabbage he had planted, withering his entire crop. But the neighbors helped him with food, and he continued on. He began singing again, writing songs praising the goodness of God in his life, and hoping that maybe God would help him to return to his life as a musician. After the COVID-19 lockdowns ended, he began making recordings that could be played on the radio. On New Year's Eve 2023, he was one of the featured performers at the all-night celebrations that took place at Pastor John's church. He took to the stage in front of a crowd that could have filled three football fields and sang.

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Despite the links between some forms of Protestantism and Alcoholics Anonymous (Brandes 2002; Antze 1987), the *Christus victor* model of recovery that shaped Richard and Daniella's experiences differs profoundly from that found in the inpatient recovery centers and recovery communities described in chapter 2 in terms of their relationships to their pasts, their futures, and to other people. Had they made their way to one of Kampala's newly founded AA groups, they would have been taught to see themselves as having a fundamental and unchanging condition. They would have learned to identify as addicts, as a particular kind of person (Hacking 1986). By contrast, at Pastor John's they and their fellow church members came to understand them as having been delivered from demonic spirits and born again, freed of the influence of forces that were never "them" anyway. The dense sociality of the church gave them the opportunity to demonstrate to others just how true this was as they spent their days working in the parking lot, the security desk, and the radio booth. By contrast, Kampala's addiction treatment centers all subscribe to the model of addiction as a chronic relapsing brain disease and deploy this model in ways that inadvertently foster forms of suspicion and hopelessness. In turn, these can make trusting relationships and forward movement difficult to achieve. While there are certainly tensions at Pastor John's as well, we argue that the possibility of seeing a person's past actions as authored by an Other allows people to form different kinds of relationships in the present and to live with a sense of confidence about what may be coming in the future. What we hope to have made clear in this chapter is that Daniella and Richard's spiritual experiences, and the ties of social connection that were made possible by a shared model of atonement in which their drinking was not entirely their own, gave them both a profound sense of hope that a new life was possible, and a safe and concrete space where that new life could take shape.

Yet, while the pastors we describe in this chapter and the mediums who we describe in the following one all seek to heal people through the ritual mediation of their relationships, their exposedness, their permeability, and their dividuality, they sharply disagree about the moral valence of the spiritual forces, the intangible persons, with whom people might be in relation. In this sense, there is both a degree of continuity between the church and the shrine as well as a profound sense of rupture.