'Cultural and Spiritual Connections: Examining Evangelical Activities within Electronic Dance Music Cultures'

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis aims to investigate the relationships between evangelical Christianity and popular music, focussing particularly on electronic dance music (EDM) in the last twenty years. This area merits attention since Christian churches and groups within Anglo-American contexts have increasingly used popular music as a way to connect with young people who are reportedly finding the Church alienating. Drawing on earlier studies on popular music and Christianity, such an observation can be seen through the historical developments of the Jesus People Movement between the late 1960s and the early 1970s; Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) from the 1970s onwards and the Alternative Worship Movement dated back to the 1980s.

Based on fieldwork research undertaken in three significant locations for the development of electronic dance music cultures (EDMC), Ibiza, New York and Bristol, the case studies examine how certain Christian groups engage with EDMC. This thesis will adopt an ethnographic approach which allows 'a "microsociological" focus upon the beliefs, values, rituals and general patterns of behaviour underlying social relationships or networks' (Cohen, 1993: 123). Key issues to be examined include contested notions such as 'spirituality' in EDM; 'community' in EDMC and the idea of 'music as a device of social ordering' (DeNora, 2000). The research groups in this thesis try to establish new ways to worship, evangelism and public 'ministry' which take place outside the church buildings. Therefore, the concept of the 'liquid church' (Ward, 2002) will also be examined closely in one of the case studies.

In view of the updated analysis on earlier studies on the use of popular music in Christian contexts and the case studies in this thesis, the perceived divide between the 'secular' and the 'sacred' grounded in a Western tradition is challenged and called into question. This thesis will show the connections between the 'sacred' and the 'secular' in certain evangelical activities within EDMC.

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Introduction

As a Christian and a music enthusiast for over a decade, I have always found a divergence between the Christian world and the world of popular music. This divide became more obvious to me when I became involved with the indie music scene in Hong Kong, working as a freelance music journalist, DJ and performer in a band. While I was active in the indie music circle, I sometimes hid my identity as a Christian lest the friends in my music community should regard me as 'cheesy'. Moreover, I found it difficult to relate to the Christian music I heard in my church, since I often found it boring. Such conflict between the indie music world and Christian music world seemed to be resolved after I moved to England where popular music genres, be it indie rock or electronic dance music, are more incorporated into the Christian music world. However, I have been confronted with a number of issues related to the manifestations of Christian spirituality in popular music and the connections between popular culture and Christian activities since my involvement with a Christian 'mission' on Ibiza, 'the Mecca of house music and club culture' (Osborne, 1999:145), in the summer of 2002. During the mission I observed that certain genres of 'secular' electronic dance music were frequently deployed by the Christian DJs who aimed at connecting with the non-Christians on the island, and that the music which was deemed relevant to the non-Christians included tracks that did not contain overtly 'Christian' lyrics.

The overall intent of this thesis is to study the relationship between popular music and evangelical Christianity. The central concerns, nonetheless, are to look at how electronic dance music is assimilated into Christian practices and how the use of such music is justified and legitimised by discourses and individuals' beliefs. Analysis of popular music in Christian contexts has thus far focused on the use of pop/rock music (e.g. Ward, 1996, 2003, 2005; Romanowski, 1990, 1992, 2000; Peacock, 1999; Joseph, 1999; Howard and Streck, 1999). This thesis adds new dimensions to such analysis, examining the roles of electronic dance music in Christian activities and practices. The relationships between electronic dance music and Christianity are worth studying because this genre of popular music has been increasingly used by Christians in their religious activities and practices in recent years (e.g. Till, 2006; Lau, 2006; Parry, 2000; Baker et al, 2003; Angier, 1997). I am looking to establish theories about how electronic dance music is legitimised in evangelical activities by Christians' discourses, and how the discourses challenge the divide between the 'secular' and the 'sacred' in the Western culture. Rather than suggesting a dichotomy between 'secular' and 'sacred', they are merely positional, differentiating between 'spiritual' spaces perceived by Christians influenced by a Western traditional view on religion (Reed, 2003) and Cartesian dualism (Gibbs and Bolger, 2006). This is a dichotomy that I have chosen to discuss and challenge variously in this thesis.

Terminology

Genre

Different types of popular music will be discussed throughout the thesis and thus attention should be given to the concept of 'genre'. According to Weinstein, 'a genre requires a certain sound, which is produced according to conventions of composition, instrumentation, and performance. For some types of music the sonic requirements in themselves define the genre' (Weinstein, 1991: 6-7). In other words, a genre of music is a 'code of sonic requirements' (Weinstein, 1991: 6) that the music must meet in order to be identified as a genre. For instance, the rapid rhythmic patterns in Drum & Bass can largely define this 'category or type' (Shuker, 1994: 149) of music. In this thesis, a genre, be it electronic dance music or rock, is defined largely in light of Weinstein's argument which suggests that a set of sonic qualities alone can define a music genre. Moreover, Frith also highlights the rules of musical form which include playing conventions, rhythmic rules, melodic rules and studio sound qualities as he discusses the definition of music genres (Frith, 1996: 91). However, the labels of music, such as Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) and ambient music in this thesis, are sometimes adopted very loosely by the media and the marketing personnel of the music industry for the ease of promotion and thus 'for purposes of commercial gain' (Fabbri and Shepherd, 2003: 402).

Electronic Dance Music and Electronic Dance Music Cultures

Electronic dance music (EDM) and electronic dance music cultures (EDMC) are two recurrent themes in this thesis. The short forms of these terms are coined by St John (2006) in his critical overview of research that examines the religio-spiritual dimensions of electronic dance music culture. I prefer EDM to rave music (Reynolds, 1998) and EDMC to club culture (Thornton, 1995) because I find these terms more comprehensive regarding the scope of electronic music development. Rave music is often associated with the explosive 'rave' scene started in the late 1980s in the UK and fails to denote newer sub-genres of dance music that emerged in the 1990s, such as drum & bass, jungle, trip-hop and so forth. According to Thornton (1997: 71), '[w]hat contemporary British youth call "dance music" is more precisely designated as discotheque or club music. Rather than having an exclusive claim on dancing, the many genres and subgenres coined obsessively under the rubric share this institutional home'. In light of Thornton's suggestion, dance music is often labelled according to the geographic location where the music is consumed, be it a club or a disco. However, the dance music that I examine in this thesis is more diverse, as ambient EDM will be discussed in this thesis. '[D]ance-influenced "ambient" music distinguished itself as a cerebral listening, or more accurately "head", music' (Thornton, 1997: 71), and is taken seriously by non-clubbers who would, to some degree, consider dancing 'stigmatized as being uncritical and mindless to the extent that it can debase the music with which it is associated' (Thornton, 1997: 71). In their analysis on dance music, culture and the politics of sound, Gilbert and Pearson underscore some academic discourses' failing to address *dance* at the heart of *dance culture* owing

to "a deprecation of the 'non-rational' that renders the activity of dance itself invisible" (Gilbert and Pearson, 1999: 6). Whereas the politics of popular music genres is not the main concern of this thesis, Thornton's claim highlights the 'dance' connection of ambient music. The 'dance root' of ambient music can be best described by Prendergast as follows:

> This was House music subtracted of its incessant thumping beats and filled with Ambient samples of nature, extraneous noises, vocal snippets and other people's music(Prendergast, 2003:369).

Since my thesis also discusses ambient EDM, which is consumed in cafés, church halls and even on portable music players on public transport beyond club settings, I prefer using the term 'electronic dance music' (EDM). EDM designates music which is related to the 'rave and club developments evolving from disco, house, garage and techno' (St John, 2006:16). It therefore also refers to music which is produced synthetically and is consumed in a range of cultural settings, e.g. shops, café and bars.

'Rave culture' (Reynolds, 1998) signifies a very limited notion of dance activities associated with 'raves' in the UK between the late 1980s and the early 1990s. Such activities included warehouse parties that operated outside the legal licensing restrictions and were held in disused industrial spaces, fields, airstrips and farms, largely fuelled by the recreational use of drugs, such as MDMA (Osborne, 1999:246, 247). Goulding et al (2002) illustrate concisely the transition from rave to dance culture by highlighting that the audience for so-called 'raves'

has nowadays become more diverse and is no longer confined to these 'underground' and often 'illegal' spaces (Goulding et al, 2002: 266). The diversification of dance music has also been evidenced in a more recent study which shows that urban dance music has become fragmented and club-based as new styles are developed and promoted in different cities around Britain (Bennett, 2000: 73). The term 'rave culture' is too time-limited and was mainly used by writers in the 1990s.

'Club culture', on the other hand, is the 'colloquial expression given to British youth cultures for whom dance clubs and their offshoot, rave, are the symbolic axis and working social hub' (Thornton, 1997:200). Nevertheless, such a term fails to convey the extent to which EDM has developed beyond the cultural settings such as dance clubs and rave parties. Electronic dance music cultures (EDMC), thereby is a more appropriate term that is workable, applicable and not overly restricted by connotations surrounding particular scenes.

Additionally, the research groups in this thesis use different types of electronic dance music (EDM) including drum & bass, trance and ambient. The fragmented and diverse nature of EDM has furthermore been highlighted by Bennett (2000a). Henceforth, I choose to use the plural form, 'electronic dance music cultures' to refer to the developments and practices of EDM throughout this thesis.

Evangelicalism

'Christianity' in this thesis refers to evangelical Christianity. Evangelicalism is said to be rooted in the eighteenth-century revivals (Bebbington, 1989). It has the following four characteristics: 1) conversionism, which stresses the necessity of personal change; 2) the Bible as the source of religious authority; 3) crucicentrism, that is, the crucifixion of Jesus as the centre of Christianity; 4) activism, which alludes to religious duties, particularly evangelisation (Bebbington, 1989; Ward, 1996; Cray, 1997). Despite the general decline of church attendance in Britain, evangelicalism is highlighted by Graham Cray, The Bishop of Maidstone (The Diocese of Canterbury) as 'the growing wing of the British Church' (Cray, 1997: 5). Ward also describes the strength of evangelicalism as rooted in the 1940s, which he regards as the 'modern period of evangelical history' (Ward, 1996: 6). During this particular period of time, evangelical history corresponded closely to the rise of strong and influential developments in work among young people (Ward, 1996: 6). This point is worth highlighting because as it will be shown later, the Christian respondents in this thesis are largely engaged with young people in their evangelical activities. However, in a more recent study, Smith argues that evangelicalism seems to falter as a faith-based movement to evangelise non-Christians (Smith, 1998: 219). Smith argues that such failure is due to the authoritatively governing traditions of American evangelicalism such as a personal influence strategy, which I would argue is equated to an individualistic approach to evangelisation, and social involvement that provides inadequate means for effective social change. This

finding regarding evangelicalism is worth noting because, as will be shown in this thesis, the evangelistic activities organised by my respondents result in small number of 'converts'.

It is noteworthy that there are tensions within contemporary Evangelicalism, for instance, between conservative Evangelicals and Charismatics. Whereas conservative Evangelicals still emphasise the authority of the Scripture, the Charismatics are comparatively more experience-oriented in the way that they stress the importance of speaking in tongues (i.e. speaking in an unintelligible language which is believed to be inspired by 'the Holy Spirit'), healing and prayers in their religious practices. Heelas and Woodhead (2004) distinguish the difference between 'religion' and 'spirituality' by using two different ideas: 'life-as' and 'subjective-life' respectively. They state, 'the key value for the mode of life-as is conformity to external authority, whilst the key value for the mode of subjective-life is authentic connection with the inner depths of one's unique life-in-relation' (2004: 4). In light of their argument, Charismatic theology seems to exemplify a hybrid of these two concepts with its emphasis on subjective experience of 'the Holy Spirit', alongside an adherence to an external authoritative figure — that is, a Christian God. Thus, it can be seen that Charismatics are rather different from traditional Evangelicals who emphasise the authority of the Scripture more. Besides, the diversity of Evangelicalism has also been recognised by theologians who acknowledge the significance of contextualisation of the Scripture in contemporary times (Johnston, 2006). The fluidity of Evangelical theology can

also be demonstrated by the stress on 'personal authenticity' (Lynch, 2002: 40) amongst contemporary post-Evangelical groups.

Religion

There are writings which have been devoted to the discussion on the definition of religion in a popular cultural context (e.g. Forbes & Mahan, 2000; Lynch, 2004). Sylvan (2005:13) also discusses the definition of religion briefly in his study on the religious and spiritual dimensions in EDMC, suggesting that the human encounter with religious experience constructs the foundation for subsequent developments that guides the organised external forms that are called religion. Related to this view on religion is a claim made by Charles Long that considers religion to be pervasive not only in religious institutions but also in all dimensions of cultural life (Long, 1987: 444). It is worth highlighting that religion is not exclusively related to 'belief in God' which is ideologically linked to institutional religions such as Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. In a very broad sense, religion can be defined as 'any person's reliance upon a pivotal value' (Monk, 1987:3), alluding to 'the organising principle in a person's life, the value or concern to which everything else is subordinate' (Forbes and Mahan, 2000:8). I regard this broad definition of religion as useful for my research, as there are parts of Chapter Four that discuss the numinous, i.e. the religious experience in EDMC. The transcendent experience in EDMC is not necessarily seen as 'religious' from the perspective of institutional religion and yet is taken as significant by individuals who have their own unique and personal beliefs. I find the functionalist

views on religion which are widely adopted by sociologists of religion particularly useful for providing a clearer definition of religion in relation to EDMC. 'The functionalist approach to defining religion does not assume that religion is characterised by certain core elements, but by its ability to perform certain functions for individuals or wider society' (Lynch, 2004:28). Lynch (2004) identifies the religious functions that popular culture potentially serves in his study on understanding theology and popular culture, which will be examined in detail in the next section.

Nonetheless, such a functionalist approach to defining religion poses problems, according to Steve Bruce (1996), a leading sociologist of religion. For instance, he highlights that functionalist definitions may count things which do not look 'terribly religious' on the face of it as religious, e.g. secular therapies or socio-political ideologies (Bruce, 1996: 6). Meanwhile, he defines religion substantively. Substantive definitions identify religion in terms of what it is instead of what it does, e.g. beliefs and actions which assume the existence of supernatural beings (Bruce, 1996: 6). Such a substantive definition of religion is particularly relevant with regard to the case studies within this thesis. It is because the respondents in the case studies are predominantly practising evangelical Christians who adhere to the belief in supernatural beings, i.e. a Christian God. 'Religion, then, consists of beliefs, actions, and institutions which assume the existence of supernatural entities with powers of action, or impersonal powers or processed possessed of moral purpose. Such a formulation seems to encompass what

ordinary people mean when they talk of religion' (Bruce, 1996: 7). However, like functional definitions on religion, substantive definitions are also problematic. They may be relatively closer to the understanding of the average Westerner but within some non-Western cultures, such definitions may be difficult to grasp owing to the blurred lines between the natural and the supernatural among 'people who commune with the spirits of their ancesters' (Bruce, 1996: 7). Although both kinds of definitions pose problems, they are still largely relevant to the understanding of the case studies within this thesis which are situated in different contexts.

Lifestyle, tribe, subculture, scene

Bennett and Kahn-Harris (2004) describe the concept of lifestyle as focusing on the issue of 'consumer creativity' (Bennett and Kahn-Harris, 2004: 13). The apparent creativity in consumption can be understood as 'expressive behaviours' (Chaney, 1996: 22) based on consuming goods and services. The creativity expressed in consumption can show that commodities function as cultural resources whose meanings are produced through the reflexivity which informs individuals to 'take an active part in the making and remaking of their image and identity' (Bennett and Kahn-Harris, 2004: 13). The relationship between creativity and lifestyle can be further evidenced by Maffesoli (1996) in his brilliant discussion of the 'tribes', i.e. micro-groups distinguished by members' shared lifestyles and tastes in the mass consumption society. For Maffesoli, the constitution of micro-groups in society is 'the most final expression

of the creativity of the masses' (Maffesoli, 1996: 96). Furthermore, his argument that tribes are expressed through 'lifestyles that favour appearance' (Maffesoli, 1996: 98) can demonstrate, to some degree, the relationship between lifestyle and creativity in the consumption of goods, e.g. clothes, home and car, which convey a semblance of style.

The apparently creative role played by consumers has comparison to the active role that audiences play in Grossberg's (1992) analysis of culture and audiences. Grossberg argues, 'In fact, both audiences and texts are continuously remade – their identity and effectiveness reconstructed – by relocating their place within different contexts. The audience is always caught up in the continuous reconstruction of cultural contexts which enable them to consume, interpret and use texts in specific ways' (1992: 54). In light of Grossberg's contention, it can be seen that the consumption of goods and services, including music products and performances, is significant for identity formation in the diversified mass consumption society.

'Lifestyle' is a preferable term to describe the so-called 'youth culture' in this thesis because it conveys a reflexivity in a way that audiences take an active role in the formation and remaking of their identity in daily consumption habits (Bennett and Kahn-Harris, 2004: 13). As will be shown later in this thesis, the respondents take an active role in consuming EDM as well as negotiating their religious identities through creative re-interpretation of popular EDM in daily life.

The term 'lifestyle' also allows for more academic freedom in a way that it is less restricted by the homogeneity of class that 'subcultures' connote and the issues of geographical locations that 'scenes' imply. I shall now turn to discuss these two terms that are often used in popular music studies.

According to Hesmondhalgh's (2005) comparative study on subcultures, scenes and tribes, popular music studies was largely influenced by traditions of subcultural analysis of the Birmingham Centre of Cultural Studies (CCCS) in the 1970s (Hesmondhalgh, 2005: 36). 'In certain respects, popular music has received attention within subcultural analysis because of its persistent association with other activities, such as drug consumption or sexual interaction, that have been the focus of the sociology of deviance' (Straw, 2003a: 372). In Hebdige's (1979) account of subculture, he also regards the construction of a style among the punks and the mods demonstrated by their appearance in public spaces, as 'a gesture of defiance or contempt' amongst the working-class youth (Hebdige, 1979: 3). According to Hebdige, such 'deviant' styles shown by different subcultural groups' music and dress, connote a resistance to the dominant or hegemonic forms of culture related to dominant groups (e.g. the police, the media and the judiciary).

However, CCCS's model of subcultural resistance has been criticised in more recent accounts on youth, music and culture (e.g. Hodkinson, 2002; Bennett, 1999; Bennett and Kahn-Harris, 2004). Very often, works on subculture (e.g. Hebdige, 1979; Clarke et al, 1976) have been disparaged because of their equation

of the post-war patterns of youth consumerism with notions of working-class opposition. In light of CCCS's subcultural theory, the term 'subculture' may overstate the extent to which young people remain fixed and homogenous in particular groups based on class distinctions. Therefore, based on CCCS's traditional model of subcultural theory, subculture is seen as a homogenous group of people adopting music-related and or fashion-related styles to symbolise resistance to the dominant culture. Such a view on music-related groups which is restricted by class is inadequate to elucidate the so-called 'youth culture' in this research whose determining factor is age rather than class.

'Scene' has been commonly and loosely used by musicians, music audiences, music writers and researchers to designate a group of people who share common musical tastes (Cohen, 1999: 239). It is worth noting that the concept of scene is used in some academic studies to represent an attempt to refine the relationship between the local and the global in music consumption and production (e.g. Harris, 2000; Kruse, 1993). Nevertheless, the term has been largely used to refer to music activities within particular geographical locations, for instance, the Seattle rock scene, the south London rock scene and the New Zealand rock scene (Cohen, 1999: 239). Moreover, the connection between 'scene' and geographical location is also underscored by Straw as claims:

> This use of the term [i.e. 'scene'] designates sets of presumably interrelated activities unfolding in a variety of locales. *With slightly greater frequency, however, it is used in a more strictly geographical sense*, though the level

> of generalization may vary widely in usage, from neighborhoods to large, multinational regions (Straw, 2003: 349; emphasis mine).

Therefore, the term 'scene' is not chosen to refer to the music-related evangelical groups in this thesis. It is not only because EDMC are highly diversified and globalised but it is also because the case studies in this thesis are situated in three different geographical locations within a somewhat global context — Bristol, Ibiza and New York. By using the term 'lifestyle' to define the 'youth culture' that the respondents are involved with in this research, the issues of locality, which are often related to the concept of 'scene', can be avoided.

Context of the Thesis

The literature that I consult over the course of fieldwork research and writing can be divided into five categories; they are: 1) Theology, religion and popular culture; 2) Electronic Dance Music Cultures (EDMC); 3) Christianity and popular music; 4) The Emerging Church; 5) Computer-mediated communication and religion. The following discussion will be organised according to these categories.

Theology, religion and popular culture

Beaudoin (1998) and Lynch (2004, 2006) have provided useful insights for the understanding of relationships between religion and popular culture in general. Beaudoin offers a theological interpretation of popular culture and illustrates the significance of popular culture for young people in the West. By highlighting the

apparently 'spiritual' dimensions of popular culture in his analysis, Beaudoin helps to lay an important foundation for my discussion on the notion of 'spirituality' in EDM in Chapter Four. Moreover, based on his assumptions that popular culture provides significant meanings for young people, Beaudoin suggests that religious groups should learn how to make use of popular culture in their so-called 'ministry'. His argument has contributed to a better understanding of using popular music in evangelical activities within this thesis. However, his critique on the religious significance in popular culture lacks empirical evidence drawn from fieldwork study. My ethnographic findings can therefore fill this gap by providing evidence drawn from discourses provided by my research groups and field observation.

Lynch (2004) identifies two approaches to the exploration of issues about religion and popular culture that are largely relevant for my research on Christianity and popular music. The first approach is to study religion in relation to the environment, resources and practices of everyday life (Lynch, 2004: 21). In this particular approach, questions are raised concerning how popular culture is appropriated by religious groups and how religious groups interact with popular culture. This approach to the study of popular culture and religion can enhance an understanding of how the research groups in this thesis make use of popular EDM in their worship practices and evangelistic activities. The second approach towards the study of religion and popular culture is to examine the ways in which popular culture may serve religious functions in the contemporary Western society (Lynch,

2004: 21). The potential religious functions of popular culture include 'the social function of popular culture' (Lynch, 2004: 30-31) and 'the transcendent function of popular culture' (Lynch, 2004: 32-33). Lynch argues that like religion, popular culture can perform a social function in terms of providing people with a sense of community and combining different people into a social order of shared beliefs. Furthermore, Lynch (2004: 28, 32) also contends that popular culture can perform a 'transcendent function' in the sense that it provides a medium through which people are able to experience 'the numinous', i.e. 'the religious experience' (Sylvan, 2002: 5) and 'the liberation', i.e. a 'quest for personal freedoms' (St. John, 2004: 19). These apparently religious functions of popular culture are particularly relevant to the study of notions such as 'spirituality' and 'community' in EDMC in Chapter Four.

Lynch (2006) also reflects on the rationale for the study of religion and popular culture, which I find tremendously insightful and pertinent to my research. Lynch elucidates that the significance of such new and on-going study lies in its ability to demonstrate how distinctions between the 'secular' and the 'sacred' are challenged in the face of the complexities of daily life. As will be shown in the course of this thesis, efforts have been made to provide evidence that the so-called 'religious experience' is no longer confined in the conventional religious rituals inside religious institutions. Instead, the encounter with 'the numinous' can be found in clubs (as shown in Chapter Four) and even in public spaces within urban contexts (as shown in Chapter Five) through the consumption of EDM.

The 'secular' is often regarded as 'having no transcendent dimension' or used as a term to refer to things that take place outside of the so-called 'spiritual activities' for Christians in traditional denominations, such as praying, worshipping in church or reading the Bible at home (Turner, 2001:56). The challenge to the divide between the 'sacred' and the 'secular', however, is manifested by the research groups within this thesis. Hence, the value of my research lies not only in its ethnographic details exploring how certain religious groups relate to popular culture (popular music in particular) in their operations, as noted earlier, but also in its ability to address the challenge being posed to the 'secular'/ 'sacred' dichotomy in the discussion of music and Christianity.

Electronic Dance Music Cultures (EDMC)

Academic work that has focused particularly on EDMC has been important for constructing the theoretical framework for my analysis on the religious and spiritual dimensions of these cultures. In particular, existing work has raised issues related to the notion of community and transcendence which have a particular pertinence to this study of the engagement of evangelical Christians with specific music cultures. Many accounts focus on social aspects of EDMC. Scholars have referred to the notion of 'neo-tribes' (Bennett, 1999, 2001), 'togetherness' (Malbon, 1999), ideas of 'community' (Gilbert & Pearson, 1999) and collective identities shared momentarily by clubbers in clubs (Rietveld, 1997), thus highlighting the social aspects of EDMC. However, the social relations in EDMC

are described as temporal in these writings. Bennett addresses the temporal nature of collective identities in dance clubs by highlighting 'a series of temporal gatherings characterised by fluid boundaries and floating boundaries' (Bennett, 1999:600) in his analysis of the relationship between youth, style and contemporary dance musical taste in Britain. His claims are supported by Rietveld's (1997) study of the Chicago house scene, in which she discusses the temporal nature of social relations in clubbing.

The temporality of social relations within EDMC has also been underscored by Olaveson (2004) who adopts Turner's idea of an 'existential community' (Turner, 1969) which is 'unstructured or rudimentarily structured' (Turner, 1969: 96). The transient sense of 'community' in EDMC has been discussed by various scholars (e.g. Saunders, 2002; St John, 2004; Sylvan, 2005). Meanwhile, the notion of 'unity', 'being together', being 'communal', or 'connectedness' in clubbing events is commonly found in the analysis of EDMC (Fikentscher, 2000; Sylvan, 2002; O'Hagan, 2004; Rietveld, 2004). Findings in other ethnographic research on EDMC also evince that the type of dance crowd is of prime importance to the formation of a sense of belonging and thus community in the clubbing experiences (Malbon, 1999; Lynch and Badger, 2006; Lau, 2006). All these writings on EDMC and community help to contextualise the discussion on community in Chapter Four particularly.

'Community' is a preferable term in the discussions of this thesis because it by and large has application to the case studies that I choose to look at. A number of respondents in this study refer to their Christian groups as 'communities' during the course of the research. Studies which address the significance of shared 'social space' (Cavicchi, 1998) and shared 'musical styles' (Cohen, 2001: 188; first published 1991) for the formation of popular music 'communities' have helped to contextualise the discussion on community in this thesis. As it will be shown in Chapter Four, respondents sharing the same interests in EDMC describe themselves as being in a community. Music is also said to be used to mark boundaries and differences for community formation (Cohen, 2003; Bennett, 2000) and collective identity (Bennett, 2000, McCloud, 2003). Such a view on the relationship between music, identity and community formation has been helpful in understanding music's role in negotiating my respondents' Christian identities — an identity that is not merely assigned by Christian traditions, but reflexively made and remade through the use of EDM. Shared religious beliefs are pertinent in generating a sense of community, i.e. a 'psychological sense of community' among students studying in Christian collegiate institutions (Bohus et al, 2005), while shared musical interests are important for conjuring up a feeling of togetherness amongst different audience members in EDMC.These findings regarding the significance of shared musical tastes and religious beliefs in forming 'communities' are largely relevant for examining some Christian groups who describe themselves as communities in the case studies.

The second significant rhetoric in EDMC is the notion of transcendence which connotes various meanings, ranging from the 'liberation' (St John, 2004:1), 'the numinous' (Sylvan, 2002:5) or 'the spiritual' (Lau, 2006:83) in religious discourses, to 'the ecstasy' (Gilbert & Pearson, 1999: 138) or 'altered states of consciousness' (Jackson, 2004:124) in comparatively 'non-religious' discourses about EDMC. However, it is worth noting that even populist discourses on EDMC draw on religious ideas[1]. The study of the induction of a trance state or an altered state through music, dance, visuals or psychoactive substances in the EDMC can be found in the writings of Reynolds (1998), ENRG (2001), Tramacchi (2001, 2004), Takahashi (2004), Sylvan (2002) and Gerard (2004). Furthermore, Sylvan's (2002) and Takahashi's (2004) ethnographic works emphasise the possibility of reaching a 'natural high' or trance state amongst clubbers who do not use psychoactive substances such as MDMA. Such a discourse of the mystification of music in the context of EDMC can be compared to the discourse made by the Christian respondents in Chapter Four, and to a certain extent Chapter Five, who claim they can connect with God by means of EDM.

Christianity and Popular Music

There have been very few studies which focus directly on the relationship between EDM and Christianity. Nevertheless there are a number of accounts which examine the relationship between evangelical Christianity and popular music. A number of recent studies have focused upon the promotion of Christian

[1] An example of religious ideas in EDMC can be found in Dave Haslam's account on DJ culture – 'DJ-ing is evangelism; a desire to share songs' (Haslem, 1997:151).

pop/rock under the label of Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) (e.g. Romanowski, 1990, 1992, 2000; Howard, 1996; Howard & Streck, 1996,1999; Wider, 2000). These studies tend to shed light on the tension between Christian arts/music and the 'secular' music industry. Earlier studies examining how Christian groups have attempted to adapt their work in response to youth culture forms have provided an important context for this study. Enroth et al (1972), Balswick (1974) and Di Sabatino (1999) provide essential background information on the origin and development of, for example, the Jesus People Movement between the 1960s and mid-1970s. The Jesus People Movement has been recorded as a historical starting point for Christians who use popular music to reach young people with evangelistic purposes (Ward, 1996, 2005; Jasper, 1984).

A number of Christian writers have examined the relationship between popular music and Christianity, offering different critiques on the subject. Jasper (1984) and Turner (2001) contextualise the Christian music debate by problematising the perceived split between the 'sacred' and the 'secular' in traditional Christian ideology. This has been a much-argued divide. Indeed Christian writers such as Blanchard, Anderson & Cleave (1983) and Larson (1983) have argued against the use of popular music in Christian contexts, bearing in mind that the rock world is made up of pop groups who run against the moral standard of Christianity.

Parry's (2000) study of alternative worship groups pinpoints that there has been a purposeful effort by these groups to target and infiltrate a particular group of young people. This has a clear resonance with the case studies in this thesis and demonstrates important parallels. Furthermore, Parry emphasises that alternative worship groups initiate non-conventional services which are characterised by EDM styles preferred by the people involved in the groups. As the groups become established, the services will subsequently attract individuals sharing similar musical interests. This type of worship can be regarded as 'culture-specific worship' (Angier, 1997:13) which is produced by, with and for a particular culture or group. Although I do not describe the case studies in this thesis as 'alternative worship' groups, I find these claims made by Parry (2000) and Angier (1997) are relevant to the research groups in Chapters Three, Four and Five. In these particular chapters, the Christian groups aim to infiltrate a particular group of music consumers involved with EDMC as will be shown later in the case studies.

A range of academic and populist writings have been devoted to the discussion on Contemporary Christian Music (CCM), which will be looked at closely in Chapter One. The issue with lyrical themes in CCM has been touched upon by several academics and Christian writers (e.g. Gow, 1999; Peacock, 1999; Romanowski, 1992, 2000; Howard & Streck, 1996, 1999; Howard, 1996; Turner, 2001). The debate on the lyrical themes of CCM mainly hinges on the degree of 'religious' content in song lyrics because, unlike other genres of popular music, the audiences of CCM largely assess the music according to its lyrical content, rather

than the musical qualities of the songs (Romanowski, 1992; Peacock, 1999). However, a debate has arisen within this music 'genre' amongst evangelicals who wish to 'reach out' to non-Christians and so have attempted to crossover to the mainstream market by including less overtly religious lyrics. As the Christian 'message' in the music is hidden or watered down, criticisms from more traditional evangelicals (e.g. Cusic, 1990) have emerged as a reaction against the 'co-opted' nature of CCM industry as suggested by Romanowski (1992, 2000). The contentions that CCM has been co-opted by consumer culture are met with another set of arguments which put forward an artistic approach towards music, in which Christian musicians are not pressured to convey an unequivocal Christian message (Howard & Streck, 1996; Howard, 1996; Turner, 1998, 2001). Such an artistic approach to music has been pertinent to the contextualisation of Christians using 'secular' EDM for evangelical purposes in this thesis, because in some way such an approach helps them to legitimise the use of this music genre that has a minimal amount of lyrics.

The Emerging Church

A special edition of the *International Journal for the Study of the Christian Church*, 'The Emerging Church' (2006 March), provides timely and significant theoretical frameworks for the discussion on the comparison between Christian EDM events and a church. The ideas of the emerging church are mainly tackled in Chapter Three in which I use the idea of the 'liquid church' (Ward, 2002) that emphasises networks and relationships in imagining a new model of church

outside the church buildings. This intriguing notion of church has been very helpful in the analysis of a club night set up by a Christian music mission organisation in Chapter Three.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the notion of the emerging church applies to all the case studies and the discussion on alternative worship in this thesis. According to Drane, the term 'emerging church' can be defined on two levels. Firstly, for the leaders of traditional denominations, it is shorthand way of describing a genuine concern to 'engage in meaningful missional way with the changing culture' (Drane, 2006: 4). Part of that engagement is involved with asking fundamental questions about the nature of the cChurch and about an appropriate contextualisation of Christian faith, which will respect the Christian tradition while making the Christian Gospel accessible to non-churchgoing people. Secondly, for the Christian believers who become disillusioned with their experience of traditional churches (e.g. the conservative evangelical, fundamentalist or sometimes charismatic church), and who have established their own faith communities, 'emerging church' alludes to an image of Christians who are not accountable to any larger tradition. Drane describes them as 'fiercely independent, and often highly critical of those who remain within what they regard as the spiritually bankrupt Establishment' (Drane, 2006: 4). Based on my observations, the perspective offered by the first level of definition is more applicable to the Christian groups in my case studies. This is because they by and large still honour churches of traditional denominations, although they view

worship and evangelism in ways which are different to those in traditional churches.

Various articles in this special edition on the emerging church are relevant for my discussion on EDMC and evangelical Christianity. Ganiel's (2006) and Edson's (2006) work has been valuable because they highlight the presence of DJs and EDM in their studies about two emerging church groups: the ikon community in Belfast, Northern Ireland and Sanctus 1 in Manchester. Edson's article is particularly relevant to my research because in Sanctus 1, a music night called 'II' is very reminiscent of the club nights that I study in this thesis. When describing 'II', Edson writes, 'it is a place for people who have no relationship with any church to come and meet informally with Sanctus 1' (Edson, 2006:26). Moreover, 'II' is a free club night. These features have comparison to the free dance parties organised by a Christian mission group on Ibiza which will be discussed in Chapter Four[2].

Other works on the emerging church also include popular music in their discussion. For instance, Kester parallels the alternative worship movement with the punk movement in the way that they both 'give permission' (Kester, 2004:72)

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[2] According to Edson, the free admission of 'II' is their manifestation of 'a theology of the *missio Dei*' (ibid, 32) which 'regards God as centripetally present and active in the world' (ibid, 34). Such theological beliefs influence the way they view evangelism – 'mission was taking place within the conversations and, indeed, simply through the "presence" of a caring Christian community' (ibid, 33). These beliefs have comparison to those upheld by the respondents who organise club nights in Chapter Three and Four. However, these Christian theological beliefs are called into question when one is confronted with 'a gap between how EC [Emerging Church] perceive their own missional efforts and how non-Christians perceive the EC missionaries' (Johnson, 2006:2). Such discrepancy

to young people to be different. Gibbs & Bolger (2006) also specify alternative worship as a crucial starting point for the emerging church and regard the alternative worship congregation, Nine O'clock Service (NOS), as '[t]he First Emerging Church' (Gibbs & Bolger, 2006:82). Additionally, Taylor's (2005) study has also offered a useful personal perspective on this development within evangelical circles, as he discusses his use of EDM as an attempt to engage with contemporary culture within his emerging church group in New Zealand. Carson (2005), furthermore, provides a list of the characteristics of the emerging church which is highly pertinent to the discussion in Chapter Three.

Computer-mediated Communication (CMC) and Religious Community

A part of my discussion in Chapter Three will be devoted to an examination of the impact of CMC on the networking practices of a Christian group. The works by Campbell (2005a, 2005b, 2004) are highly relevant to my research because they generally discuss the effects of CMC on Christian groups in both their online and offline worlds. It is worth highlighting that Campbell was hired by NGM (i.e. one of the research groups in this thesis) in 2002 to evaluate the effectiveness of their online missionary project, www.clubberstemple.com. Although this online project is rendered 'a failure' (personal communication, 14 June 2005) by a Christian DJ in NGM, the internal document kindly supplied by Campbell, along with her publications, are pertinent to my discussion on 'virtual community' (Rheingold, 2000; Castells, 2000) in a religious context. Rheingold

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of beliefs held by Emerging Church groups and those of non-Christians will be analysed with more

(2000), Valentine & Holloway (2002), Bennett (2003) and Campbell (2005a) all provide useful insights in the discussion on the relationship between online and offline worlds in creating communities.

Works which address the notion of network (e.g. Castells, 2000, Rapport and Overing, 2000; Leonard, 2000) have also been useful for elucidating the connections between CMC and the Christian groups that I look at in Chapter Three and to some extent in Chapter Five. Unlike community, 'network' is a term often used to emphasise the importance of relationships instead of differences and sameness in individuals' social lives (Rapport and Overing, 2000). Networks are also made up of lines of communication and a series of nodes in Castells' theorisation of 'network society' (Castells, 2000). These writings help to contextualise the discussion in Chapter Three where respondents describe 'relationship-building' on the Internet as pivotal in their evangelical activities.

Methodology

During this research into the relationship between EDMC and Evangelical Christianity, I have drawn on the research methodologies deployed within disciplines such as Popular Music Studies, Anthropology, Sociology, Religious Studies and Cultural Studies. Ethnography will be the main methodological approach adopted in this thesis, while a textual analysis is included to study specifically the notion of spirituality in Chapter Four.

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details in Chapter Four.

With regard to the textual analysis in Chapter Four and the analysis of ambient EDM in Christian worship in Chapter Five, it is worthwhile to discuss audience reception and interpretation. Longhurst (2003: 120) suggests that 'reception' refers to the receiving of messages from media sources and is often used in connection to the concept of 'audience' — a group of listeners or hearers. More importantly, he underscores the significance of 'reception' and 'audience' in the study of mass media, suggesting that 'social and cultural contexts make a significant contribution to the meanings derived from texts — meanings that may be very different from those the author or producers intend' (Longhurst, 2003: 120). His argument, to a certain extent, reflects the well-known proclamation, 'the death of the author', by postmodernist cultural theorist Roland Barthes (1977). Barthes (1977) argues that a text is not a line of words that convey a single meaning intended by the author but a 'multidimensional' space in which a variety of interpretations based on individuals' cultural contexts meet and collide.

The discussion on audience reception is significant in the study of popular music and culture, particularly in relation to the active role of audiences (e.g. Jenkins, 1992; Grossberg, 1992; Kruse, 1999). Kruse (1999: 95) argues that listening to popular music should not be regarded as mere consumption. Instead, interactions between the musical texts and audiences produce new and unexpected meanings (Kruse, 1999: 95). Chambers also emphasises the significance of audience reception as he suggests that music is an 'counter-space' where the body can connect sounds, dance and style to the subconscious anchorage of sexuality —

'It is the body that ultimately makes, receives and responds to music' (Chambers, 1985: 210). These contentions can be compared to an argument made by Grossberg who suggests that audience members constantly struggle to make a text mean something that relates to their own lives, experiences, needs and desires (Grossberg, 1992: 52). These arguments need highlighting, as will be shown later in this thesis, the respondents indeed make EDM mean something that connects to their own religious desires, e.g. needs to be either 'uplifted' (Chapter Four) or 'relaxed' (Chapter Five) by a Christian God in their worship practices.

As already detailed, the thesis draws on and advances the work of a number of scholars who directly engage with the subjects of religion, popular culture and popular music. There has been scant academic work on EDMC and Christianity. The thesis also draws upon some populist sources specifically from a Christian perspective in order to analyse the Christian view on EDMC (e.g. Saunders 2002; Dante, 2001). Although these writings are not theoretical, they do provide a very good way to understand EDMC from a Christian perspective. Handbooks on club culture (e.g Osbourne, 1999; Reynolds, 1999) and UK dance music magazines (eg. *Mixmag, DJ, Jockey Slut*) were consulted in the study of EDM. They help to elucidate how genres of EDM are defined in journalistic writings and how EDMC develop historically.

Video clips of the BBC Channel Four programme, *Witness: God Bless Ibiza* which focuses the 24-7 Mission on Ibiza (a case study in my research) was

consulted to study the ways in which the mission team aims to evangelise among young people on the Island. Furthermore, information about the research groups that was available on their official web sites was also consulted as a part of the study. An ambient funk dance track by Layo and Bushwacka 'Love Story' was also examined closely for the textual analysis of spirituality in EDM in Chapter Four.

Interviews were conducted with thirty respondents over the course of fieldwork research. I selected these respondents based on their levels of involvement in the evangelical activities that I examine. All the fieldwork research was undertaken between March 2003 and October 2005. I spent two weeks on Ibiza in order to conduct participant observation and structured interviews with the research group in Chapter Four. In relation to my research for Chapter Five, I spent a week in New York in October 2005 to conduct participant observation in the activities organised by the research groups, as well as to conduct structured interviews with a research group in this chapter. I spent a day in Bristol in March 2003 to conduct participant observation of a club night organised by a Christian group in Chapter Three. This short visit was followed by a two-day visit to Bristol where I conducted in-depth structured interviews with the DJs and Music personnel of the group. The respondents in the overall thesis include DJs, participants and Christian leaders who belong to the Christian groups in the case studies, i.e. 24-7 Mission in Ibiza, NGM in Bristol, as well as Artisan and Tribe in New York. All these interviews were recorded by cassette recorder and note

taking. Interviewees were asked to respond to questions in structured interviews about their backgrounds and their views on the EDM played in the activities organised by the research groups, such as club nights set up by Christian DJs and worship sessions in church. The questions varied slightly across the case studies owing to the different backgrounds and histories of the Christian groups that I studied. However, the central theme focused upon the role of EDM in the Christian groups' activities and the respondents' daily lives. Interviewees in this research also included those who were not directly involved with the Christian groups in the case studies. For instance, I interviewed four clubbers on Ibiza who were not part of the research group in Chapter Four.

Moreover, the presentations and 'question-and-answer' session at an NGM seminar held in a Christian conference 'Cultural Shift' in 2003 were recorded during the course of fieldwork research. Drawing on this seminar, I gained a nuanced understanding of the relationship between popular music (EDM in particular) and Evangelical Christianity. Note-taking, photo-taking, video-recording and informal conversations with participants were conducted during the participant observation. However, being a participant researcher or an 'insider researcher' is both advantageous and challenging for the whole research process. The importance of reflexivity in ethnographic research will be discussed in the following section.

Ethnography and Reflexivity

Numerous writings have discussed the significance of reflexivity in conducting ethnographic research (e.g. Hodkinson, 2002, 2005; Bennett, 2002, 2003; Davies, 1999; Moore, 2003; Grills, 1998; Prus, 1998; Shaffir. 1998; Stebbins, 1998; Blain, 1998; Hammersley, 1992; Maxwell, 2002). Since ethnography is the main methodology used within this research, the importance of being reflexive during the process of research and during the writing process deserves particular attention. A range of works on popular music in daily life has been shaped by ethnographic research methods, for instance, extended personal interviews, telephone interviews, informal interviews, and participant observation, which I also made use of during the course of my research (e.g. Finnegan, 1989; DeNora, 2000; Cohen, 1991, 1998; Hodkinson, 2002). Reliance upon secondary sources such as journalistic accounts and textual sources can be avoided by using these methods because they foreground the views and actual life experiences of those involved in the research field. Furthermore, a range of studies on EDMC have also drawn on ethnographic research methods which generally include participant observation, formal and informal interviews and/or informants' knowledge (e.g. Thornton, 1995; Malbon, 1999; Redhead, 1993; Rietveld, 1998; Jackson, 2004). With reference to the specific concerns of the thesis, it should be acknowledged that a number of academic studies on EDMC and religion are also based on ethnographic evidence which is chiefly drawn from participant observation and/or structured interviews with clubbers (Sylvan, 2002, 2005; St John, 2004; Lynch, 2004; Lynch & Badger, 2006; Lau, 2006; Till, 2006). Cohen's

description of the concerns of ethnography offers useful insights as to why this approach has been widely adopted in the field of EDMC and religion:

> Generally speaking, ethnography in the anthropological sense is description and interpretation of a way of life (or 'culture'). It involves a 'microsociological' focus upon the beliefs, values, rituals and general patterns of behaviour underlying social relationships or networks, hence anthropologists' concern with concepts of relatedness embodied in terms such as 'kinship', 'ethnicity', 'identity', 'society', 'culture' and 'community'. When analysing ethnography, a comparative approach is also important, comparing different groups or cultures and how they might classify people in different ways and organise and conceptualise relationships differently (Cohen, 1993:123).

Cohen's anthropological perspective on ethnography highlights the beliefs, values, and rituals in social relationships and network which are, at the same time, the key concerns for theological and religious reflections. Such comparison between an anthropological focus in ethnography and key interests in theological and religious studies may help to explain the aforementioned prevalence of ethnographic research in the field of EDMC and religion. The theological interests in people's beliefs, values and rituals in everyday life are implicated in Lynch's reflections on developing methodologies in the study of religion and popular culture which support the use of ethnography:

> While studying popular culture as text may be helpful, for example, in theological reflection on issues raised by that 'text', it does not offer insights into the religious significance of media and popular culture in everyday, lived experience. A key question, then, is what we can learn from the ways in which popular cultural resources and environments are used in everyday life – rather than regarding popular culture as a collection of static, de-contextualised objects (Lynch, 2006:3).

Lynch (2004:113) also identifies the ethnographic approach, which focuses on what meanings people take from participating in popular cultural activities, such as clubbing and playing sports, as one of the key approaches to the exploration of popular culture and theology. Moreover, some key concepts that I examine, such as community, networks and the analysis of how the respondents conceptualise relationships between music and faith in this thesis have comparison to the characteristics of ethnographic research as highlighted by Cohen (1993) earlier. All these help to justify the use of ethnography in my research on popular music and religion.

Nevertheless, there are limitations and issues in ethnography as a research methodology. The precarious relationship between researcher and respondent in ethnographic research should be given attention, because during the course of the fieldwork research I was frequently faced with both the benefits and the challenges of being an 'insider' researcher. Before my discussion on 'insider research' (Hodkinson, 2005), I will examine the complexities of insider and outsider status in an ethnographic research setting. I had been a practising Christian for over a decade at the time of research and so I did not have doubts about my 'insider' status during the course of fieldwork research. However, as I reflected upon the relationships between the respondent and researcher by re-visiting my field notes and interview tapes, as well as by reading literature about reflexivity in ethnographic research, I came to realise that the fact that I am an academic researcher to a certain extent kept a distance between me and the Christian

respondents in the research. Such realisation brought me into the transition from an insider to an insider researcher (Hodkinson, 2005), which was crucial for my reflection on ethnography as a research methodology.

According to Hodkinson, 'insider research' is 'a non-absolute concept intended to designate those situations characterised by a significant degree of *initial* proximity between the sociocultural locations of researcher and researched' (Hodkinson, 2005:134). Such a high degree of 'initial proximity' between Hodkinson and the goth scene that he examines in his research on identity, style and subculture (Hodkinson, 2002) is demonstrated by his age, ethnicity, class and educational achievements, which are 'compatible' (Hodkinson, 2005:136) with the backgrounds of those goth participants whom he researches. His committed involvement with the goth scene prior to the commencement of his research also helps him to acquire an insider status.

Thus, in light of Hodkinson's suggestions, I am going to examine the extent to which I was considered to be an insider by those being researched in the field. Age is a determining factor for access to the research field. Holding a position within my mid-twenties placed me in proximity with my respondents who were mainly in their twenties or early thirties during the course of the fieldwork research. Although the respondents in my research are predominantly white Anglo-American with the only exceptions in New York[3], my Chinese ethnic background

[3] I spoke to two American-born Chinese women and a black Afro-American woman at a meeting of Tribe in Manhattan, New York.

did not affect my 'insider' status when researching predominantly white communities. This was perhaps because I could communicate with them in their first language, English (which is my second language), fairly fluently during the course of my research. It might be also due to my profound interest and respect for their evangelical culture, as well as a desire to study the relationship between EDM and Christianity, which was also of great interest to some of the Christian DJs, clubbers and church leaders whom I met during fieldwork research. Furthermore, my participation in the 24-7 Mission on Ibiza in both 2002 and 2003 showed my eagerness to participate in this youth-oriented evangelical culture. My participation in the mission in 2002 purely as a member certainly helped to pave the way for my ethnographic research that I conducted for Chapter Four in 2003. It is important to highlight that when I made a decision to participate in the mission in 2002, I had not considered conducting a postgraduate research on EDMC and evangelical Christianity. My participation in the mission in 2002 was entirely based on my great interest in the use of EDM in a mission context and my Christian faith. I mentioned my experience of the 2003 mission to nearly all the people I interviewed for research in Chapter Three and Chapter Five. The 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 2000) that I displayed, owing to my participation in the earlier mission, surely helped gain access to the field of my subsequent research. These conditions seemed to help me gain a so-called 'insider' status. It seemed that once these conditions were met, the concern of being a Cantonese-speaking Hong Kong Chinese became irrelevant. Stebbins shares similar views on being 'an ethnic outsider' (Stebbins, 1998:65) in an ethnographic fieldwork setting. Stebbins'

anglophone status did not affect his insider status when researching a Roman Catholic francophone community in Calgary, Canada because of his fluency in French (his respondents' first language), desire to help in the community and a great interest in francophone culture (Stebbins, 1998: 69). Most importantly, the Christian commitment that my respondents and I shared contributed to relative ease in accessing the field and general acceptance from the respondents during the course of fieldwork research, albeit the level of acceptance varied across the field, as will now be discussed.

I regard an 'insider' status as a 'mixed blessing' in view of the fieldwork research and the analysis of data. I shall now move on to discuss both the advantages and disadvantages of occupying an insider position in the field of my research. The advantages of being an 'insider' in my field of research include access to the field and a rapport with the respondents which directly affects their willingness to disclose information (Hodkinson, 2005). Firstly, I shall discuss the advantage for an insider of gaining access to the field. Numerous writings on EDMC are conducted with an insider ethnographic approach (e.g. Rietveld, 1997; Malbon, 1999; Lau, 2006; Till, 2006). Hammersley (1992:143-144) recognises that a 'practitioner' ethnographer who possesses 'participant knowledge' already has relationships with others in the setting and can use these to collect data. By comparison, an outsider may need to spend a great amount of time in the field building such relationships (Hammersley, 1992: 144). Furthermore, an insider has the 'cultural competence' (Hodkinson, 2005:138) which is required to

communicate with others in the field. Hodkinson acquires such competence through his prolonged commitment and involvement with the goth scene prior to the onset of his research. In view of my research, I was able to demonstrate such 'cultural competence' not only by means of my involvement with 24-7 Mission and my Christian commitment, but also through my experience as a freelance music journalist. For instance, during my fieldwork research, the Christian DJs that I interviewed showed amazement towards my music knowledge of different EDM acts, and they also demonstrated a great level of excitement when discussing the 'spiritual' dimensions of an ambient funk track by Layo and Bushwacka, 'Love Story', which I mentioned during the interview. My mention of the track triggered a generous flow of information and the atmosphere of this group interview changed as all the Christian DJs became more open and interactive in disclosing their thoughts on EDM and Christian faith. One particular Christian DJ that I met was also very eager to pass a promotional copy of his own dance single to me, as he knew I was a music journalist. The cultural competence that I displayed not only led to a greater level of openness during interviews with DJs and clubbers, but also allowed me to obtain promotional copies of dance singles and albums produced or mixed by Christian DJs. Such benefits undoubtedly facilitated my research, particularly in terms of analysing the notion of 'spirituality' in EDM perceived by Christian DJs.

Another advantage of being an 'insider' is the ability to have a rapport with the respondents in the field. Such a benefit was clearly manifested in the fieldwork

research about a mission team on Ibiza when I participated as a short-term team mission member. I was able to meet and interview the clubbers outside the mission team with the help of a Christian DJ who introduced me to them. Moreover, I also benefited from being part of the mission team by getting support from the team members who accompanied me in order to assure my personal safety on the streets of Ibiza, which were characterised by volatility, violence and alcohol-related disruptive behaviour during my fieldwork there. The mission team members expressed a profound interest in my subject of research because most of them were enthusiastic about EDM and Christianity. They shared more information with me as a fellow team member. Their open attitude also allowed me to observe day-to-day activities, conversations and interactions more closely.

However, as mentioned earlier, the level of access and rapport varied across case studies. It is worth noting that I attempted to apply to work in NGM as a Booking Assistant in their Music Office for a year, during the first year of my research, in order to conduct a lengthy ethnographic study within the field. However, this request was refused as a staff member stated that applicants should usually commit to at least two years of work in their organisation. It is worth acknowledging that my motivation to investigate the organisation might also have had some bearing on their refusal. Although I was unable to undertake a placement, I was able to investigate the work of NGM at a later stage of my research as a visitor to their organisation and their club event, Rubix Cube in Bristol. This incident highlighted that the level of access to the field varied

according to the nature and system of different organisations. The level of trust and rapport that I obtained in 24-7 Mission in 2003 was perhaps largely due to my initial involvement with the team in 2002. However, as I had not had any previous relationship with NGM before I embarked on my research, my interest to work in the organisation was met with a certain level of suspicion from the personnel involved. Such observations show that commitment that is displayed by previous participation and time scale of involvement are of prime importance for evangelical faith groups, revealing the values underlying social relations within some sectors of evangelical Christians.

I contend that the challenges of being an 'insider' in an ethnographic setting draw attention to the need for transition from an insider to an insider researcher, which involves considerable reflection on the relationships between researchers and respondents. The first and utmost challenge that I confronted as an ethnographer was about not projecting my own values, beliefs and desires onto a different context. I was increasingly aware of how my own Christian beliefs affected my research in terms of, for instance, interpretation and understanding of findings. Thereby, I had to make deliberate efforts to reflect critically on such biases, particularly as I left the field and started analysing the data collected, by distancing myself from the groups that I was involved with. Such intentional effort to establish a critical distance from the researched is mentioned by various scholars undertaking ethnographic work (e.g. Hodkinson, 2005, Bennett, 2002, 2003; Jorgensen, 1989). I chose to leave the field and withdrew from the activities

organised by the Christian groups in my case studies during the course of data analysis and writing up the findings. I deliberately refrained from participating in the groups' activities because I was aware of the biases that I had as an 'insider' in the field. As Maxwell claims, 'the closer to home the culture being researched, the easier it is to overlook significant differences' (Maxwell, 2002:112). Instead of merely occupying the insider's position as my respondents did, I had to assume a critical distance from the field of research and respondents in order to avoid 'a one-dimensional voice which echoes the self-assumed "rightness"' (Bennett, 2002: 457) of the culture that I researched.

Nevertheless, the critical distance that I assumed was met with another issue related to 'dual identities' possessed by an insider researcher. I was very open about the intention of my research[4] to the respondents in the field and my respondents were not deceived into providing information about themselves during the course of fieldwork research; therefore, my research did not have the issues of ethics that Bennett (2003) discusses. However, the matter Bennett (2003: 198) underlines regarding the management of the researcher's identity/identities in the field deserves attention. Whilst it was important for me to be critical and to provide a different or sometimes opposing view to what my respondents offered in the discussion of the relations between music and religion due to my academic role, it was equally crucial to respect the viewpoints and practices of those whose life-worlds were being studied and to avoid imposing my own academic viewpoints on

[4] I made it clear to my respondents that the intention of my research was to study the relationships between EDM and Evangelical Christianity.

others (Prus, 1998: 42-43). As Bennett expresses, '[insider] 'knowledge' does not equate authority' (Bennett, 2003: 198). Fiona Bowie, an anthropologist of religion, also makes a very pertinent remark regarding the role of ethnographer in the field of religious studies, suggesting that 'the task for the ethnographer remains to interpret the views of others in as honest and responsible a manner as possible and to place these views and practices within a broader theoretical framework' (Bowie, 2006:11-12). My conscientious efforts to draw on data from interviews with evangelicals, clubbers and DJs, as well as observations of evangelical activities, form the basis for this thesis' exploratory analysis of the cultural and religious dimensions of EDMC. In so doing, the fallacy of developing an authoritative voice that predominantly belongs to the author can hopefully be averted in this thesis.

Despite painstaking efforts to provide a balanced analysis of views drawn from such ethnographic 'insider' research, there is still room for improvement regarding the quality of ethnographic data drawn from the field. Such a call for improvement is particularly valid with regard to the research data used in Chapter Three. As noted earlier, my attempt to work for NGM[5] was futile because of the issue of trust and commitment. Therefore, the data about this Christian group was mainly collected over a period of a few days when I visited the NGM office and their activities in Bristol. Although Hammersley (1992:85) points out that ethnographers usually study one or a few small-scale cases over periods as brief as only a few days, ideally ethnography involves a 'lengthy period of intimate study' (Cohen, 1993:122) within the wider context of respondents' 'day-to-day activities,

relationships and experiences' (Cohen, 1993: 127). Therefore, the research data that is used in Chapter Three, and to some extent in Chapter Five, could have been more thorough if I had been able to spend a longer period of time with the Christian groups, for as Cohen argues, 'what people say they do often differs from what they actually do, or from what they think they do' (Cohen, 1993: 127). In spite of these limitations, I hope that the *quality* of the in-depth interviews with my respondents will be evidenced in all of the case studies in this thesis. The length of interviews ranged from half an hour to an hour and a half and resulted in the respondents disclosing precious information about themselves, as well as their views on music, Christian beliefs and their faith groups.

Last but not least, it is also worth noting that ethnography has its own limitations in the field of popular music studies. Although it has been shown that ethnography is an appropriate methodology for studies on popular music and religion given its 'microsociological' focus upon beliefs and rituals as discussed earlier, 'popular music would be condemned to subordination should it only be treated ethnographically' (Shumway, 2002:19). Shumway illustrates his point further:

> Ethnography shifts the focus from the activity of making sense of music, that is from listening, to making sense of other listeners' activity. So, one of the frustrations one often feels when faced with ethnographies of popular music is the very small role the music or other products – lyrics, performance, etc. – actually play in them' (Shumway, 2002: 19).

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[5] NGM is chosen to be one of the case studies in the research.

Shumway's grief over the minimal reference to music (e.g. lyrics, texture of sounds, etc.) in ethnographies about popular music is echoed in Hesmondhalgh's critique on DeNora's ethnographic work with sociological perspectives, *Music in Everyday Life* (DeNora, 2000). DeNora's work, as Hesmondhalgh (2002:122, 125) argues, establishes a substantial case against those who might regard music as a trivial supplement to the business of daily living, but makes little reference to people's evaluations of particular texts and genres. I, therefore, include a textual analysis of a dance track in the discussion of spirituality in EDM. This is intended to provide a more thorough piece of ethnographic work on the religious dimensions of popular music, which examines both the people and the music involved in this particular culture. Lynch (2004) also makes conscientious efforts in developing a comprehensive and balanced methodological framework consisting of an ethnographic approach, textual analysis and 'author'-focused approach in the study of popular culture, religion and theology. Whilst my methodological approach is still largely ethnographic in nature, along with the textual analysis in Chapter Four, an attempt has been made to provide a more balanced analysis of both the people and the music involved in EDMC and Evangelical Christianity.

Inter-disciplinarity

As noted earlier in the discussion on methodology used within this research, my approach to research is informed by a number of disciplines. Such inter-disciplinarity in my research is supported by the scholars who aim to explore

the research agenda for theology, religion and popular culture at a panel discussion at the American Academy of Religion. While exchanging views on how work in this field can be strengthened in the future, the scholars at the panel discussion underlined an inter-disciplinary approach in research:

> there is (and probably will for ever be) an on-going need to strengthen our inter-disciplinary knowledge and skills. Without such inter-disciplinarity, we risk making superficial and inadequate analyses of our field of study and are unlikely to have our work treated seriously in the wider academy (Lynch, 2006:2).

Being trained in Popular Music Studies, which is fairly inter-disciplinary in nature, I have benefited from the practice of drawing upon different approaches in a range of disciplines in the course of my research over the past few years. Moreover, through connecting with academics in the UK Research Network on Theology, Religion and Popular Culture, I am fortunate enough to be able to exchange views with new and established scholars from a range of academic backgrounds, including Theology, Religious Studies, Music, Media Studies, Popular Music Studies, Sociology and Journalism, through meeting with the aforementioned research network. 'An important step forward in this field may therefore be greater collaboration between scholars from disciplines, leading for example to the production of multi-authored books and research articles' (Lynch, 2006: 2). During the course of my research, an article based on the findings in Chapter Four of this thesis was published alongside other articles written by scholars from a range of disciplines, including Cultural Studies, Theology, Religious Studies, Anthropology and Music in a special edition on EDMC and Religion in *Culture and Religion*

(Vol.7, No.1, March 2006). My publication in the journal and participation in the UK Research Network of Theology, Religion and Popular Culture demonstrate the inter-disciplinarity of my research agenda, which is crucial to developing theorisation in this thesis.

Thesis Structure

My analysis of Christianity and popular music is organised into six chapters. Chapter One discusses the historical developments of the use of popular music by evangelical Christians since the 1960s. This chapter is concerned with the ways popular music styles (e.g. rock/pop), cultures and scenes were recuperated by Christians involved with the Jesus People Movement in the 1960s. This historical account will also document developments in the 1970s and early 1980s when Christian music gained popularity in the mainstream music market in the US and the UK, leading to the identification of a new popular music 'genre', Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) (e.g. Romanowski, 1990, 1992, 2000; Peacock, 1999; Joseph, 1999). The growth of CCM shows that the adoption of popular music within Christian contexts has become a common practice nowadays and is not as 'novel' and 'surprising' as it was in the 1960s. Therefore, discussion on the development of CCM is relevant to my study because it helps to contextualise the prevalent use of popular music among the respondents in this thesis. This chapter will discuss the tension between Christian values and those perceived to be supported by the music industry. Chapter One will identify a

number of issues that arise in the attempt to connect with young people through the use of popular music.

Chapter Two then narrows the discussion by examining the relationship between EDMC and Christianity in particular, outlining the historical relationship which can be dated back to the Alternative Worship Movement started in the late 1980s. It also discusses the global development of the movement, examining alternative worship groups in Britain, the United States and Australasia. However, the discussion will predominantly focus on developments in Britain, where the pioneer of alternative worship, the Nine O'clock Service, started their first congregation and worship in mid 1980s.

Chapters Three to Five will be devoted to the discussion of three case studies. Chapter Three mainly focuses on the comparisons between a Christian club night and a Christian church, by looking at the ideas of 'liquid church' (Ward, 2002) and the so-called 'emerging church' (e.g. Gibbs and Bolger, 2006; Drane, 2006; Carson, 2005; Brewin, 2004). Moreover, this chapter will examine Christians' involvement with computer-mediated communication (CMC) by concentrating on notions such as 'virtual community' (Rheingold, 2000) and 'networks' (Castells, 2000).

Chapter Four analyses the 24-7 Mission on Ibiza. The discussion will focus on the notion of spirituality in EDM from a Christian perspective. This chapter

also concentrates on the crossover between the discussion of spirituality and community amongst the mission members, and the mystification of music by clubbers. Textual analysis will be included here as a complement to study the notion of spirituality in EDM.

Chapter Five will examine a church called Tribe and a networking activity organised by a Christian organisation, 'Artisan' in New York. Tribe is led by a DJ pastor, Kenny Mitchell. Although Tribe is not related to NGM or 24-7 Mission directly, Mitchell used to work with Pete Greig, the founder of 24-7 Prayer (the base of 24-7 Mission), before establishing a church in New York. Tribe is set up with the help of Revelation Church in Chichester, which is affiliated with 24-7 Prayer. During the field research of the Ibiza Mission, I came to realise that a number of key figures in the mission were connected to Revelation Church. These links make the study of Tribe worthwhile, owing to its direct or indirect relations with the Christian groups in the other case studies. The major finding drawn from the fieldwork research about Tribe is the use of ambient EDM in the congregation's private and public worship practices. This will be discussed closely along with an analysis on music and urban contexts. Moreover, the ethnographic study of the Artisan event provides an interesting discussion on sociality and business networking practices amongst evangelicals who are professionally involved with the arts, media and entertainment industries. The way that EDM is used as 'a device for social ordering' (DeNora, 2000) within the networking event will also be examined attentively in this chapter.

The concluding chapter will draw some general observations on electronic dance music cultures, evangelical Christianity and popular music (electronic dance music in particular) from the key points of all previous chapters. This thesis will then shed further light on the relationship between popular music and Christianity.

Chapter One

The Historical Development of the Use of Popular Music in a Christian Context

This chapter discusses two important developments relating to the use of pop/rock music in a Christian context from the 1960s to the 1990s. As already stated, the main focus of the thesis is to study the relationship between 'secular' electronic dance music and Christianity. This chapter offers a historical context for a later discussion by considering how popular music cultures have been integrated into certain Christian sectors. I am going to focus on two significant developments, namely the Jesus People Movement in the late 1960s and Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) from the 1970s onwards. They were chosen because they exemplify the pivotal models which contemporary Christian groups follow in the area of using popular music as a 'tool' for evangelism among young people in particular. Some key elements of the models, such as using music as a way to connect with non-Christians and adopting the language of youth culture in a Christian context, have comparisons to findings within the Christian groups that are discussed in the case studies of this thesis. They are chosen also because they raise issues about the dualistic 'secular'/'sacred' Christian worldview and the role of popular music in evangelical Christianity which are both central to the analysis of the use of electronic dance music in a Christian context.

Before discussing the two aforementioned historical developments of contemporary Christian music, I would like to emphasise that there are other

historical figures who attempted to make church music more familiar to the general public through the use of music as part of popular idioms of the time. Such attempts to make Christian worship more relevant to contemporary culture could be traced back to the sixteenth century as Martin Luther (1484-1546) incorporated the folk tunes of his day in order to provide a recognisable musical tune for churchgoers to connect with in worship (Parry, 2000:68). Another significant historical precedent is John Wesley (1703-1791), who as a great traveller himself, picked up folk-songs in different places and added a Christian message to them (Parry, 2000: 68). Like Luther and Wesley, William Booth (1829-1912) who founded the Salvation Army in 1878, also recognized the effectiveness of contemporary popular tunes. He would relate simple Christian messages into popular tunes of his time. For instance, the music hall tune 'Champagne Charlie' was set to the words of a Christian hymn 'Bless His Name, He Sets Me Free' (Parry, 2000: 68). The endeavours of these leading Christian figures who incorporated popular music styles into church music exemplify evangelicals' functional approach to popular music — music is conceived of as a tool to evangelise to people who might not be churchgoers. This functional approach was also adopted by American evangelicals in the early 20th century. Romanowski (1992:79) commented that music was a favourite tool for evangelical expression in the early- to-mid-twentieth century in the United States. For instance, the preaching of post-Civil War revivalist Dwight L. Moody was closely linked to the music of his songleaders (Romanowski, 1992: 79). Moreover, gospel singer George Beverly Shea frequently performed at Billy Graham crusades in the United

States in 1950s (Romanowski, 1992: 79). Therefore, it is important to highlight that the Jesus People who deployed rock music to evangelise amongst the young hippies in the late 1960s had their precedents.

As to the parallel between the Jesus People groups and the evangelical groups in this thesis, a few observations will be made in the following discussion. Firstly, they both use popular music as a way to connect with young people (in their teens or early twenties), either Christians or non-Christians. Secondly, they both evidence a connection between 'experiential Christianity[6]' and the transcendence of music in the discourse on popular music. Finally, the analysis of the Jesus People Movement will also reveal the issues of authenticity faced by some of the Christian respondents in this thesis who have no previous active links or involvement with EDMC. Regarding the Jesus People Movement, 'effective evangelism' seemed to be grounded in Jesus People's credibility among the hippies which was obtained through their existing links with the counter-cultural movement in the late 1960s. As it will be shown later in the thesis, the small number of converts in the case studies is small. It might be due to the lack of existing links with EDMC among some Christians in the research groups.

The issues that arise in the discussion on Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) will lead to a Christian music debate based on the 'music as evangelism' and 'music as art' divide. The discussion on CCM, could lead to the argument that

music is an art form and that music without direct Biblical references or an overt Christian message possesses communicative elements that convey 'spiritual' meanings. This way of understanding music by Christians is pertinent to the research on Christians' use of popular EDM that has no overt Christian connotations. More importantly, the discussion on CCM as a major music market within the music industry also helps to contextualise the prevalent use of EDM amongst the respondents within this thesis. CCM has become so established that the use of popular music within Christian contexts is no longer as 'novel' as it was in the 1960s. The growth of CCM in the 1980s effects a shift in perception on the use of popular music in Christian contexts which has become well understood.

Regarding the relevance to the discussion on Alternative Worship in the next chapter, the analysis of CCM leads to a debate on music being an art form which possesses communicative elements to convey 'spirituality,' as noted earlier. Such views on music help to legitimate most Alternative Worship groups which use popular EDM that does not contain an overt Christian message. The 'experiential Christianity' (Di Sabatino, 1999:4) that arises with the emergence of the Jesus People Movement in the 1960s also paves the way for more pluralistic forms of spiritualities that characterise Alternative Worship in which ancient Celtic spiritualities are sometimes 'mixed and matched' with contemporary EDM in an experimental manner. Therefore, Alternative Worship is in some way indebted to

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[6]'The Jesus People were Christian experientialists. This experientialism was comprised of a volatile mixture of countercultural empiricism, Pentecostal praxis, and aggressive fundamentalist-style evangelism' (Di Sabatino, 1999: 4).

the experiential Christian spirituality/spiritualities that emerged in the 1960s with the rise of the Jesus People Movement.

Jesus People Movement

Romanowski (1990, 1992), Turner (2001), Wider (2001) and Jasper (1984) have all recognised the Jesus Movement in the late 1960s as a significant starting point for the development of contemporary Christian music. In a factual survey of the Jesus People Movement, *The Story of the Jesus People*, Enroth *et al* (1972) argue that following the emergence of the Jesus People Movement the evangelical church started to adopt a new perspective in relation to its role with young people. It was because evangelical church leaders 'began to pay some serious attention to these young people as a potentially fruitful mission field[7]'(Enroth et al, 1972:240). Although it is difficult to trace the exact starting point of the movement, several 'ministries' that started independently in 1967 laid the foundation of the movement. The Jesus People Movement emerged in the West Coast in the late 1960s when there was a considerable counter-cultural movement that came to be defined as *the* youth movement of its era. The counter-cultural movement was a response to American social and political conservatism in 1950s and the US government's involvement in the Vietnam War. The ethos of the counter-cultural movement could be epitomised by a rhetorical phrase coined by Timothy Leary in the 1960s: 'Turn on, tune in, drop out' (Leary, 1999). This phrase suggests that

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[7] A mission field can allude to a community or any place where the Christian gospel has not been effectively preached or where the church available there is lifeless (e.g. see http://mission.rccg.org/definition_of_terms_content.htm for details). The church leaders of traditional denominations in the United States started to regard a group of young people as a

people can trigger cultural changes by means of psychedelics and through detaching themselves from establishments and conventions in society. Meanwhile, the Jesus People Movement's connection to the hippies' counter-cultural movement can be best illustrated by Tracy (1970) as he ironically compares the 'Jesus freaks[8]' with the hippies in Los Angeles in the late 1960s:

> They [i.e. the 'Jesus freaks'] are acid graduates, students of smack, mescaline majors, speed freaks – all having forsaken their individual narcotic nirvanas for the joys of Jesus. They have not deserted the accoutrements of counter-culture. The hair is still long, the clothes a potpourri of hand-me-downs, original creations or serviceable army surplus. Their talk is fairly hip when not communicating their "love for Jesus." (Tracy, 1970: 123).

In the early stage of the Jesus People Movement, the independent evangelical hippie pioneers were called "street Christians" and "psychedelic Christians" only later to be dubbed either "Jesus People[9]" or "Jesus freaks" (Di Sabatino, 1999:4). Although the movement was labelled 'Jesus movement' by *Look* magazine in February in 1971, I shall refer to the movement as 'Jesus People Movement' in this chapter in order to avoid confusion with the first century Christianity which was known as 'Jesus Movement' (Di Sabatino, 1999: 4). 1974, on the other hand, marks the end of the movement when those who classified themselves as Jesus

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'mission field' owing to the increasing interest in Christianity generated from within the counter-culture in the 1960s (Enroth et al, 1972, 240).

[8] Tracy (1970) used this term to refer to people who participated in the Jesus People Movement. They were hippies who were newly converted to Christianity and were eager to evangelise among their 'hippie counterparts'.

[9] 'The Jesus People, as members of a distinctive age stratum, exhibit many attributes common to the counterculture: subjectivism, informality, spontaneity, new forms and media of communication. As members of a distinctive religious orientation, they exhibit attributes common to fundamentalist and Pentecostal Christianity: the inerrancy of scripture, emphasis on the Holy Spirit, and a commitment to "one way" to God' (Balswick, 1974:23).

People entered a wide spectrum of Protestant and Catholic denominations. The former Jesus people gave way to a more complex and holistic view of the church and pushed the remaining counter-cultural traces further to the margins. It was reported that by the end of the movement in 1974, there were approximately 400,000 members of the movement in the US and as many as 600,000 worldwide (Balswick, 1974:24). Moreover, the consequential influence of the Jesus People Movement is still to be seen in evangelical churches nowadays, particularly in the use of contemporary music in Christian worship. The influence and issues related to the movement will be examined closely in the following paragraphs.

The majority of the so-called 'Jesus People' were Christian converts who had been formerly on drugs and adopted the transient lifestyles of hippie dropouts from the establishments in the society. The Jesus People Movement was then a series of 'ministries' and communes set up by the hippie Christians who lived communal lifestyles and were eager to recruit new converts among their fellow hippie youngsters. First, it was The Living Room 'coffee house ministry' (Enroth et al, 1972: 13) which started within the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco – an area often taken as 'the mecca of counter-culture' in the late 1960s. The relationship between the counter-cultural lifestyles and the Jesus People communes has been implicated in numerous writings (e.g. Tracy, 1970; Simmonds et al, 1974; Ward, 1996). Whilst Tracy (1970) considers the Jesus People to be former heavy drug-users and fashion victims as noted earlier in this section, Ward offers a more sympathetic understanding towards the intricate relations between the relatively

drug-induced counter-culture in the 1960s and the rise of the Jesus People Movement. Highlighting the confusion and social unrest that characterised the hippie counterculture in the 1960s, Ward saw the Jesus People Movement in a more positive light as he commented:

> In California groups of hippie Christians were going out onto the streets talking about Jesus. These young people had felt lost, without any meaning in their life, but Jesus had met them and made them whole. They were on the streets with a zeal to rescue their fellow hippies who were hooked on drugs or lost and confused in some other way. Their was a ministry of love offering hope to anyone who would listen... The anxiety and confusion left in the wake of the hippie era led many young people to turn to the Christian faith (Ward, 1996:81,82).

In light of Ward's suggestion above, the social and political upheavals in the late 1960s (e.g. the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement) and the personal quest for meanings amongst hippies were facilitating the evangelistic works conducted by the Jesus People. It was because the Christian gospel seemed to provide an anchor for the young hippies amidst the social chaos and personal confusion. Under these circumstances, the Living Room ministry was founded. The ministry was initiated by a group of hippies-turned- Christians from the Bay Area in San Francisco. The central figure of this group was Ted Wise, a recreational drug user who became a Christian in late 1966. Ted Wise, and his wife, alongside a group of their hippie friends who were converted to Christianity through the Wises, began to live together and began The Living Room ministry. The ministry was based in a coffee house named The Living Room which was as a point of connection to street people whom the Wises had conversations with on a daily basis. The Wises would

discuss their Christian faith with street people and customers in the friendly and relaxed environment of the coffee shop, hoping to see the non-Christians accept Christian faith through their 'ministry'. The coffee house lasted for two years and this group of Jesus People had made contact with thirty to fifty thousand young people, talking about Jesus and the Bible during that time (Enroth et al, 1972:13). This group of Jesus People later met another key figure in the movement, Lonnie Frisbee, who was a student at San Francisco Academy of Art at that time. Frisbee got converted and moved in with them, then terminated studies in school and got married. A neighbour-friend suggested that the commune should be called The House of Acts, as it was the idea of a Jesus commune brought to the level of higher consciousness (Enroth et al, 1972: 14). This Jesus commune was based in a two-storey farmhouse in Novato shared by five couples, including the Frisbees and the Wises and three other couples, the Sands, the Heefners and Doops. In addition to them, single youths moved in and out. Frisbee then brought the idea of a Jesus commune to Southern California by establishing a similar ministry called the House of Miracles with his wife and another Christian called John Higgins, whom the Frisbees met while hitchhiking to Santa Ana. Hundreds of young people were converted in the House of Miracles, which was funded by a pastor of a small southern California church.

Frisbee's departure also meant the dispersion of The House of Acts' ministry, approximately eighteen months after its opening. Eight members of The House of Acts spread the idea of a Jesus commune based on shared habitation and

values to other parts of the country. The movement, which was characterised by 'a transcendent experience of God that usually began along the hippie quest for truth' (Di Sabatino, 1999:4), 'Christian conversion' (Di Sabatino, 1999:4) and 'Christian experientialism' (Di Sabatino, 1999:4), kept growing across the West Coast of the US. It then spread eastwards. For instance, the Heefners and Doops were signed up by The Way International, founded by Victor Paul Wierville, who geared his ministry towards young people. Heefner served as the director of The Way East in New York while Doop became the director of The Way West in California. Liz and Ted Wise went to the Peninsula Bible Church and ran a drug prevention centre south of San Francisco. A key Jesus People figure, Arthur Blessitt was largely responsible for the spread of the movement throughout the US. Blessitt was well-known for carrying a cross fitted with a wheel across the US in his seven-month 3500-mile journey from Los Angeles to Washington D.C. (Di Sabatino, 1999:10). He also travelled through numerous countries in Europe and Asia carrying his cross (Di Sabatino, 1999: 10).

In 1971, Arthur Blessitt visited the UK and the Jesus People Movement was then given public attention in Britain (Leech, 1976, 117; cited in Ward, 2005:43). A more detailed account of the link between the US and British Jesus People Movement can be found in discourses about the *Lonesome Stone* rock musical. The show was a collaborative project produced by an American Jesus People group, The Jesus Family, and a British real estate businessman, Kenneth Frampton. With the financial support of Frampton, The Jesus Family wrote,

recorded and performed the musical as a response to popular musicals about Jesus, such as *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Godspell* (Ward, 1996:96). The publicity of the musical stated:

> There is no doubt of the fact that *Godspell* and *Jesus Christ Superstar* have left their impact upon many Christians. The aspect of the clown and the omission of the resurrection in *Godspell* and the general use of the Bible out of context and mis-quotes that are found in *Superstar*. For these reasons many Christians have expressed a concern to see presented a corrective view of who Jesus is (Jasper, 1984:116).

Aside from investing efforts to produce a musical, The Jesus Family also contributed greatly to another important development of the British Jesus People Movement. They initiated an influential Christian music and arts festival, Greenbelt, with Nick Stone, Steve and Ruth Shaw and Martin Evans who were all members of a Christian folk group, Capel House. The founders of Greenbelt saw the need to use arts and music to construct 'spontaneous fellowship and worship' (Jasper, 1984:137). The first Greenbelt Festival took place in 1974 at Prospect Farm, Suffolk and 2000 people attended. In the first two years, the festival included seminars, Bible studies, music workshops, films and performances by Christian artists and musicians (Jasper, 1984:137). The festival is described as 'the most continuous happening' by Jasper (1984:136) and is still one of the important Christian festivals in the UK at the time of writing. It has provided a significant forum for Christians to discuss creative and new ways of doing worship. For instance, Alternative Worship was given a spotlight in the mid-1980s at Greenbelt and was since made well known among Christian groups in the UK.

Ward (1996) offered important insights into the Jesus People Movement in Britain, suggesting that the movement in the UK was a matter of style. It was simply Christian groups or churches which appropriate the features of the movement in the US with an attempt to attract more young people to Christian faith in the 1970s (Ward, 1996: 86). The difference between the US Jesus People Movement and the UK Jesus People Movement lies in their different social circumstances. The young Americans felt the need to search for meaning and identity amidst the upheavals of the counter-culture in the 1960s whereas in the UK there was little evidence of a similar mass movement (Ward, 1996: 86). In fact, according to Ward, the Jesus People groups in the UK were more able to adopt contemporary music styles of the time into Christian worship and they were more accepted in the established Church (Ward, 1996: 86). A quote from a Christian youth music magazine at the time reveals the difference concisely:

> Will the Jesus revolution strike in Britain? I believe it already has though in a less outward and spectacular way. Gospel Rock Bands and Jesus folk singers have been saying their bit here for several years now. But the British Christianity is more tolerant than its USA counterpart. There has been no need to take refuge in communes (*Buzz* June 1971, 3; cited in Ward 2005:43).

The Jesus Movement in the UK was more implicated in the appropriation of youth culture rather than in the formation of a network of Jesus communes as it was in the US. The influence of the US Jesus People Movement was the most obvious in the formation of Christian music/arts festivals and in contemporary rock/pop styles

of charismatic Christian worship, giving rise to what Ward refers to as 'evangelical subculture' (Ward, 1996: 103) in the UK. The relationship between the Jesus People Movement and the so-called 'evangelical subculture' can be best illustrated by Ward:

> The impact of the Jesus revolution on youthwork in England has been tremendous. The emergence of specifically targeted Christian records, festivals and magazines has meant that Christian young people have been given the chance to buy into this new hip culture. As these young people have grown up events and products have moved with them. The net result has been that changes brought about by and for young people have now passed into the mainstream life of the majority of evangelical churches in this country (Ward, 1996:103).

Given the great influence of the Jesus People Movement on the role that music plays amongst contemporary Christian groups, I shall now turn to discuss the music of the Jesus People.

In the Jesus People Movement, young Christian converts began using the rock music of the time for the purpose of evangelism among young people in various festivals, concerts, and performances sponsored by Christian organisations. For instance, Music Gospel Outreach invited Christian folk groups and rock bands to offer entertainment 'with a message' in coffee bars in the UK, using these events as a way to attract young people from outside the Church (Ward, 1996: 90). This attempt showed that evangelicals in the UK recognised the popularity of rock and folk music amongst young people. Hence, it can be seen that evangelicals

started to adopt a functional approach to popular music in relation to evangelism among young people.

In the US, the Jesus People Movement was characterised by a conspicuous split between the institutional Christian Church and Jesus People. Jesus People expressed their religious beliefs both through rock music instead of through 18th and 19th century hymns and by means of psychedelic art forms and underground gospel newspapers instead of Christian publishing houses (Balswick, 1974: 29). Such novel approaches to the expression of Christian faith showed that Jesus People were discontent with the institutionalisation of the established Church (Di Sabatino, 1999: 6). Enroth et al (1972) argued that a key characteristic of the movement was its anti-establishment sentiment, commenting that: 'The movement is a searing indictment of the cosy, complacent sterility of merely institutional religion' (Enroth et al, 1972: 84). Larry Norman, a singer-songwriter and key figure in the movement between the late 1960s and early 1970s, wrote a song entitled "Right Here in America" and this song aroused the church's objection owing to its harshly anti-church lyrics:

> I'm addressing this song to the church,
> 'cause I've been to your churches and sat in your pews,
> And heard sermons on just how much money you'll need for the year
> And I've heard you make reference to Mexicans, Chinamen, Niggers and Jews;
> And I gather you wish we would all disappear;
> And you call yourselves Christians when really you're not,
> You're living your life as you please. (Enroth et al, 1972: 80)

The politicalisation of young people through music and popular culture in the counter-cultural movement clearly inspired Jesus People like Larry Norman to think about how young people/ young adults might be politicised around Christianity. While Bob Dylan's protest songs can exemplify hippies' disillusionment with the US government's involvement in the Vietnam War in the 1960s and 1970s, Larry Norman's anti-establishment sentiments can be demonstrated by the lyrics that critique the institutional Church in the US as noted above. Jesus People's disdain for the institutional Church is also highlighted by Romanowski. Romanowski (1990:146,147) suggests that one of the tenets of the faith upheld by Jesus People is that they reject 'modern theology and the role of mainline Protestantism as "chaplain of the status quo"' and 'the social institution to which their parents belonged'. It then appears that the Jesus People borrow the 'anti-establishment' language from the counter-cultural movement, hoping that their movement would have similar resonance among young people whom they want to evangelise. The 'borrowed culture' of the Jesus People Movement surely has comparison to the research groups in this thesis who want to evangelise young people with rhetoric in EDMC, e.g. 'community', 'togetherness' and 'spirituality'.

The cross-over between the 'secular' psychedelic rock music and the Jesus Music[10] was even more obvious. The rock music of the late 1960s was in some way 'spiritualised' by a number of musicians who experimented with drugs and produced works which carried the drug experience as transcendence, for example,

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[10] 'Jesus Music' refers to music produced by Christian rock and folk musicians who sang religious lyrics and did not have contracts with the mainstream recording industry.

'White Rabbit'[11] by The Jefferson Airplane. Instead of singing about drugs or pills, the Jesus Music artists sang about the source of their 'spiritual transcendence', Jesus Christ. This has parallels to the discourse used by the research groups in this thesis that claim to find 'secular' EDM 'spiritual' in the context of Christian worship. The image of Jesus Music artists also largely resembled the image and appearance of prominent psychedelic rock musicians of the time. Larry Norman, Agape and the Shiloh Jug Band grew long hair like many of the artists popular within the counter-cultural rock movement.

The discussion of the parallel between the Jesus People Movement and the counter-culture movement of the 1960s can in some way reveal the issues of authenticity within my case studies. Since the Jesus People had existing links with the counter-culture, their hippie-style music and lifestyles allowed them to communicate with and convert the young hippies at the time 'within the context of the innovation of the youth counterculture' (Balswick, 1974: 27). Balswick's interpretation of the effectiveness of Jesus People to connect with the young hippies in the counter-cultural movement is inspired by Mannheim's (1952) theorisation on the phenomenon of 'fresh contact':

> Culture is developed by individuals who come into contact anew with the accumulated heritage. In the nature of our physical make-up, a fresh contact (meeting something anew) always means a changed relationship of distance from the object and a novel approach in assimilating, using, and

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[11] The opening line of this song sung by the San Francisco psychedelic rock group is 'One pill makes you larger and one pill makes you small'.

> developing the preferred material. (Mannheim, 1952: 294, in Balswick, 1974: 27).

In light of this argument, the 'new' way of contact with Christianity offered by the Jesus People within the counter-cultural contexts seemed in some way to account for the growth of the Jesus People Movement particularly in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. To a certain extent, the Jesus People were effectively aping 'youth speak' in order to evangelise. Their previous involvement with the counter-cultural movement might be advantageous for their access to the demographic group that they wanted to evangelise because they had the 'cultural competence' that was required to establish and consolidate social relationships with the hippies in the counter-culture. Nonetheless, the issues of authenticity arise among some Christian respondents within this thesis who have no previous or existing links with EDMC. The small number of converts evidenced in both Chapter Three and Four may be related to the issues of authenticity amongst some Christians in the research groups.

Furthermore, Jesus People were also known for their strong emphasis on experience. A common ground that both the hippies and Jesus People stood on was their emphasis on experience. Whilst the former acquired their transcendent experience through their recreational use of drugs, the latter embraced 'spiritual gifts' through which they could be 'turned on to Jesus'. The transition from hippies to Jesus People brought with it an emphasis on experience-oriented religious

practices such as healing, speaking in tongues[12] and other charismatic gifts. Their experience-oriented religious practices caused suspicion amongst the established Church (e.g. Balswick, 1974; Enroth et al, 1972; Di Sabatino, 1999). Perhaps when the Jesus People talked about being 'turned on to Jesus', they were making reference to an emotional experience that was similar to the emotional experience induced by drugs (Enroth et al, 1972: 164). Despite the apparent social concern of the Jesus Movement, many people of the movement regarded Jesus as what Guiness called 'the ultimate trip, beyond marijuana and LSD, safe, satisfying and spiritual' (Guiness, 1973:327). This stress on experience amongst Jesus People turned the Christian message almost wholly inward as Romanowski puts:

> Instead of transforming the structures of American society, the Movement emphasized personal piety and evangelism as the solution to social and political problems. Everything would be all right when people "put Jesus on the throne of their heart."(Romanowski, 1990:147).

One of the major characteristics of the Jesus People Movement was spiritual experientialism, as noted earlier in this chapter. The shifting of counter-cultural experientialism to prototypes of Christian faith has been discussed in various writings (e.g. Hubery, 1973; Richardson and Reddy, 1980; Richardson and Davis, 1983). Such a hippie-inspired Christian experiential framework emphasised fleeting moments of spiritual ecstasy, visions, prayer and speaking to God in unknown tongues which all overrode the emphasis on dogma (Di Sabatino, 1999:6). Such an emotional and anti-intellectual stance taken by the Jesus People

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[12] Speaking in tongues is regarded as a form of 'spiritual gift' which Christians possess when they are believed to be 'filled by the Holy Spirit', speaking in a language that is unintelligible and

not only challenged the theological restraints of traditional Christianity (Di Sabatino, 1999: 6), but it also marked the 'subjective turn' in alternative spiritual development in which subjective experiences rather than objective experiences are valued (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005:2). Based on the analysis of the Jesus People Movement, it can be seen that there is a relationship between 'experiential Christianity' and the transcendence of music in a 'secular' context. Such connection is also manifested in the case studies within this thesis. Recreational drug culture and its emphasis on experimentation and transcendent experiences are shown to be connected to the presentation of spirituality within discourses about the use of popular music in Christian contexts, particularly in Chapter Four. The use of 'uplifting' dance music as well as 'meditative', 'reflective', 'ambient' electronica music by Christian respondents in their experiential creative worship time are also evident in Chapter Four and Chapter Five, respectively. Henceforth, it can be seen that discourse is of prime importance to both the Jesus People and the research groups in this thesis who want to incorporate popular music into their expression of Christian faith.

Another characteristic feature of the mode of operation in the Jesus People Movement was their 'youth-oriented' evangelistic approach. Ward highlights that the movement produced merchandise featuring Christianity in a way similar to the promotion of popular music. The merchandise produced included psychedelic posters, badges and bumper stickers (Ward, 1996:83). Moreover, in order to attempt to appeal to young adults, publications sponsored by Christian

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believing that it is inspired by God through the Holy Spirit.

organisations such as *Letters to Street Christians* featured biblical verses translated into 'street language' (see Ward, 1996:84). Such language was an attempt to appeal to young people who might have been estranged from the established Church. All these tactics have comparison with some of the contemporary Christian groups which use youth-oriented electronic dance music, promotional tactics and flyers as well as club events to attract young people, as will be shown later in this thesis.

For Enroth et al (1972: 237-238), music, like the clothing, the vigils and the bumper stickers, just served as a means for Christians to show their acknowledgement and recognition of the counter-cultural movement. The Jesus Music artists recorded music and played in live evangelistic events but not many of them commercially released their work. They had no commercial infrastructure to support their musical pursuits; evangelism was their predominant goal and recording was only given a secondary priority when compared to the 'imminent' need to evangelise through singing songs with religious lyrics (Di Sabatino 1999:157). The Jesus People Movement can be understood to have had a far-reaching effect on the development of the use of popular music in a Christian context. Evangelical groups can be seen to pay an increased attention to the youth culture as a potential 'mission field' since the emergence of the movement. Such endeavours can be evidenced by various music events or festivals organised by numerous evangelical groups. For instance, The Festival of Light organised by Peter Hill in 1971 at Trafalgar Square was one of the highlights of the Jesus People

Movement in the UK. The influence of style and music from the US Jesus People Movement was exhibited in the event, as a Christian youth magazine put:

> An imported version of the culture of the American Jesus People was much in evidence throughout the day giving the enthusiastic crowd plenty of opportunity for action in "Jesus chanting", singing and "one way" finger pointing (*Buzz*, November 1971,9; cited in Ward, 2005:45).

A follow-up event of the festival called 'Jesus Festival' in London was organised by the Jesus People in the UK in 1972. At Hyde Park, various Christian pop musicians such as Larry Norman, Gordon Giltrap, Graham Hendrick and Cliff Richard all performed in the event.

Another major development of the use of popular music in the Jesus People Movement was Music Gospel Outreach (MGO) which was founded by Pete Meadows, David Payne, Geoff Shearn and Johnny Webb in the UK in the early 1970s. Meadow claimed, 'MGO was there to train and equip those using music to share their faith' (Ward, 1996:90). MGO did so by organising training conferences and produced publications, suggesting that Christians were to 'use' music not only as artistic expression but also as a 'tool' for evangelism (Ward, 1996: 90). It also sponsored and organised Jesus Music concerts; set up an MGO-sponsored record label, 'Key' and published songbooks such as *Songs For Jesus*. One of the most youth-oriented programmes organised by MGO was the 'Start the Year with Jesus' series of concerts at the Royal Albert Hall in 1973 when the events drew approximately 10,500 young people (Jasper, 1984: 88). The radical move that

MGO took regarding the concerts was that it attempted to sell tickets in sets of four – two for Christians and two for non-Christians (Jasper, 1984: 88). Another radical tactic taken by MGO was its Operation Fred preparation programme which was 'designed to get young Christians involved in personal evangelism with concerts providing the basis of action' (Jasper, 1984: 88). One of the founders of MGO, David Payne, also openly claimed that the contacting of local non-Christians, 'befriending' them and following them up could only be effectively conducted by local Christians 'on the spot', challenging the role of evangelism which used to be played by the local church (Jasper, 1984: 88). As will be shown later in the thesis, such organised evangelistic tactics adopted by MGO have parallels to the modes of operation used by the contemporary Christian groups in the case studies of this thesis. Music, in the case of MGO, acted as a 'tool' for evangelicals to connect with young non-Christians.

In the US, Jesus People saw popular music as a powerful and effective 'tool' to connect with young people. Di Sabatino (1999) suggests that the first Christian rock album in the US is The Crusaders' LP *Make a Joyful Noise With Drums and Guitars* (1966). On the back cover of the LP, it is written that the band 'chose the Big Beat as the means of expressing their religious faith... Now for the first time, God is praised in song through the most contemporary musical expression: The Beat' (Di Sabatino, 1999:156). Romanowski underscores the evangelistic rhetoric in the use of popular music within Christian contexts in the following statement:

Initially Jesus rock was frowned upon by members of established churches, evangelicals and mainline Protestants alike. However, gradually it was seen by some church leaders and Christians working in the entertainment fields as a potential vehicle for evangelism among the young (Romanowski, 1990:148).

In light of Romanowski's argument as stated above, evangelicals already saw the ability of popular music to connect with young people during the Jesus People Movement in the 1960s. This particular role of popular music needs to be highlighted as it has pertinence to the research on the evangelical groups working in EDMC in this thesis.

With regard to the legacy of the Jesus People Movement, Melton highlights the influence of the movement on the established Church as he claims that its major momentum will be 'absorbed by the older bodies from which the movement derives its basic ideas' (Melton, 1992:16). As Di Sabatino notes, the more relaxed approach to formal worship found in Catholic, Anglican and Methodist churches is an example of how the Jesus People Movement has influenced traditional mainstream Christianity (Di Sabatino, 1999:x). Moreover, the emphasis on contemporary worship music found in most charismatic churches in the UK also gained its original impulse from the movement (Ward, 2005:47; Di Sabatino, 1999:19). One of the most important impacts of music developments in the Jesus People Movement would be the emergence of Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) to which I shall now turn.

Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) — from the late 1960s to the early 2000s

This section will look at the emergence of the CCM industry. The discussion on CCM is important to this thesis because it helps to contextualise the prevalent use of popular music amongst the Christian groups in the case studies as noted in the beginning of this chapter. The CCM market is significant within the popular music industry, with an established network of labels, promoters, artists and media channels. The activities of my research groups take place against this commercial backdrop where the idea of selling popular music to Christians is no longer novel and the idea of promoting Christian views through popular music is well understood. Like rock or pop music which was promoted largely by Christian record labels in the 1970s, EDM is now seen as 'appealing' to young people by practitioners in the CCM industry. Therefore, EDM produced by Christian DJs has also become a comparatively new type of Christian music to be promoted in the CCM market. Given the importance of CCM in contextualising this research on EDM and Christianity, I shall now look at the historical development of the CCM industry closely.

i) The emergence of the CCM industry

As evangelicals saw the potential that popular music had to attract young people to Christian faith in the Jesus People Movement, a more developed network of record labels that produced and promoted for Christian musicians particularly was established in the 1970s. For instance, Billy Ray Hearn founded Sparrow

Records[13] in the US in 1976 and talked about it in terms of connecting with young people. As a former minister of music, Hearn claims: 'I saw in contemporary music the best vessel to reach young people with the gospel... They listen to the music that is current. That's their language' (Rabey, 1984:42).

The diversified frame of record labels in the CCM industry can be traced back to a few key Christian record companies such as Word and Sparrow. Word and Sparrow should deserve particular attention because they are underscored in a number of recent academic accounts on CCM (e.g. Romanowski, 1990; Joseph, 1999; Wider, 2000). Word was founded by Jarrell McCracken in 1950. In 1975, only 5 percent of the recorded merchandise sold by Word was contemporary; however, three years later the amount had risen rapidly to 60 percent (Baker, 1979:173, in Joseph 1999:12). In 1972, Billy Ray Hearn started a label called Myrrh under Word Records. Myrrh recorded artists who performed Jesus Music and it became a major part of Word's record sales. Contemporary Christian music grew from 10 to 12 percent of Word's total sales in 1974, and to 50 percent in 1981. Such rapid growth of contemporary Christian music sales might be largely due to the US$ 75,000 promotion campaign launched by Myrrh in 1977. The slogan of the campaign was rhetorical — 'The music is today, the message if forever' (Romanowski, 1990: 153). The average budgets for record production in Myrrh also grew from US$ 8000 to US$ 35,000 throughout 1970s; the sales for a successful record also increased from twenty to fifty thousand copies. Hearn

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[13] Before founding Sparrow Records in 1976, Hearn started Myrrh Records in 1972 to promote and record for artists performing Jesus Music (Romanowski, 1990:153). See below.

founded another leading CCM record label, Sparrow, in 1976 in California after he left Word. Some of the top CCM artists under this record label in the early days included BeBe and CeCe Winans, Steve Camp, Steve Taylor, Phil Keaggy and Margaret Becker. In the late 1980s, Sparrow was taken over by EMI. Sparrow's Christian artists currently include Christian worship bands such as The David Crowder Band and Switchfoot as well as DJ Andy Hunter who is affiliated with one of the research groups in this thesis.

ii) The definition of CCM

For Romanowski (1992:79), 'Jesus Rock' as created by the 'evangelical hippies' in the Jesus People Movement was a precursor to 'contemporary Christian music' — a term which has been used by record labels and retailers. Since a monthly Christian music magazine *Contemporary Christian Music* was established in 1978, Contemporary Christian music (CCM) has become the acknowledged label to refer to music released by Christian record companies. Romanowski describes CCM as 'evangelical popular music that co-opted existing popular music styles with religious lyrics added for ecclesiastical purposes, specifically, worship and evangelism' (Romanowski, 1992:79). The importance of lyrics for defining CCM can be demonstrated as follows:

> As far as I am aware, it [CCM] is the only musical category recognised in the record industry that is defined entirely by lyrical content. All other categories – blues, soul, dance, heavy metal, rap and so on – are defined by musical styles… This criterion has naturally focused attention on the words of the songs at the expense of the quality of musical composition, musicianship and studio production (Turner, 2001:47).

According to these quotes, lyrics seem to be a central defining factor for the category of CCM (Romanowski, 1990, 1992). To consider CCM to be a genre of music is thus problematic because according to Deena Weinstein, 'a music genre must, at minimum, have a set of fundamental sounds by which it is distinguished from other genres' (Howard & Streck, 1999:8). Given the definition of Weinstein, CCM cannot be regarded as a genre because it has no 'sonic code' that is distinguishable from other contemporary forms of popular music, for example, rock, heavy metal, punk, folk, rap and even electronica apart from its lyrics (Howard & Streck, 1999:8). Therefore, I would argue CCM is music released by Christian record labels *and* that contains lyrics which explicitly or implicitly address Christian worldviews. CCM thus encompasses Christian grunge, Christian rap, Christian heavy metal and Christian EDM.

Although lyrics play a very crucial role for defining CCM, Howard and Streck (1999) identify alternative approaches towards the definition of this particular type of Christian music. Firstly, they discuss the artist-based conception of CCM and contend that such an approach requires a connection between the beliefs of the artist and his or her creative output (Howard and Streck, 1999: 9). This approach is again problematic because defining Christian music is equated to defining Christianity and identifying the signifiers of faith. They suggest that another approach to defining CCM is based on the organisational terms of the music. CCM is 'music that is promoted, distributed, broadcast and sold primarily by and to Christians' (Howard and Streck, 1999: 9). However, as problematic as

the two aforementioned approaches are, this third approach can be challenged as one that takes the ties between Christian record labels and mainstream record companies into consideration. For instance, Word and A&M Records as well as Sparrow and EMI merged respectively in the early 1980s for their cross-over[14] ventures. The cross-over success of CCM was particularly pronounced in the 1980s with the rise of a Word artist, Amy Grant, who successfully crossed over to the mainstream market, being dubbed the 'Madonna of Christian Rock' (Romanowski, 1990:163).

iii) The basic commercial infrastructure of the CCM industry

The Recording Industry Association of America's (RIAA) 2005 Consumer Profile can in some way reflect the recognition of the importance of the Christian music market in terms of sales[15]. The consumer profile reveals that Religious music, which includes Christian, Gospel, Inspirational, Religious and Spiritual, is by dollars of sales the sixth-most-popular genre (5.3 %) behind Rock (31.5 %), Rap/Hip Hop (13.3%), Country (12.5%), R&B/Urban (10.2%) and Pop (8.1). This genre has remained in the same position since 2000, securing a market share of 4.8 %(2000), 6.7 %(2001), 6.7% (2002), 5.8% (2003), 6.0% (2004) for six years consecutively, outselling Classical and Jazz. Also, the development of contemporary Christian music can be to some degree reflected by the establishment of the Christian/Gospel Chart in *Billboard* in 1980 (Wider,

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[14] A tendency of Christian musicians to pursue a career in the mainstream industry.
[15] Available on http://www.riaa.com/news/marketingdata/purchasing.asp, accessed on 27/6/06.

2000:30). Under the Christian/Gospel *Billboard* Chart[16], there are various types of Christian/Gospel music, namely 'Hot Christian Songs', 'Hot Christian Adult Contemporary', 'Top Gospel Albums', 'Hot Gospel Songs', 'Top Christian Albums' and 'Top Christian and Gospel Albums'. Wider (2001: 32) suggests that a comparison between the US and European gospel scenes reveals a much less developed market in Europe. He cites Germany as an example, claiming that gospel is part of the 'other' category that represents only 9% of the German record sales (Wider, 2001: 32).

The development of dedicated media channels also forms the basic commercial structure of the Christian music market. The records of American and British CCM artists are normally sold in Christian bookstores, such as, Wesley Owen and SPCK in the UK. Also, CCM is promoted through a variety of magazines, radio stations and festivals which are aimed at Christians. As noted earlier in this chapter, a monthly Christian music magazine, *Contemporary Christian Music,* was established in 1978. It is still one of the leading Christian music magazines in the US, featuring articles or interviews with some leading CCM artists in print and online (http://www.ccmmagazine.com). In the UK, a popular Christian music magazine entitled *Cross Rhythms* was founded by a music journalist, Tony Cumming, in 1990. In 1998, a significant development occurred for *Cross Rhythms* when it launched a satellite radio channel broadcasting to the UK and Europe in partnership with Christian broadcasting company United

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[16] Available on http://www.billboard.com/bbcom/charts/christian_gospel_index.jsp, accessed on 27/6/06.

Christian Broadcasters (UCB). This partnership continued until 2002 when *Cross Rhythms* was granted a license for a new form of radio known as Community Radio. The radio station now broadcasts to Stoke-on-Trent on local radio and it also broadcasts worldwide via the Internet (http://www.crossrhythms.co.uk). Like *Cross Rhythms*, the majority of the radio stations that promote CCM are available online. For instance, US-based local radio stations such as WORQ 90.1 FM and Choice FM (97.7 FM, Northern Kentucky) both broadcast CCM online. There are also Christian festivals where CCM artists play in front of large audiences, including major ones like Cornerstone Music Festival which was established in 1984 in Illinois, in the US, and the Greenbelt Festival which was established in 1974 in Suffolk and is currently run every year in August in Cheltenham, in Britain. The key programmes of these festivals include music performances given by CCM acts as well as seminars on current issues related to Christianity.

iv) The CCM Debate

Some who uphold a dualistic worldview that divides Christianity and 'the world' are completely against the use of popular music within Christian contexts. Such criticism had been made about the Jesus People Movement in the late 1960s by traditional church-goers who made no distinction between the long-haired Christian rock musician Larry Norman and 'secular' rock musicians like Jimi Hendrix (Di Sabatino, 1999: 156). In the early 1980s, evangelicals including Larson (1983) and Blanchard, Anderson & Cleave (1983) argued that there were

'satanic' associations to sexual promiscuity and drug abuse in rock music which were inappropriate in a Christian setting.

In the discussion of the moral boundaries in Christian discourse on rock music, Hager (2000) illustrates, with a number of quotes from Jeff Godwin, the most widely read American anti-rock writer in Scandinavia who argues vigorously against the use of popular music in Christian context. To highlight Godwin's anti-rock arguments, Hager states that there is a sharp line between the church and the world, and trying to be both a rock star and Christian is impossible. (Hager, 2000:161) According to Hager's analysis on the Christian discourse of popular music, the most illustrative quote from Godwin to convey the opposition to using rock music in church is as follows: "'Christian' rock is the music of: [the] ANTICHRIST!" (Hager, 2000:168; originally from Godwin, 1990:6; boldface in original).

Not only does this dualistic Christian worldview influence the rationales of those who are strongly opposed to the use of popular music within Christian contexts, but it also shapes the framework of those who dispute the benefits of the use of popular music in church. In their prominent analysis of the splintered art world of CCM, Howard & Streck (1996:42-49) identify three orientations that CCM takes: Separational CCM, Intergrational CCM and Transformational CCM. My discussion on CCM is framed according to these three orientations because they help to shape the contentious debate on the role that music plays in different

sectors of the Christian circle. Hence, they help to clarify the rationales constructed and maintained by Christians who use popular music in a Christian context.

a)Separational, Integrational and Transformational CCM

It is worth noting that these three orientations of CCM are framed according to Niebuhr's (1951) arguments regarding the relationship between Christ and culture. The central question that Niebuhr asks is, 'How can one be in the world, but not of it?' His discussion is based on the assumption that Christians must reconcile their faith with the beliefs of a given culture. His contentions then become useful for CCM critics, artists and audiences who try to construct rationales to bridge the gap between the evangelical circle and the rock music of popular culture; to justify the existence of CCM and to define what is 'good art'. Niebuhr (1951) argues that there are five ways of resolving the dilemma of situating Christ in the realm of culture: Christ against Culture, Christ of Culture, Christ as the Reconciler of Culture, Christ Above Culture, and Christ and Culture in Paradox. The first three ways are chosen by Howard & Streck (1996) for the discussion of three main orientations of CCM. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that Niebuhr (1951) admits that his resolutions to the Christian ideology of 'living in the world and yet not being of it' are in a sense manufactured and artificial (Niebuhr, 1951:43). Despite this, I still regard his rationale as relevant for identifying the themes that characterise Christians' struggle to reconcile Christ and Culture in the discourse about the art world of CCM: 'separation versus

integration' and 'integration versus transformation' (Howard and Streck, 1996: 42).

It is the first orientation, Separational CCM, that is particularly indebted to the dualistic worldview which divides 'the world' and a Christian God. Separational CCM artists are those who see Christ against Culture, i.e. 'Christ's admonition is interpreted as a call to abandon the world, to come out from the non-believers and be separate' (Howard & Streck, 1996: 41). In short, the world is characterised by a clear dichotomy between the 'sacred' and the 'secular'. From this dichotomised Christian perspective, music is characterised as either 'sacred', i.e. evangelistic, edifying or worshipful, or as 'secular', i.e. music that does not carry obvious Christian connotations. This 'either-or' confrontation is summarised by Cusic who suggests there are two distinct types of music: music that is concerned lyrically with Jesus Christ and all else, i.e. 'secular' music (Cusic, 1990:219).

Cusic's contention also reflects the great emphasis on lyrics within the discourse of CCM. For Separational CCM advocates in Christian record labels, the boundary between the 'sacred' and the 'secular' is drawn according to the lyrical content. Given the 'necessary' criterion to have 'spiritual' lyrics that distinguish the music from 'secular' popular music, Separational CCM often displays much lyrical homogeneity despite the musical diversity, be it Christian heavy metal, Christian grunge, Christian industrial, Christian rave and Christian rap (Howard &

Streck, 1996:43). Most of the lyrics in Separational CCM display conspicuous and explicit theological statements that are concerned with the nature of a Christian God's love and express the need for 'salvation' in Jesus, who is seen to offer 'answers to life' (Howard & Streck, 1996: 44). For instance, CCM solo artist Kenny Marks (1987) urges: 'Fall in love with Jesus tonight' while CCM group DeGarmo & Key (1993) sing: 'You can trust in God'. The lyrical content indicates that Separational CCM artists place emphasis on 'salvation' and view their songs as a vehicle for evangelism. Hence, it can be seen that a functional approach to music, i.e. a way to regard music as a 'tool' that serves certain functions, is again adopted by Separational CCM artists. This functional approach to music adopted by Christian musicians renders music as 'neutral' and the evangelistic value of music is not affected by any cultural associations related to certain popular genres like rock.

Some CCM artists regard popular music not only as a 'tool' for evangelism but also as a form of ministry, i.e. a way to consolidate the faith of the converted ones. For example, the 1998 press kit of a US band called Reality Check emphasises the importance of building relationships with Christian believers through playing live shows:

> We don't want to come in and do an intense show, get everyone pumped up and then leave them hanging. We want to see kids saved, but then we want to make sure they have Bibles and other materials, and that they get plugged in somewhere where they can grow. We like the Billy Graham model of ministry where people get saved, get counseled, have follow-up, and get planted in local churches (Peacock, 1999:149).

'The advantage of being with a label is that they are going to get you to more people [on tour] so your *ministry* is able to grow', said a member of Reality Check (Peacock, 1999: 150, emphasis mine). Through playing music that young Christians like and meeting them on a personal level, the CCM 'ministers' think that they can 'build up' believers. It can then be seen that evangelicals who see CCM as a means of 'ministry' also adopt the functional approach to music.

The second orientation of this genre of music as defined by Howard & Streck (1996) is Integrational CCM. The line between the world and a Christian God starts to get blurred in this particular orientation. In Niebuhr's (1951) typology, Integrational CCM most closely reflects the 'Christ of Culture' option in which Christ is considered to be the culmination of the best of culture. (Howard & Streck, 1996:45) In this view, Christ is also seen as the highest goal of culture and thus facilitates the guiding of culture to its 'proper' goal. Hence, in order to influence culture in what they regard as a proper way, Integrational CCM artists such as pop singer Amy Grant, hip-hop group dc Talk as well as indie band Jars of Clay, believe the best way is to cross-over to the mainstream by singing 'positive pop'. The singer of the band Six Pence None The Richer, Leigh Nash said,

> Non-Christians tend to find our music hopeful, and people who don't know we are Christians respond to the lyrics and ask, 'So what's going on?' and we can talk about it... Really people in the mainstream music community, they've been the kindest people. They know our music and where we are

> coming from. There is not this taboo for being Christians. The taboo is with the Christian audience (Rumberg, 1999:10).

A member of dc Talk, McKeelan also marks a clear distinction from Separational CCM artists by claiming that they are *not* ministers like most Separational CCM artists are (Joseph, 1999:226). The leader of Jars of Clay, Dan Haseltine showed his disdain for the 'separation' within the music industry with the following comment:

> We've tried really hard to break that separation of Christian band and mainstream band, because as far as we're concerned, there really shouldn't be that separation. We don't want our music to be just for the Christian marketplace (Akins, 1996:24).

However, the more commercially successful the crossover song, the less distinguishable it is from mainstream pop music. For example, Romanowski argues that the blending of evangelism and marketing eventually led to the gospel industry's own co-optation by the mainstream recording business (Romanowski, 1992: 84-85). He also argues that by adopting popular music genres such as pop, rock, rap and heavy metal, CCM may thrust the young evangelicals into consumer-oriented culture (Romanowski, 1992: 84-85).

Despite this, Integrational CCM artists defend the integration into popular music through the development of new rationales. Howard and Streck (1996) claim that most Integrational CCM artists believe they can provide the mainstream audience with 'a wholesome alternative to the hedonism inherent in most rock'

(Howard and Streck, 1996: 46). Integrational CCM artists often attempt to offer 'family-friendly' music. As Romanowski (2001:82) notes, this term 'family-friendly' connotes a moral meaning, as generally the product has 'no explicit sex, foul language, or excessive violence'. For instance, Amy Grant comments, 'Some feel that if music doesn't have some kind of evangelical content, it doesn't have any value. I feel differently. I want to be able to turn on the radio and hear fun songs where I'm not being pressured materially, sexually or violence-wise.' (Romanowski, 2001: 79) Grant's view can be in some way supported by the editor of *Contemporary Christian Music* John W. Styll who writes a positive review of Amy Grant's album *Heart in Motion*:

> She [Amy Grant] has always resisted the temptation to exactly fulfill the expectations of a Christian music market which tends to prefer the safe, the jargonistic, and the predictable…these songs seem to represent life as Grant sees it at the point in time. <http://www.ccmmagazine.com/reviews/30.aspx>, accessed on 12 August 2006.

Apparently Grant's comment suggests that there is a need for Christian musicians to develop an identity in the music industry through differentiating themselves from those mainstream pop/rock artists who glamorise violence and sexual promiscuity through their music. In order to develop an identity amidst the sea of musical products in the music market, Integrational CCM artists need a 'villain' whom they can differentiate from and thus develop an identity. This argument can be supported by a music producer's comment on the mainstream country music market:

> But listen to what's going on in country these days – family, faith, fidelity. Country fans with Christian values don't have a problem with most of what's out there... They just don't see a villain bad enough to warrant an alternative (Romanowski, 2001:81).

Such views on country music may help to explain why there is no 'Christian country' in the CCM market -- because country music itself is understood to be generally 'family-friendly'.

The final orientation of CCM is, according to Howard & Streck (1996), Transformational CCM, which corresponds to Niebuhr's (1951) category of 'Christ as Reconciler of Culture'. This viewpoint is located between the two ends of the same continuum: Christ Against Culture and Christ As Culture. In this perspective, Christ is seen as the agent of the restoration of a 'secular' culture. 'While this viewpoint maintains a radical distinction between God's work in Christ and humanity's work in culture, it does not propose people isolate themselves from society as does the 'Christ Against Culture' viewpoint' (Howard & Streck, 1996:42). Thus, unlike Cusic's (1990) dichotomised functional approach towards music which suggests that Christian art can provide the 'Great Answer' through Christ, Transformational CCM artists are more concerned with asking questions about the meaning of life.

Turner (2001), who is a Christian writer, sees music as a form of art instead of ministry. He believes that Christians who write music do not need to include an

overtly evangelistic message but can simply write music about things and people from a Christian perspective. He also comments, 'a lot of CCM songwriting begins with a conclusion and the lyrics are simply used to expound it' (Turner, 2001:54). However, he thinks art should involve self-discovery and so it should be surprising for the artists instead of being predictable. Turner's understanding of the role of music is indebted to his holistic view of faith as he says, 'a believer should view secular activities as part of life' (Turner, 2001: 56). This holistic view of Christian faith not only prevents music from diminishing into a 'tool' for evangelism but it also upholds the artistic value of music. Therefore, 'an honest commentary on life from the experience of one struggling to be faithful in a broken and hurting world' (Howard & Streck, 1996:48) is favoured by the Transformational CCM artists who regard music as a form of art and refrain from offering theological cliché in their music. For instance, dc Talk can be categorised as both an Integrational and Transformational CCM group, owing to their commercial success in the mainstream and their view on music as an art form. The following comment made by McKeelan, a member of the group, made it clear that dc Talk adopted an artistic approach towards music and argued that they were vocal on their struggles in life as Christians:

> Our job is to focus on making great art... When I write a song, my faith comes out, and if that moves you in some way, that's great. But we're not trying to stuff it down people's throat by any means. We want to encourage people to think about where they stand, but not be preachy about it. We're not ordained ministers... by no means do we have it all together. We struggle with human inadequacy and believe that we can be more responsible as role models if we talk about what we're thinking and how vulnerable we can be (Joseph, 1999:226).

Transformational CCM artists also embrace the rationale that art is a reflection of the image and creativeness of a Christian God. For example, Christian song-writer T. Bone Burnett proclaimed that his songs were inspired by his reflection on Jesus, saying: 'If Jesus is the Light of the World, there are two kinds of songs you can write. You can write songs about the light, or you can write songs about what you see from the light. That's what I try to do' (Turner, 2001:51). For him, CCM has values in its own right because it is an inspiration from a Christian God. Therefore, CCM need not be a 'tool' for evangelism and has value and worth apart from the lyrics.

Peacock also underscores an observation regarding CCM artists' move away from the 'functional' lyric-driven Christian songs as he suggests:

> From the very beginning, contemporary Christian music has had to accomplish some task assigned to it. It could never just be music. It had to serve a religious *function* which produced a tangible result. The idea that music can also exist as something good, true and beautiful without having to do something is a concept largely foreign to CCM (Peacock, 1999:102, emphasis mine).

Peacock's comment above can concisely sum up the transition from lyric-driven

Separational CCM, which was predominant in the early developmental stages of CCM in the late 1960s, to Transformational CCM, which is music produced from an artistic perspective which renders music having worth and value regardless of the lyrics.

b) Music as evangelism, music as art or music as a means to riches?

I would like to first highlight the tension between evangelism and art because this is also observed among the Christian respondents in the case studies. In section (a), I have identified that people creating, promoting and listening to CCM place importance on lyrics and they see words in songs as a significant way to convey their Christian beliefs. Others, however, explain how they merely write music which fits alongside their Christian beliefs but does not necessarily attempt to evangelise. These are key debates within this thesis. The following chapters will discuss how evangelical groups use EDM in their missionary work. These groups see music as a means to evangelise but they do not see the missionary activities limited to supplying listeners with a message through lyrics. The research groups in the case studies regard music as a way to connect with a particular group of young people who use music within their leisure activities. For them, music provides a way to meet with non-Christians and perhaps then engage them with Christian ideas. However, the EDM that I discuss in the case studies would not be categorised as CCM, because the respondents do not originally produce the EDM that they play. Instead they merely remix existing popular EDM tracks produced by mainstream EDM acts without adding their own materials.

The tension between evangelism and art in CCM is illustrated precisely by Howard (1996), who argues that the 'CCM as evangelism' perspective and the 'CCM as art' perspective represent the opposite ends of a continuum, rather than

an either/or dichotomy' (Howard, 1996:159). What he means is that CCM artists tend to move from position to position along the continuum during the course of their music career owing to different dynamics in the CCM market and the music industry. Howard pinpoints that for the advocates of 'CCM as evangelism', the best CCM musicians are those who 'willingly and faithfully submit their art in a utilitarian fashion of this task [of evangelism]' (Howard, 1996: 152). The advocates of this stream of thought concerning CCM include presidents of CCM record labels, Christian music festival organisers and musicians themselves who consider music as a means to evangelism and ministry, that is, a way to convert non-Christians and consolidate Christians' faith. For instance, Michael Black, the Vice President of a CCM record label, Frontline Records, denounces the move away from evangelism in the CCM industry and hopes his company 'to be a source of ammunition for individuals eager to evangelise through music' (Santini, 1993:2). Another advocate is Bill Ranta, the coordinator of Icthus[17] (a Christian music festival held in Wilmore, KY, US) in 1993 and 1994, who said that the promoters aimed to include bands that were 'ministry-oriented' in the line-up:

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[17] Itchus Festival was founded in 1970 by seminary professor Dr. Bob Lyon and a group of students at Asbury Theological Seminary as a 'Christian reply and alternative to the 1969 Woodstock festival' (http://www.icthus.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=46&Itemid=74, accessed on 30/6/06). It is the first and longest continuously running Christian festival in the US. It is held annually in summer at a 111-acre farm in Wilmore, KY. It is an important festival for the promotion of CCM because it provides four stages for different Christian artists to play. Firstly, there is the Main Stage where leading and more well-known CCM artists play. For example, Delirious (Furious Records), The David Crowder Band (Sparrow Records) and Reliant K (Capitol Records) played in the summer of 2006. Secondly, the Edge Stage is where the newcomers to the CCM scene play. The third stage is Deep End Stage where more alternative CCM artists would play. The last stage is Worship Stage where more overtly Christian worship music is played. These stages provide CCM artists of different levels of reputation good opportunities to play. Therefore, the Icthus Festival is of key significance to CCM artists, especially to those who are new and less well-known (see http://www.icthus.org for more information, accessed on 30/6/06).

> We want bands, we want people, who are going to minister to kids. The whole idea behind Icthus is getting kids into a personal relationship with Christ or helping them to mature in their faith (Howard, 1996:152).

Such an 'evangelism-oriented' or 'ministry-oriented' attitude towards music is also manifested in another Christian music festival, Jesus Northwest in the US. As it is written on its brochures, the first ministry goal of Jesus Northwest is '[t]hat every person who attends this year, young and old, unsaved and churched, would have a life changing experience with Jesus Christ' (Stafford, 1993:17). Another group of advocates of this perspective are CCM artists who judge the level of success of their music according to the number of 'souls saved' and not on the artistic qualities of their songs or performances. Jars of Clay are one of the Christian acts which emphasise an evangelistic agenda when evaluating their music. A member of the band, Haseltine, said,

> It is good to see music getting spiritual and getting people to be aware of it, because that is going to open doors... It has for us, and I think it will continue to open doors for other Christians to get in there and to give them a chance to share their faith. People are coming to our shows in bars and clubs and getting a glimpse of Christianity, and *seeds are being planted.* That is *real important* (Atkin, 1996:24; emphasis mine).

From this statement, it can be seen that what the musician sees as 'real important' is not the artistic qualities of the music but the 'seeds being planted', i.e. the 'evangelistic' qualities of the music and the 'spiritual' personal traits of the band members that might convince audience members to convert to the Christian faith. Haseltine's remarks reveal a dominant approach towards music amongst CCM artists as a similar observation is also made by Turner as he discusses the split

between the 'sacred' and the 'secular' in CCM. He claims, 'The listener is not meant to be enriched but changed. Success is gauged not in terms of critical appreciation but in souls saved' (Turner, 2001:48).

However, an issue arises with this perspective when CCM artists are pressured to turn song lyrics into religious clichés. Ingrained in this perspective is 'the difficulty of making an artistic statement that communicates truth while avoiding triviality'[18] (Howard, 1993:154). The artistic level of this type of evangelistic Christian music is thus always called into question. The irony is that the 'Jesus-filled' religious lyrical cliché seems more appealing to the Christian audience members than to the non-Christians who are considered to be 'in need of conversion' in the evangelical worldview. Such conflict between evangelicals' expectation of music and the actuality of audience reception to the music can be summed up concisely by Turner (2001). As puts it, 'When Christians think of the arts as something that can be used to win the world to Christ, they create an unrealistic expectation of the arts and put unfair pressure on artists' (Turner, 2001:49).

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[18] According to Becker (1984:x), any given art world is made up of a network of people who co-operate to produce the art world's certain type of artistic product, including the artists, the producers, the distributors, the audience and the critics. For Becker, the critics are philosophers and aestheticians who create and maintain rationales based on which all these artistic activities make sense and have value. These rationales are of prime importance to the art world because changes in the art world are made in response to changes in them. They are the philosophical justifications for an art world's art which are used to determine if the art world's products are 'good' art or not and they also help to explain how an artistic product fills a particular need for people and society (Becker, 1984:4). These rationales also change according to the changes in the surrounding social setting in which the art world exists (Howard & Streck, 1996: 37). CCM is a very good example to demonstrate how the changes in social settings, e.g. changes in the music industry and in the

Nonetheless, some CCM record companies choose to adopt an artistic approach towards music. These companies are comparatively younger when compared to the leading CCM record companies like Word and Sparrow. For instance, Brad Ebel of a CCM record label Tooth and Nail claims: '...I don't put any artistic restraints on my bands. They can be as bold as they want, or they don't have to talk about God at all' (Counterculture, 1994:11). R.E.X.[19], a US-based independent Christian record label formed in the late 1980s, offered a similar outlook as a representative of the company said:

> We let artists say whatever they want to say in their lyrics. If it's about love, that's cool, because Christians are in love. If it's about their father dying, that's fine, because our fathers die... It's more of a Christian world-view...(Counterculture, 1994:10).

These two companies demonstrate a more open and relaxed attitude towards Christian artists' music. While the pressure and expectation on the Christian artists in these labels may be lessened, the artists recording for more established CCM companies are still faced with the task to deliver music which helps believers to 'worship God. It is because the more established Christian record companies aim at traditional Christian audience members. For instance, the founder of Sparrow Records — a home to many leading CCM artists, Hearn revealed the emphasis of his company in the early days as follows:

Christian Church, effect changes in the rationales towards music which are characterised as diverse and divergent at the same time.

[19] This record label closed down in 1995 because of financial difficulty.

> Our quality emphasis was not necessarily on the recording technique... [but] the quality of the artists and *their ministry orientation*, that established the basis for what kind of company we would be (Granger, 1991:2; emphasis mine).

The orientation of Sparrow not only shows a contrast to newer Christian record companies in terms of their approach to music, it also shows that CCM has further moved away from its origins in the ethos of 1960s Jesus Music. While the Jesus Music artists emphasised 'reaching out' to non-Christians through popular music, artists under the leading CCM labels such as Sparrow and Word are now expected to cater for the evangelical audiences who find 'comfort and security' (Howard, 1996:154) in Christian lyrics. Word's merger with EMI in the late 1980s demonstrates the goal of the company to enlarge the Christian consumer base in an attempt to sell more records (Joseph, 1999:13).

Turner's contentions for the 'music as art' perspective have been noted earlier in this chapter with regard to the pressures faced by CCM artists to write lyric-driven songs in order to expound a Christian 'message'. This is very likely due to the expectations put on their music to change the lives of non-Christians, under the banner of evangelism as well as the lives of Christians in the name of ministry. Accordingly, I shall move on to discuss Turner's arguments as to why music is often taken as a 'tool' to evangelise or edify in the Christian circle. Not only is Turner discontent with the observation that the importance of lyrics overrides that of composition in CCM, he also elucidates the core reason for the strained relationship between Christianity and popular music, that is, the divide

between the 'secular' and the 'sacred' in conventional Christian ideology. He argues:

> Christian song-writers are encouraged to ignore the ordinary things of life because they don't provide the opportunity to witness. Mention of soup or football doesn't naturally lead to Calvary[20]. They are then left with the overtly spiritual, and this has the effect of making them seem out of balance to non-Christian observers (Turner, 2001: 51).

Such a divide between the 'secular' and the 'sacred' is also highlighted by former pop music journalist, Jasper (1984), as he identifies the core divide of the Christian life. A Christian believer, Jasper poignantly says,

> [t]here are many exciting things taking place in the Christian community, but an underlying conflict is frequently present. It lies in the current Christian debate (one which has in fact surfaced at many times in Christian history), as to whether Christians are or are not of this world. Many would say that there is certain amount of truth on both sides of this debate: the Christian is committed to this creation, yet by very nature of the Faith the Christian sees beyond this life. But too often people have been expected to opt for one extreme or the other and, this attitude is becoming increasingly popular, particularly when the question of pop culture arises (Jasper, 1984:7).

His overall view is also conducive to the understanding of the core conflict of the Christian music debate, that is, the divide between the 'secular' and the 'sacred'.

Within the CCM industry, the word 'secular' is taken as similar to 'world' (Turner, 2001:56). Some practitioners within the industry consider 'secular' to be non-religious and that they use the word to describe 'those things that take place

outside of such spiritual activities as praying, worshipping, witnessing, ministering and reading the Bible' — things that take place outside the church on a Sunday morning (Turner, 2001:56). However, Turner disagrees with such a view because he sees no natural connection between activities occurring outside of church and denying God. For Turner, the word 'secular' means 'of this temporary world or age' and he thinks the majority of things that constitute human lives are inevitably of this temporal world or age. Thus a Christian believer should regard 'secular' activities as part of a spiritual life and Christian faith should percolate through believers' daily routines and activities (Turner, 2001: 56). Turner's challenge to the divide between the 'sacred' and 'secular' is of relevance to my research group because a number of my respondents in this thesis demonstrate the belief that they can be a 'witness' for God outside of church by organising clubbing events in the mainstream club venues.

It has then become apparent that the advocates for the 'music as evangelism' perspective are amongst those who consider 'secular' music to be 'worldly' and 'un-spiritual'. However, the advocates for the 'music as art' perspective like Turner (2001) are amongst those who holistically view the so-called 'secular' activities as a part of their spiritual lives and so songs about the mundane aspects of life have worth and value because music is an art that reflects the 'creativeness' of a Christian God. Turner argues from his Christian viewpoint,

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[20] It is the name of the place where Jesus Christ was crucified. It is used here to allude to the salvation of Jesus Christ.

> The doctrine of creation teaches us that God made human beings in his image for the purpose of serving him in love and looking after the things he made. *Creativity is part of that inherited image because God is a designer and maker*. Our desire to create, our ability to make concepts tangible and our pleasure in making are all reflections of God's original "let there be"[21] and "it was good" [22] (Turner, 2001:66, emphasis mine).

The statement above needs highlighting because it is in this Christian rhetoric that so-called 'non-religious' music is given a legitimate status amongst some respondents of my research group in Chapter Five who either work as full-time or part-time artists/musicians.

The tension between 'music as evangelism' and 'music as art' advocates is best related to the unease found between the Separational and Transformational CCM artists. Meanwhile, the strain between the Separational and Integrational CCM artists can be best related to the debate on whether music is a means to evangelism or riches. The idealisation of CCM as a vehicle to evangelise amongst young people is considered by Romanowski to be 'naïve' (Romanowski, 1990:151; 2000:107). As Romanowski states:

> Contemporary Christian music became the musical mainstream of the reformulated gospel market, 12- to 35-year-old white evangelicals, not the "unsaved youth" for whom the music was allegedly written (Romanowski, 2000:111).

This demographic group contributes to the rise of a Christian music market, with the turnover rate growing from US$ 86.5 million in 1986 (Romanowski, 1990:153)

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[21] Extracted from the Bible, Genesis Chapter 1, verses 3, 6, and 14 (New International Version).
[22] Extracted from the Bible, Genesis Chapter 1, verse 31 (New International Version).

to a recent total of US$ 300-500 million (Romanowski, 2000:106). As noted earlier in this chapter, the RIAA figures also reveal that Religious Music which includes Christian and gospel music, is the 6th most-popular genre in 2005, making up 5.3% of the total record sales.

Romanowski's analyses of the CCM industry focus on the Christian record companies in the US (e.g. Romanowski, 1990, 1992, and 2000) as the main driving forces of the growth of the CCM market. Nevertheless, I would argue that the linkage between consumer choice and religious faith among evangelicals is the impetus for the growth of the CCM market. Evangelicals' consuming habits are related to their moral standards and values (Ward, 1996). Ward (1996) offers a significant insight into an understanding of an evangelical market in the UK, suggesting that the youth workers based in the churches within Britain want to provide what they believe to be 'more constructive' entertainment to young people with whom they work (Ward, 1996: 205). This view held by the youth workers is reminiscent of claims made by some CCM artists who describe their music as 'positive' and 'hopeful' as noted earlier in this chapter. Evangelicals holding rather radical views such as Nyumbus (1988) and Gilbert (1986) regard popular music with different levels of suspicion and seek to provide 'instruction' on music consumption for Christian youth. For instance, Nyumbus (1988: 335) regards rock as 'unashamedly promoting the profane' and he implies that Christian youth should be aware of the different effects that music has on their minds and feelings. Gilbert (1986: 109), on the other hand, is suspicious towards what he refers to as

'anarchic or violently aggressive music' and argues that bands which are seen as 'devil' worshippers should be avoided. 'Safe' and 'constructive' popular music, that is music which complies to the evangelical moral standards, is then promoted by Christian youth workers. Consequently, young Christians are encouraged to consume cultural products which appear to be 'positive', including CCM. The following statement may help to illustrate the rise of a 'faith-based' culture industry in the UK:

> The need for Christian bands arises from the desire to see young Christians listening to music which will influence them in positive (that is, evangelical) ways. All around the country [UK] youth leaders and Christian parents are making small decisions along these lines. Christian young people, for their part, may well collude with the desires of their parents and their youth leaders. A Christian Metal band or Rap act may feel a little *less risky* or open to condemnation. Greenbelt festival might be a place for some adventure, but it is nothing like the secular festivals at Reading or Glastonbury. The Christian bands, festivals, T-shirts and magazines offer a safe and approved source for forming an identity for many evangelical young people (Ward, 1996:205, emphasis mine).

The demand for a 'safe' context and environment for Christians to consume popular culture can also be evidenced by Romanowski (2001: 82-83) who suggests that Christians consume entertainment that is family-oriented and that does not carry connotations about sex, recreational drugs and violence. Thus, it can be seen that the 'need' to provide music which is perceived to be 'morally safe' by Christian parents, youth workers or leaders may have some bearing on the growth of the CCM market.

Evangelicals' ambition to provide a 'safety zone' for young people has a significant role to play for the growth of CCM market. Such growth may go in line with the third dominant perspective within the discourse of CCM — 'music as a means to riches'. In the following paragraphs, I shall outline the rise of Integrational CCM. Unlike Separational or Transformational CCM artists, Integrational CCM artists acquire major chart success. For instance, Amy Grant's album *Age to Age* (1982) was at the top of three airplay charts in the US — Contemporary, Adult Contemporary and Inspirational.

According to Romanowski (1990, 2000), the Christian music industry in the US was faced with four challenges throughout the 1970s. Firstly, there was a dearth of acceptance for contemporary Christian music (Romanowski, 1990). The lack of acceptance was perhaps due to the insufficient support from churchgoers of traditional denominations who were still largely suspicious of popular music which they considered 'worldly music' (Di Sabatino, 1999:157). Secondly, the production of contemporary Christian music was technically inferior. The low quality of record production could be related to the influence of Jesus Music artists' evangelism-oriented mindsets that rendered personal intimacy found in live performances essential and record production only secondary (Di Sabatino, 1999: 157). Thirdly, Christian musicians in the 1970s were also faced with a small and inefficient network for distribution. The records made by Christian artists at this time were mainly distributed through tours and a limited network of Christian bookstores (Romanowski, 1990:152). Finally, there was limited exposure for

Christian musicians on radio in the US. This insufficient radio exposure could be linked to the economic considerations of Christian radio stations in the 1970s. During that time, most Christian radio stations in the US still relied heavily on donations made by middle-aged to elderly Christians for financial support (Romanowski, 1990:154). The Contemporary Christian music format which featured music of popular idioms, e.g. rock and pop styles, was considered to be too risky by Christian radio executives who were afraid that this group of older donors might be offended by music of popular style. For instance, a sales representative for a Christian radio station KPRZ in Los Angeles admitted, 'Economic concern is the number one factor... We call it a ministry, but the decisions makers know it's business' (Palosaari, 1981:42). Therefore, it can be deduced that the economic apprehension of Christian radio stations affected the exposure of contemporary Christian musicians by and large throughout the 1970s.

Although the Christian radio stations were afraid of alienating traditional contributors in the older generation, they started seeing that younger audiences had the potential to attract greater advertising revenues (Romanowski, 1990: 155). As Negus highlights, the radio systems in North America have always been market oriented and the content of radio formats has been influenced more by the interests of commercial sponsors than ideas about 'serving the nation' as in the case of Europe (Negus, 1996: 75). Moreover, Negus also underscores the importance of music for radio programming (Negus, 1996: 76). These helped to elucidate the change of Christian radio stations' music policy in the US toward the end of the

1970s. The radio stations started to introduce a conservative playlist that would attract young listeners without offending their older contributors (Romanowski, 1990: 154). Middle-of-the-road Christian pop and rock, which constitute a major part of CCM, suited the new music policy of Christian radio stations well (Romanowski, 1990: 154). This significant change in music programming at Christian radio stations also contributed to the expansion of the CCM market in the US throughout the 1980s.

Also, a few historical developments in Contemporary Christian Music that occurred in the 1970s changed the dynamics of the Christian music industry in the US. Firstly, the First Annual Christian Artists' Seminar was established in 1975 at Estes Park, Colorado, United States. This annual event was significant for Christian musicians because it provided an important platform for new Christian artists; it has since become a significant event for new Christian music talents (Romanowski, 1990:153). The Fellowship of Contemporary Christian Ministries (FCCM) was also founded in the same year, facilitating the organisation of performers and management and creating a way to gain national exposure through the expansion of personal contacts through the publication of a directory of artists for Christian programmers (Romanowski, 1990:153).

In the 1980s, some CCM artists acquired popularity that could be to some extent compared to that of the commerically successful artists in the mainstream music industry. For 158 weeks, Amy Grant's *Age to Age* remained at the top of

Billboard's gospel chart which was set up in 1980 as a response to the growth of gospel sales (Wider, 2000:30). Grant's following album *Straight Ahead* was at number one in the chart for more than a year (Romanowski, 1990:160).

However, those who endorse Separational CCM criticise Grant's music for its lack of religious lyrics. For instance, Grant's album *Unguarded* is criticised by a *CCM* reader in the following way: '*Unguarded* isn't Christian music; it's moral and ethical humanism with a very slight religious perspective' (Romanowski, 1990:163). Such criticism can demonstrate the tension between the advocates of Separational CCM who regard 'music as evangelism' and the advocates of Integrational CCM whose rationales in a sense conform to the 'music as a means to riches' perspective though under the disguise of evangelistic rhetoric. The conflicts between the advocates of Separational CCM and those of Integrational CCM regarding the lyrical content can be best summarised by Romanowski's statement as follows:

> But popularity required religiously shallow lyrics; songs not dealing overtly with the Christian life elicited harsh criticism from conservative evangelicals and especially from fundamentalists (Romanowski, 1990:163).

Perhaps what Romanowski means by 'religious by shallow lyrics' is a Christian 'message' that is not going to offend the mainstream music market.

The editor of *CCM*, John Styll, defends Grant by claiming that her music is 'sanctified entertainment' (Styll, 1986:4). Styll's defense of Grant's music suggests that the 'sacred' or 'sanctified' label can be used to resolve or alleviate the tension between these two different Christian perspectives on popular music despite its questionable ability to convince. Styll's statement is also reminiscent of another music label — 'sanctified dance music', which is used by CCM practitioners and media to promote EDM produced by Christian DJs (Ray Gourdie[23], personal communication, 15/2/03). All these reveal that some sectors of the CCM industry rely on notions of the 'sacred' and 'sanctified' to justify the combination of popular music and Christianity.

Conclusion

The discussion of the Jesus People Movement and CCM is important because it is relevant to the research on EDM and Christianity in this thesis in the following ways. With regard to the analysis of the Jesus People Movement, music is seen as a way to connect with non-Christians and to encourage them to be Christians. This finding surely has parallels to some findings in the case studies where certain Christian groups regard EDM as a 'tool' to establish relationships with non-Christians. Moreover, the growth of the Jesus People Movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s can be in some way related to their existing links with the US counter-culture in the 1960s. This finding demonstrates the issues of authenticity and credibility that are important for understanding the missionary

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[23] Ray Gourdie is the founder of New Generation Music and Mission (NGM). His concern for using the word 'sanctified' to justify the use of popular music in a Christian context will be discussed in

works conducted by the Christian groups examined in this thesis. Unlike the Jesus People, some of the Christian respondents within this thesis do not have existing links or previous involvement with the particular 'youth culture' that they want to evangelise. This lack of authenticity or credibility within EDMC may have a bearing on the small number of converts resulting from their missionary activities, as will be shown in the case studies. Furthermore, the discussion also shows that the Jesus People borrowed language from the US counter-cultural movement in a way that they communicated Christian beliefs using the 'transcendent' discourse which was also employed by the hippie drug-users. This surely has comparison to a research group within this thesis who use rhetoric such as 'spirituality', 'community', 'togetherness' which is also often found in the populist discourse of EDMC.

With respect to the discussion on CCM, music which directly references the Bible or carries an overt Christian message is seen by some evangelicals as 'sacred' or 'suitable' for listening among Christians. However, my research challenges such views by showing that popular EDM which contains no Christian lyrics is used to a large extent by certain Christian groups in their religious activities. Meanwhile, music is seen by some evangelicals as an extension of their leisure interests and can be a way for them to express their creativity from a Christian viewpoint or, at least, in a way that is not in conflict with their Christian perspective. My research extends this way of understanding the use of music by evangelicals through demonstrating that certain Christian groups express their

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more detail in Chapter Three.

Christian faith by means of popular EDM which does not carry connotations in conflict with their faith. The EDM that they use is purely instrumental or contains no Christian message and yet can be interpreted from their Christian perspective as 'uplifting' or 'reflective' with an artistic approach towards music as upheld by Transformational CCM advocates. Finally, the discussion on the growth of CCM as a major music market in the West, the US in particular, also helps to contextualise the original research in this thesis. The activities of my research groups take place against this commercial background where the idea of promoting Christian views through popular music is no longer unfamiliar and is well recognised.

. Before looking into the case studies, however, it is worthwhile examining the first recognised Christian music development based on the use of popular EDM — the Alternative Worship Movement which emerged in the mid-1980s in Sheffield, UK. It is worth studying because it features popular EDM, which is the focus of this thesis. Moreover, the discussion on the movement also helps to show how certain Christian groups reconcile the marriage of the 'secular' and the 'sacred' through re-interpretation of lyrics in popular EDM and the theological framework of incarnation. In the following chapter, I shall outline and discuss the development of alternative worship in a global context, examining the alternative worship groups in the UK, North America and Australasia.

Chapter Two
The Historical Background and Development of Alternative Worship

Alternative worships groups began to form in the late 1980s in the UK and started to be established in Australia/New Zealand by the mid-1990s, emerging in the US, Canada and other parts of Europe from 2000 onwards (http://www.alternativeworship.org/definitions_definitions.html, accessed on 25/11/05). Alternative worship, a term coined in the 1990s, is used to refer to Christian activities in which participants express their Christian faith with certain aspects of popular culture, e.g. EDM and computerised visuals and special lightings that are common in EDMC. Alternative worship groups also have an agenda to engage with a contemporary culture where they refuse to 'draw boundaries that determine who or what is in or out of God's kingdom' (Collins, 2005). It is said that over two hundred alternative worship groups operated in Britain at the turn of the twenty-first century (Parry, 2000:261) and that there are approximately fifty alternative worship groups within the Church of England alone at the present time (Gibbs & Bolger, 2006:39). There are approximately twenty-six North American alternative worship groups in a directory of alternative worship groups (http://www.alternativeworship.org, accessed on 7/7/06); nineteen in Australia and New Zealand (http://www.alternativeworship.org, accessed on 7/7/06). These groups are usually small in number and consist of no more than twenty-five members due to the highly participatory nature of the groups (Gibbs & Bolger, 2006:111). The main features of these groups will be surveyed and examined more closely later in this chapter.

A key characteristic of alternative worship groups is that it challenges the split of the 'sacred' and the 'secular' through the emphasis of 'connection' instead of 'compartmentalisation' (Riddell et al, 2000:28; Baker et al, 2003:72). Notably for this thesis, alternative worship can be characterised by its use of 'secular' EDM (e.g. Ward, 1993:138; Roberts, 1999:6-7; Lynch, 2002:43; Till, 2006:103) Moreover, it is worth noting that alternative worship is also seen as an integral part of the Emerging Church movement (e.g. Riddell et al, 2000; Gibbs & Bolger, 2006; Brewin, 2004: 71-72) and the post-evangelical debate (e.g. Lynch, 2002:42-48; Cray, 1997:15).

The previous chapter examined how popular music has been used in an evangelistic context, by focusing on the Jesus People Movement in the 1960s and the CCM development from 1970s. This chapter identified the ongoing debate concerning so-called 'sacred' and 'secular' musics. One way in which proponents of alternative worship have challenged the 'sacred'/ 'secular' divide is through the incorporation of EDM (including atmospheric electronic ambient music which contains no overtly Christian lyrics) in their practice of worship.. Parry (2000: 266) suggests that a defining feature of alternative worship is a phenomenal desire to effect a change in the perception of Christianity amongst the non-Christians by challenging dualistic spiritualism, that is, dichotomies as physical/spiritual and sacred/secular. Leaders of a few alternative worship groups in the UK express their dissatisfaction towards the dualistic 'sacred'/ 'secular' divide as follows:

There is an inherent rejection at Grace of dualism (Jonny Baker, Grace, London; Gibbs & Bolger, 2006:66)

> We try to create bridges that span the secular/sacred divide because we don't make that distinction. We use secular music in worship as well as film and literature. I hope they are points of *connection* between people's everyday lives and their faith (Ben Edson, Sanctus 1, Manchester; Gibbs & Bolger, 2006:66, emphasis mine).

Similarly, Collins also conveys discontent towards such 'secular'/'sacred' divide, suggesting that the alternative worship groups are reluctant to draw boundaries which 'determine who or what is in or out of God's kingdom' (Collins, 2005).

EDM is predominantly used in alternative worship as background music to create ambient atmosphere to calm the participants in worship (Ward, 1993; Angier, 1997; Roberts, 1999 and Baker et al (2003). It is also used as a background to prayers and biblical readings (Baker et al, 2003: 72). Sometimes it is there to be listened to as a form of reflection (Baker et al, 2003: 72; Roberts, 1999: 6). Angier (1997: 53) suggests that 'secular' EDM is more preferable than 'secular' rock music in alternative worship because 'it is a medium that Christians can participate in at the forefront, rather than with a poor reflection of the real thing as has been the case with rock' (Angier 1997: 53). Angier argues along with a quote from an article in *Mixmag* published in November 1995:

> Rock and Christianity never mixed too well... Rock music is all about rebellion, against society, against whatever, but in the case of Christian rock this doesn't work. The medium and message are at odds... Rave, house, club culture is a whole different kettle of fish. It's a participatory

activity, it's a collective experience. One where you feel empathy with those around you and is based on a sense of disorientation and losing yourself. These are also essential elements of a successful act of worship… If a Christian DJ is playing or a non believer, could you tell? House music is a perfect vehicle for speech samples and visuals of a religious nature. And it won't look stupid (Angier 1997: 53).

Gibbs & Bolger also argue that the use of EDM in alternative worship reflects an intention of making holy what was once secular (Gibbs & Bolger, 2006:81). The justification or rationale for selecting 'secular' dance music for use in alternative worship is expressed in a number of ways. Firstly, the minimal amount of lyrics in popular dance tunes are interpreted as compatible with Christian worship. As Roberts comments:

> There is a tendency (not a new one) to re-interpret the lyrics of secular songs in the worship context. Some secular dance songs have explicitly spiritual, even Christian lyrics. Other club artists are Christians producing dance music that sometimes has a spiritual focus… The American producer/DJ Moby expresses a vehement, off-beat, anti-fundamentalist, pro-vegetarian version of Christianity (Roberts, 1999:7).

Ward also considers the direct appropriation of secular dance tracks in a Christian context to be appropriate.:

> ideas expressed in dance records are spiritual without being very specific about what they mean. Lyrics such as 'Love is the message' or 'Your love is lifting me' could mean a variety of things…it is perfectly legitimate to use songs like this in Christian worship because the meaning of the lyric is in the heads of the people dancing, not in the intentions of the person who made the record, whatever they may be (Ward, 1993:138).

These quotes from Roberts and Ward evidence that Christians justify the use of 'secular' EDM in Christian worship through a postmodern way to re-interpret lyrics which also challenges the notion of 'authorship', advocating that an author role can be taken up by the readers and the audiences. Such re-interpretation of lyrics requires a certain degree of imagination. Likewise Brady and Torode (2000) also underscore the power of imagination in audience members' music consumption. In their analysis of Buddy Holly's 'Pity Peggy Sue', they argue that there is possibility that rhythmic elements of the song's instrumental break can be identified with words sung to the same rhythms in the verses so that the break triggers a set of 'imaginary' words (Brady and Torode, 2000:218). The discovery of imaginary words can make sense of the apparently non-verbal rhythms of the guitar break in 'Peggy Sue' (Brady and Torode, 2000:218). Hereby the power of listeners' imagination is seen to be underlined in their song analysis. Imagination is also required in order for alternative worship participants to re-interpret lyrics in popular EDM from a Christian perspective.

Furthermore, the divide the 'secular' and the 'sacred' is challenged through adopting a theological rationale, namely incarnation theology: 'The metaphor of incarnation suggests that popular culture should resource the culture of our worship' (Baker et al, 2003:121). Within such theological rationale, popular EDM, be it a track by Moby or Fatboy Slim, is given an immanent[24] status in a sense that God can be found in human creation, including popular music.

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[24] 'Immanent' is an adjective to describe that 'God actively participates in creation' (Gibbs & Bolger, 2006:72).

Within this incarnation approach, the use of popular culture in worship powerfully brings the real world into the presence of God and enables God's presence to be discerned back in that real world. Any notion of a split between sacred and secular is rejected
(Baker,http://seaspray.trinity-bris.ac.uk/~altwfaq/theology/awtuk00401001.html, April 2000, accessed on 5/6/04).

Hence, it can be seen that the destruction of the 'secular'/ 'sacred' divide is again justified by such incarnational theological foundation which suggests that God is present in the ideas, materials and forms from the 'secular' world (Riddell et al, 2000). Ingrained in this theological foundation is a positive theology of creation and its redemption which has comparison to the view that Christ is 'reconciler of culture' (Niebuhr, 1951). In such view, Christ is regarded as the agent of a 'secular' culture as already noted in the discussion of CCM development in the last chapter.

The discussion of alternative worship not only reiterates the 'secular'/ 'sacred' conflict central to the whole Christian music debate, but it also demonstrates how Christians reconcile the blending of the 'secular' and 'sacred' through re-interpretation of lyrics in EDM and the theological framework of incarnation. This chapter will present a more thorough account of alternative worship which also provides a backdrop and linkage with all of the three case studies to be examined in the following chapters. For instance, Chapter Three discusses the issues of the 'Emerging Church' phenomenon which is grounded in the development of alternative worship. Also, the analysis of alternative worship

also provides a historical context for Christians' club dancing worship practice which will be looked at closely in Chapter Four. Furthermore, the analysis on alternative worship can be linked to the role of music in providing ambient background for worship practices which will be discussed in Chapter Five. Therefore, it can be seen that the analysis of alternative worship in this chapter is important because it offers historical background necessary to understand the case studies in the following chapters.

This chapter mainly consists of several parts. I shall start by discussing the issues of terminology related to alternative worship. Such a discussion is significant because it shows that 'alternative worship' is a contestable term amongst Christian groups which are put into this category. This section also includes a discussion on the Emerging Church which is a key concept for Chapter Three. I will then move on to offer a historical account of the movement by analysing an alternative worship group, the Nine O'Clock Service (NOS) in Sheffield which is often considered to be the pioneer of the movement (e.g. Baker, Gay & Brown, 2003:vii; Parry, 2000:277, Roberts, 1999:3). The Alternative worship movement can be traced back to 1986 when a group, Nairn Street Community led by Chris Brain chose to incorporate aspects of EDMC into Christian practices. This community attended a local church called St. Thomas, Crookes (Parry, 2000:282; Till, forthcoming; Gibbs & Bolger, 2006:82). The church was unwilling to give up time devoted to their normal early evening service which appealed to local students, so the group set up their services after the last

conventional service of St. Thomas, starting at nine o'clock at night. They chose to name their congregation after this starting time, differentiating themselves from the rest of the church. The first NOS started in 1986, and it soon expanded from thirty people to over 600 at its peak in 1990. The historical account is followed by a survey to trace the emergence of alternative worship as a global phenomenon. However, I shall concentrate on initiatives in the UK because the following case studies are predominantly linked to contemporary British Christian groups. An evaluation of general observations found in the alternative worship groups is going to follow the survey, highlighting worship and evangelism as well as the post-evangelical debate which can be related to the discussion about 'church-planting' in Chapter Three.

Terminology

The term 'alternative worship' is believed to be coined in 1991 at the Greenbelt Festival by individuals and groups who started up new form of worship service based on the model of the Nine O'clock Service (Angier, 1997: 12). Greenbelt is a significant Christian music festival which was first established in 1974, mainly featuring performances of Christian musicians and seminars that focus on contemporary issues faced by the Church and Christian believers[25]. Greenbelt was very influential in the development of alternative worship because it formed a point of contact for individuals and Christian groups who were interested to launch alternative worship projects (Roberts, 1999: 10). Aside from music

[25] For more details on the history of Greenbelt, please refer to the section on the Jesus People Movement in Chapter One.

performances, seminars, films, visual arts and comedy, the festival also has special worship services as a part of their programme. Greenbelt's involvement in alternative worship is still active at present. For instance, two leading alternative worship groups in Britain, 'Visions' in York and 'Grace' in London organised special worship services in the 2006. 'Global Zoo' is an event organised by Grace at Greenbelt 2006 'for anyone involved in the alternative worship/emerging church scene to meet at the New Farms Café for stories, strategy and coffee' (http://www.greenbelt.org.uk/?1=1659&pr=82, accessed on 7/7/06). 'Palestine' is a celebration service and a prayer installation organised by Visions for its fifteenth anniversary. Greenbelt also offers alternative worship groups 'a forum for ongoing debate' (Parry, 2000:261).

At time of writing it is estimated that there are ninety-six alternative worship groups in different countries, including Britain, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Germany and Switzerland (http://www.alternativewoship.org/directory_grouplist.html, accessed on 7/7/06). In order to develop a working definition of the term, I have drawn on discussions about alternative worship within different academic and Christian books (e.g. Ward, 1993; Angier, 1997; Roberts, 1999; Riddell et al, 2000; Lynch, 2002; Baker et al, 2003; Gibbs & Bolger, 2006). These have shed some light on the understanding of the term and so I have identified a common characteristic found in such texts, which is an emphasis on creativity. It will be explained in detail as follows:

> There appear to be two understandings of the term alternative worship. One definition is anything which isn't mainstream, but what is mainstream and for who? The other goes much further but is less easy to define, but defines more than worship services, more, a whole lifestyle. In an effort to be inclusive, the list of alternative worship groups is split into two below, groups fitting best under the former definition come under youth & evangelistic and groups fitting best under the latter under creative worship. (http://seaspray.trinity-bris.ac.uk/~altwfaq, accessed on 19/12/05).

This definition was provided by Greenbelt in 2000. I will adhere to the second definition provided by Greenbelt because I find it more suitable to describe the alternative groups which are going to be looked at in this chapter and also because I find the idea of being 'mainstream' or 'non-mainstream' could be problematic and confusing in the discussion of worship and music. Mainstream dance music or commercially successful electronic dance music, when used in a Christian setting can sometimes be referred to as 'non-mainstream' because of either the lack of exposure by Christian groups to popular music or conservative views that might be held towards worship music. Such groups might categorise worship music inside the box of 'chorus singing and worship group with worship leader' (Baker et al, 2003: x). Baker et al (2003) also highlight the 'creative' use of music, EDM in particular among Christians when discussing the definition of alternative worship:

> Before the name 'alternative worship' appeared, early experiments were being dubbed 'rave worship' because they were borrowing directly from the culture of dance music in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In opting to introduce dance music into worship there was a clear continuity with a tradition of modernizing church music in line with popular culture which goes back through the era of the music hall to the work of Martin Luther and others in Protestant Reformation (Baker et al, 2003: viii).

This suggests that EDM has a significant role to play in alternative worship. The use of EDM in alternative worship, however, is regarded as 'marginal' by mainstream charismatic churches which mainly use guitar-based music in their worship services.

As a number of critics have observed the charismatic churches have often used guitar-based soft rock music (e.g. Ward, 2005; Parry, 2000; Westermeyer, 1992) within worship services since the 1970s. Alternative worship groups' heavy deployment of mainstream dance music could possibly be regarded as 'non-mainstream' in the majority of charismatic churches. The founder of the NOS, Chris Brian draws comparisons between rave style worship and earlier developments in the Charismatic Movement of the 1970s when defending for NOS whose alternative worship service held in Greenbelt 1992 was criticized as 'blasphemous', 'overtly sexual and grotesque' (Parry, 2000, 283-284) by the mainstream charismatics. The marginal status of alternative worship is evident in the following defensive statement made by Brain:

> Guitars and flowing frilly dresses are ingredients of an art form that related to the seventies. Today our equivalent ingredients are house music and dance wear... it was ironically the very people who brought folk guitars and sacred dance into the church 30 years ago and were accused of being heretical and sexually provocative, who seemed to be the ones who found the genre we were using most offensive (Parry, 2000: 284).

This statement poignantly shows that alternative worship groups are marginalised by the charismatics who were once marginalised by more traditional evangelicals

themselves and yet have become a mainstream of the Church and started marginalising Christian groups that do not lead worship in their guitar-based styles.

Apart from ambient EDM, the use of visuals (Roberts, 1999:5; Riddell et al, 2000:85-88; Guest & Taylor, 2006:57) as well as symbols and images (Ward, 1993:127-133; Roberts, 1999:8; Riddell et al, 2000:90; Baker et al, 2003:69-70; Ganiel, 2006: 38-39) are also important for creating a contemplative atmosphere for alternative worship. In order to avoid confusion regarding the nature of music being used in worship, I would equate alternative worship with creative worship which is not solely defined by style of music, use of visuals, symbols and images but also by a holistic lifestyle which reflects the Christian faith of those involved and places an emphasis on building a sense of community. Under this definition of alternative worship, the preparation, design and creation of worship are already part of the worship itself. (http://seaspray.trinity-bris.ac.uk/~altwfaq/, accessed on 19/12/05). The argument that alternative worship is more than the style of its presentation is also found in the following statement:

> alternative worship involves more than contemporary music, nightclub lighting and multi-media. Although it often uses these things, it has a wider agenda that embraces theology, the nature of church life, and how gospel is applied in Christian proclamation and personal life. It arises from the need for the church to engage with culture shift (Roberts, 1999:3)

Robert's emphasis on the need for alternative worship groups to engage with a culture shift is reminiscent of Pete Ward's argument for the idea of 'liquid

church' (Ward, 2002) – a theme to be explored in Chapter Three of this thesis. Ward argues that the institutional Church, or to use Ward's word, the 'solid' church (particularly the megachurch[26]) is the by-product of solid modernism which emphasizes growth of the church in terms of the size of congregation and church building. Megachurches are new and mainly evangelical, constructed in suburban areas of rapid urban development in, for example, the United States and Australia (Connell, 2005). In order to maintain the large congregation, the worship in these so-called solid churches can be described as 'one-size-fit-all' - explain, and usually features chorus singing or a middle-of-the-road rock worship music (Ward, 2002:19). In contrast to this alternative worship tends to be practised on a smaller scale with a higher level of independence by each organising body. For example, the Greenbelt website places emphasis on the diversity of alternative worship stating that: 'the service will very much reflect the interests of the group, for example, if they are all technoheads, the music is techno, no two groups are the same.' (http://seaspray.trinity-bris.ac.uk/~altwfaq/, accessed on 19/12/05). This finding suggests that'cultural specificity' (Angier, 1997:13) seems to be of prime importance for alternative worship. As Angier (1997:13) explains: 'Culture-specific worship describes worship produced by, with or for a particular culture. A culture-specific congregation is drawn from worship within a particular culture'. Alternative worship groups attend to the differences and design the worship events accordingly. Alternative worship can then be regarded as a part of a larger process

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[26] Megachurches are 'seeker sensitive' (Gibbs, 1993:173), meaning that the churches tailor their programmes to cater for people who do not normally go to church on a regular basis. Megachurches are considered to 'epitomize the restructuring of religion in the context of social change' in being

of enculturation of the Christian gospel for different communities – that is making the Christian evangelistic message appear relevant to the communities by incorporating their specific cultural practices. For instance, Mark Pierson highlights the use of contemporary music, movies and services held in nightclubs when describing his alternative worship group Parallel Universe in New Zealand (Riddell et al, 2000: 106; Taylor, 2005: 138). He also stresses the importance of engaging with and reframing contemporary culture within his group (Taylor, 2005: 138). Speaking for Graceway, an alternative worship group based in New Zealand, Steve Taylor highlights the groups' efforts to connect with contemporary culture by publicising a service which aims to reflect on the spirituality of an EDM artist, Moby on radio (Taylor, 2005: 137). These groups' activities seem to suggest that the use of contemporary culture, e.g. popular EDM rather than traditional hymns may have a greater resonance with the young people who are involved with popular culture, facilitating Christians' evangelistic goals in 'reaching out' to the youth.

Although alternative worship is still the most commonly used term to describe a range of experimental worship endeavours, it has sometimes been criticised within Christian circles, 'the name "alternative worship" is one many involved in it dislike' (Baker et al, 2003: vii). I have found evidence of this in my research of the term. For example, the website of a Christian dance group, Aorta

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built up through marketing techniques and survey data analysis (Weightman, 1993:15, in Connell, 2005).

describes how they offer 'DJ or deck-led worship' [27] — a term which is apparently preferred by the group (http://www.aortalife.com/djworshipi.asp, accessed on 5/5/05). They are keen to distinguish their activities from the term alternative worship:

> Firstly dance music is not Alternative Worship! I know that this is a popular concept in a lot of Christian circles but actually 'alternative' worship does not exist. It is merely a term that Christians use to describe forms of worship that they do not consider mainstream <http://www.aortalife.com/djworshipi.asp>, accessed on 5/5/05.

The term 'alternative worship' is problematic because it implies a minority taste and refers to the alternative to an existing mainstream form of worship, including anything from EDM to Celtic worship, depending on the type of 'mainstream' service (Angier, 1997:12). Such identification is relativist, depending on another 'mainstream' worship entity for identity and existence and so is fluctuating. Some even regard alternative worship as doing something alternative to worship while some see it as a label to refer to whatever they are doing as a way to gain recognition from the crowd they want to 'reach out' to (Angier, 1997:12).

For Aorta, the difference between DJ or deck-led worship and so-called mainstream Christian worship led by a worship band or a choir lies in the style of music used and the response to worship: people in DJ or deck-led worship celebrate their Christian faith through dancing whereas people in the mainstream church worship through singing. I found evidence of this new way of worship

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[27] It is term preferred by most Christian DJs when describing their music which is characterized by

through club dancing (as opposed to prophetic dancing which is legitimized in the Charismatic movement) during my research into a Christian mission group on Ibiza – a case study to be explored in Chapter Four. In the interviews and observation that I conducted on the island, it can be seen that the majority of Christians participating in the mission believe that they can worship God through dancing to popular EDM which contains no overt Christian connotations. In fact, some of them even claim that they can worship God better, i.e. experiencing the transcendent more, through dancing than they do when singing.

However, whilst being aware of the people who are cautious of the use of popular EDM to worship God as opposed to dance music which the Christian music industry has regarded as 'sanctified', Aorta claim that the label 'sanctified' is misleading. They say:

> The word, "Sanctified" means "blessed by God" and I think that it is incredibly brave to assume that because a track is made by a Christian that God is automatically going to bless it and anyway how can we say that God has specifically blessed certain tracks and not others. The fact is all music is valid in our worship to God, be it written by a Christian or not, therefore sanctified music is in no way any more glorifying than any other piece of music used in worship. It is actually about the heart and focus behind how the music is used. <http://www.aortalife.com/djworshipi.asp>, accessed on 5/5/05

This statement not only exemplifies the Christian music debate characterised by a 'secular'/ 'sacred' divide which has been already discussed in Chapter One, but it

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electronic dance music or ambient music played on a pair of turntables.

also illustrates a more holistic view upheld by some who believe that 'secular' dance music can be appropriated directly in worship.

The website, www.alternativeworship.org.uk, reveals a few themes that have been observed during the course of research for Chapter One in relation to the 'secular'/ 'sacred' divide in the Christian music debate. Some characteristics of alternative worship are related to the aforementioned divide in Christian music discussed in Chapter One. The nature of alternative worship can be characterised by:

1. 'holistic (*view on Christian life*, italic mine) – life not divided into sacred and secular'
2. 'reluctance to draw boundaries that determine who or what is in or out of God's kingdom'
3. 'openness to God's presence in any area of life or culture.'

(Collins, www.alternativeworship.org/definitions_definition.html, accessed on 25/11/05)

The three characteristics mentioned above also imply incarnation theology, a belief that God can be found in human culture, and thus within popular culture including music. Moreover, Chapter One also reveals that Transformational Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) artists pose a challenge to the 'secular'/ 'sacred' divide which is manifest in Separational CCM (Howard & Streck, 1996). Such a

challenge to the dualistic divide can also be found within the discourse of alternative worship which is legitimated by incarnation theology. Baker et al regard incarnation and popular culture in their discussion of alternative worship as follows:

> Incarnation is about God becoming flesh in Jesus Christ. God's action offers a metaphor for worship that seeks to resonate in contemporary culture... The metaphor of incarnation suggests that popular culture should resource the culture of worship...Some in the churches may dismiss the use of popular culture as bad taste or a gimmick. In part this is because a high/low view of culture still seems to be prevalent. But it's also because the cultural forms of church have become so normative that to insiders they are both the 'natural' and the 'correct' equation. In this reification, popular culture is simply 'out of place' because it transgresses established symbolic boundaries (Baker et al, 2003: 121).

This statement above demonstrates the problem of using popular culture in alternative worship. A genre of music has been linked to a particular culture, for instance, rock has long been associated with cultural connotations like sex and drugs and thus caused a lot of controversies amongst Christians during the Jesus People Movement in 1960s. This suggests that the cultural associations of a genre of popular music are more likely to cause controversy within the Christian circles than the actual sounds of the music. However, a genre of popular music would become more widely accepted along with the support of church leaders as time goes by.

Furthermore, there are numerous characteristics of alternative worship that are related to the notion of 'liquid church' (Ward, 2002). This is a view of church

as a series of relationships and communications, implying something like a network or a web rather than an assembly of people (Ward, 2002:2). This notion will be looked at more closely in Chapter Three but for now, I shall examine some features of alternative worship which can be linked to such idea. The characteristics are as follows:

1) 'Reconsideration of all inherited church forms and structures'

2) 'Paradigm shift from centralized into networked forms of church'

3) 'A diverse network of individuals and small groups, practitioners and theorists'

4) 'No single centre or authority'

5) 'High levels of friendship and exchange of ideas throughout movement'

(Collins, www.alternativeworship.org/definitions_definition.html, accessed on 25/11/05).

All these features are reminiscent of a liquid church that operates through networks. Networks consist of lines of communication that unite a series of nodes; individuals, organisations or communications systems can be seen as nodes that connect in a crisscross manner in an Informational Age (Ward, 2002:41-42) Network can be conceived as the space of flows which is defined by Castells (2000: 442) as 'the material organization of time-sharing social practices that work through flows' - i.e. flows of information, images, sounds, capital and so forth. Nodes constitute one of the layers of the space of flows. The nodes of the network is:

the location of strategically important functions that build a series of locality-based activities and organizations around a key function in the network. Location in the node links up the locality with the whole network' (Castells, 2000: 443).

Identifying network as the organising principle of the contemporary society helps the exploration of new patterns of communication, 'both face-to-face and electronic' and the interaction between 'physical layouts, social organisation and electronic networks' (Castells, 2002: 399-400). In light of this definition of networks, Christian leaders, believers and organisations can be regarded as 'nodes'. Therefore, liquid church may refer to the loose networking amongst different key Christian leaders, churches or organizations overriding the centralized tight organization within the mainstream church, or in light of Ward's theorisation, the 'solid church'. This new notion of church is proposed as a response to the changing cultural paradigms in contemporary times both within and outside the Church. Interestingly, the discussion of liquid church in Chapter Three coincides with the development of a new kind of church – the emerging church.

'Emerging church' is a term used side by side with 'alternative worship' and both terms often used interchangeably to refer to the establishment of new churches (www.alternativeworship.org/definitions_awec.html, accessed on 25/11/2005). The formation of new churches that place an emphasis on the cultural relevance of their worship styles, the inclusion of young people and the following

of a holistic Christian faith go beyond life inside the church building. Many in the alternative worship movement also adopt the term 'emerging church' because it implies a less limiting and more accurate description of their intentions to develop a church instead of just a worship event, for example, Sanctus 1 in Manchester (Edson, 2006), ikon Community and Zero 28 in Northern Ireland (Ganiel, 2006) are regarded as emerging churches which incorporate elements of EDMC, e.g. setting up events and services in clubs and bars which feature EDM, in order to connect with urban dwellers in the cities. Moreover, some Christian writers Gibbs and Bolger (2006) also include alternative worship groups in their discussion on the emerging church. Therefore, alternative worship and emerging church can be taken as different names for the same phenomenon (Collins, 2001, http://www.alternativeworship.org/definitions_awec.html, accessed on 25/11/2005), only with the latter being seen as a relatively new term. It can be seen that alternative worship is taken as being an integral part of the broad field of emerging church. Despite the problem regarding the term, alternative worship represents a distinguishing approach to Christian worship and has a distinctive history (http://www.alternativewprship.org/definitions_awec.html, accessed on 25/11/2005) which I shall now turn to.

The Nine O'clock Service (NOS)

The Nine O'clock Service (NOS) which began in 1986 in Sheffield, UK has been regarded as the main historical starting point for the alternative worship movement (Baker et al, 2003: vii; Parry, 2000: 277). The founder Chris Brain, who

led the service from 1986 to 1995, has offered the following reflection on the establishment and development of the worship event:

> It is called the Nine o'Clock Service partly because nine o'clock was the only time available for the congregation to meet in the church building, and partly because it seemed the natural time for people from the club culture to get together to celebrate. Started in 1986, it has grown rapidly. For example, numerically, it has grown from a congregation of only 60 people, to one of over 500, whose average age is in the late twenties... This growth has been centred around a group artists and musicians who were on the fringe of the Church, or outside the Christian faith. They were at the heart of house music and multi-media experimentation in the early 1980s, and activists in social, political and environmental concern (Brain, 1993:166).

In this account Brain (1993:166) states that the NOS attracted three groups of people: those who had spiritual quest in their work in environmental and justice issues and found it through Christian faith, people who wanted to find 'social and spiritual healing in the community' and Christians who were returning to the Church after a period of cultural alienation and reaction against it.

Brain had for sometime been involved with music with an evangelical intent. Before he got involved with the NOS, he played in a Christian rock band, Candescence who also moved to Sheffield with him. The rock group changed its names several times, firstly from Candescene to Present Tense, then to Tense and finally to ICI. The style of their music also changed from rock to house, presented with different forms of multi-media from the early 1980s onwards. Even before the NOS started, this group had begun to look for new ways of worship – a new music style and way of living to worship God. They settled in an evangelical Anglican

Church with a strong charismatic leaning called St Thomas's, Crookes. However, the group was dissatisfied with the cozy middle-class atmosphere in the church and were in favour of a holistic faith penetrating all aspects of life that went further than a nominal faith (Parry, 2000:280).

The rock group Candescence was a crucial part of the NOS vision, part of which was to infiltrate and 'reclaim the music industry for God' (Parry, 2000: 280). The band later developed into a kind of dance-rock fusion. The influence of EDM on the rock group was significant for the NOS whose congregation was made up of people who were highly involved with the EDMC at the time (Brain, 1993: 166). The influence from the dance-rock groups in the mainstream music industry had also become obvious at this stage for the group who played a main role in leading the worship music style which came later in NOS:

> The influence of other groups like the 'Happy Mondays' and 'Cabaret Voltaire', along with the increasing exposure to the dance music that was emerging from the clubs in Sheffield, were critical factors in determining the eventual musical style that would be adopted for the Nine O'clock Service (Parry, 2000: 280-281).

It can then be shown that the divide between the 'secular' and the 'sacred' is challenged by NOS through music, manifesting a characteristic of alternative worship which was already mentioned in the last section and also in the website, www.alternativeworship.org

(www.alternativeworship.org/definitions_definition.html, accessed on 25/11/05).

The NOS developed out of a Christian group which was known as the Nairn Street Community in Sheffield. As a tightly-knit group living in a commune around Nairn Street, they were looking for a new worship style and a dynamic way to practise Christian faith while remaining in an establish church, St. Thomas, Crookes. The senior vicar at St. Thomas's, Robert Warren, saw the potential and ability in the group to connect with a new generation of potential Christians by the group's connection with the EDMC at the time. It was apparent that the Nairn Street Community was considered by Warren to have evangelistic potential at this stage. In a conference by John Wimber, an American evangelist and leader of the Vineyard church, Warren states that he had a 'spiritual encounter' alongside the members of the Nairn Street Community who went to this conference altogether. Robert Warren recalled the conference:

> I found myself in the midst of a group of black-clad young people. When the Spirit came all heaven, and yes all hell, were let loose....In one of those rare moments that I know God has spoken to me the thought 'God wants to add one or two hundred young people like these into the church in the near future' was in my head without my having put it there (Parry, 2000:281).

With the support of the Church Council, Warren sanctioned a special experimental Sunday service which was to be Nine O'clock Service, led by Brain. In April 1986, the first NOS took place. Because of the perceived 'evangelistic potential' of the Nairn Street Community, Brain's Christian group gained recognition and support from the established Church. For instance, in 1989, the Bishop of Sheffield, the Right Reverend David Lynn, confirmed one hundred people in a NOS service (Parry, 2000:283). The confirmation ceremony showed the Church's recognition of

the NOS's ability to draw in young people; by then, the NOS had grown from a small group to a congregation of 500 people.

Although music played a significant role in the NOS, the musicians were not placed at the centre during the service in the church, instead they were placed on the side allegedly to 'avoid any danger of idolatry' as suggested by Parry (2000:282). Worship was expressed through both singing and dancing; words were projected onto screens in the church hall through computerized TV or OHPs so that people could sing and dance at the same time. According to Roland Howard (1996:25), the members of the NOS wrote music, designed the area using lighting and wall-size projections with an intention to make a church resemble a night-club.

Furthermore, it is worth noting that a major development for NOS took place at Greenbelt. In 1988, the NOS organized and presented worship in the 'Big Top' and their worship at Greenbelt inspired a lot of other Christian groups to start alternative worship services (Parry, 2000:283). In 1992, the NOS opened the Greenbelt Festival on the main stage. In Brain's words, it was:

> An explosion of stroboscopic lighting and high-powered computer simulation bombarded the 15,000-strong congregation; performance art and energetic rave dancers led people in worship; loud house music and rap pulsated across the field; and the leaders of the service exhorted everyone to participate in global and planetary salvation, to 'make God happen now' and 'use their lifeforce'(Brain, 1993:165).

Despite Brain's positive review, the response to the NOS worship event in Greenbelt was mixed. Some said it was 'phenomenal' and some said it was 'New Age and blasphemous, pagan, overtly sexual and grotesque' (Parry, 2000: 283-284)). The use of EDM began to cause suspicion from the mainstream charismatics as noted earlier in this chapter.

Although the NOS received criticism regarding their performance at Greenbelt, the momentum of the group still grew. In March 1993, the NOS developed further and held its 'Planetary Mass' in a new venue which was the basement of Ponds Forge sports complex in Sheffield city centre. In the Mass, a combination of elements could be found, ranging from sustained periods of contemplation with incense to dancing, to a combination of Gregorian or Greek Orthodox chants and finally to synth music (Parry, 2000:285). Howard describes the Planetary Mass as follows:

> When one's eyes have adjusted to the ultra violet light, hundreds of black clad figures peer out of the darkness swaying to the swirling, strangely ethereal breaths of ambient techno. The world outside has dissolved into synthesizer and computer-generated mysticism (Howard, 1996b:93).

According to Howard's description above, the members of NOS seemed to be able to create a 'virtual reality' (Sylvan, 2002) through the use of EDM and lighting. Howard's description of the Planetary Mass is also reminiscent of a finding from the field work for Chapter Four in which Christians claim to have experienced a sense of spirituality in the consumption of EDM. The discussion on the notion of

the 'spiritual'/ the 'transcendent' in EDM will be examined more closely later in Chapter Four.

An article written by Till (2006) reveals a very detailed ethnographic account of the NOS. Being a participant observer himself, Till discloses details of how a worship service organized by the members of the NOS was run on 9th April 1989, including in his the description the setting of the church, the lighting, the music, the lyrics and the congregation. Till's ethnographic account of a night of research in the NOS deserves attention here because a descriptive account could help one to visualise the actual event and thus enhance one's understanding of what was actually happening in the NOS teaching service.

Four key elements of the NOS can be identified in Till's ethnographic account. Firstly, it was the use of house music. A piece of down-tempo deep house track from New York, 'Someday' by Ce Ce Rodgers, was played as the background music before the start of the service. As for the actual performance of music during the worship session, a house track was mixed with live music played by a bass player, keyboard player and drummer. The backing house rhythm track was stylistically very similar to the popular club tracks at the time. Secondly, it was the use of night-club visuals. In the NOS service, five video screens were put up around the sides of the church and one was placed in the gallery upstairs. The NOS logo, a number nine created with computer graphics, was shown on the screens. A large mixing desk and an effects rack that contained effects units.

graphic equalisers, tape recorders, compressors, noise gates and other electronic equipments were put near the back. As the worship session started, the video screen also began to display video art, featuring computer generated images, ranging from moving patterns to spinning three-dimensional shapes, stars and cubes. The screen also displayed the title of a song, 'Out on the streets', which was sung by a woman with a powerful voice. Thirdly, it was the integration of songs as a background to biblical readings and prayers. The worship session was followed by a prayer which was said over ambient music. Music was also played as a sonic background as the speaker spoke on that night – the background music was an ambient track featuring a repeating hi-hat pattern and sustained synthesizer chords. Finally, sampled vocals and music were mixed with live music in the worship session. The drummer in the worship band hit a pad that set off a sampled voice saying, 'This is not a programme, this is a worship service' which was blended into a house track. All these musical and visual features resembled the setting of a club more than a church.

Aside from a descriptive account of the NOS teaching service summarized as above, Till also mentions briefly about other NOS services. One of these includes a club service held at regular intervals at the Limit nightclub in Sheffield. Attendance was by invitation only. This nightclub seemed to be a cutting-edge music venue where house music was played even before the acid house explosion of 1987/88, according to Till (2006:102). These club nights featured house music mainly, participants danced to instrumental music or tracks with 'uplifting' vocals.

These club night services were worth mentioning because they bear close comparisons to the music events organised by my research groups in this thesis.

In 1995, the NOS ended in a series of allegations related to sex scandals and abuse of power involving the founder, Chris Brain. Guest and Roberts identify the 'strict authority structures' (Guest, 2002:66) and 'hierarchical leadership structure' (Roberts, 1999:12) as the main causes of the downfall of the NOS. However, a core group involved with NOS re-named themselves as the Nine O'Clock Community (NOC) and this small group of approximately thirty participants continue to meet in a small chapel in Sheffield on the third Sunday once a month (http://www.alternativeworship.org/directory_grouplist.html, accessed on 7/7/06). Although the NOS ended in disgrace, it still remains a key development for the alternative worship movement and the present Christian club events. The theology behind the running of the NOS was very much influenced by a former priest, Mathew Fox, whose creation theology which emphasises the creation over the redemption of God received criticism from the traditional evangelicals. On the other hand, Fox was inspired by the NOS to start his Cosmic Mass in California. The Anglo-American interaction can be seen here through the NOS.

Elements of the NOS, specifically the use of EDM and visuals were copied by other alternative worships. For instance, Andy Thornton, a founder of the Late Late service (an alternative worship group based in Glasgow) was inspired by the

worship session of the NOS at Greenbelt in 1988 and started his own alternative worship group in 1990 which organised a worship event with the use of EDM in a night-club (Parry, 2000:288). The music of the Late Late Service (LLS) was said to be the marriage of folk-rock or reggae with house rhythms (Parry, 2000: 289). Furthermore, the elements of the NOS were copied by another early alternative worship group , Visions based in York in 1991. Visions' dance-based teaching service consisted of half an hour of sung worship which was performed over dance tracks written by those in their congregation. Moreover, they also experimented with video and word loops as part of the service, hoping that this approach would appear to be more relevant to dance music and club culture (Riddell et al, 2000:122). Generally speaking, the worship session of the NOS at Greenbelt in 1988 was also said to have inspired a lot of Christians to start their own alternative worship service (Parry, 2000:283). With regard to media exposure, the Planentary Mass of the NOS was broadcast on BBC World Service in November 1993. The influence of the NOS on the development of Christian worship activities can be best illustrated by a positive review the Archbishop of Canterbury at the time, George Carey about the alternative worship group before their downfall in 1995:

> We must learn to communicate to our rising generation the wonder of worshipping God. The Nine O'Clock Service at St. Thomas', Crookes, in Sheffield is a good example of Christian vision combined with imaginative appropriation of youth culture and music. (Carey. 1994:91).

Since the NOS started in 1986, different Christians groups in the Western culture have set up alternative worship groups modelled on the NOS's emphasis on attracting a 'youth culture' audience and engaging Christian faith with social issues in daily life. I shall now turn to survey the emergence of alternative worship as a global phenomenon in the western countries, including Australasia, North America and Britain.

Survey on Alternative Worship Groups in the West

Australasia

Alternative worship groups have sprung up in Australia/ New Zealand since the mid-1990s; at the time of research, and there are twenty listed as active within an on-line directory (<http://www.alternativeworship.org/directory_grouplist.html>, accessed on 7/7/2006). According to the directory provided by the website, www.alternativeworship.org, the alternative worship groups in Australia include Breathing Space, Café Church, Holy Trinity Port Melbourne, Living Room, Solace, Urban Seed in Melbourne; Café Church and Village in Sydney; Connection Church, South Yarra Community Baptist Church and Surfside Church in Victoria; Godspace in Perth; The Mustard Bush Faith Community in Brisbane and The Other Late Late Service in Adelaide (<http://www.alternativeworship.org/directory_grouplist.html>, accessed on 7/7/2006). Groups in New Zealand include Avenues, Cityside and Graceway in

Auckland; Side Door in Christchurch and Soulplex in Dunedin (<http://www.alternativeworship.org/directory_grouplist.html>, accessed on 7/7/2006). I shall first examine some of the groups in Australia and then turn to discuss those in New Zealand.

Café Church in Melbourne exemplifies a new form of alternative worship group, by meeting in a café outside the church building. It is a group of Christians who want to enjoy friendship with other Christians or non-Christians through the challenge of community, meeting weekly in a café called Babel where they also hope to evangelise to non-Christians in an environment that is informal and interactive (www.cafechurch.org/index/shtml, accessed on 17/12/05). Moreover, they also state on their websites that friendship, openness and community are some of their top priorities. This emphasis on relationships instead of ritualised formality which is characteristic of conventional worship in the Church is a common trait in the emergent church or the 'liquid church' (Ward, 2002). Aside from an emphasis on relationships, meeting outside the church building is another characteristic of the liquid church. For instance, these Christian groups often meet in local cafes. Visions in England is also involved in a project to launch a Christian ambient café venue in York. Malcolm, speaking for Visions, regards a café as a good venue to have deep conversations in a way that a nightclub does not (Riddell et al, 2000:122-123) because light ambient music instead of heavy dance music can be played. During the course of my fieldwork research for Chapter Three, I also discovered that the crew who ran the club night 'Rubiks Cube' also organised a

café night called 'Rubiks Café' at the time of research in March 2003. On the night, a café was open to provide tea and coffee while ambient EDM was played by live DJs.

The laid-back, friendly and relaxed environment of the Café Church is welcomed by its members. It can be reflected in the following comments made by the participants of the Café Church:

> Café Church doesn't work for everyone but it can be addictive, and once you're hooked it's difficult to go back to 'normal' church – Glen (www.cafechurch.org.au/who.htm, accessed on 17/12/05);
>
> I visit churches a lot, most of them do things that seem crazy to outsiders. At Café Church normal people do normal things, could be called sane church – Luscombe (www.cafechurch.org.au/who.htm, accessed on 17/12/05).

The comments above connote a sense of discomfort and unease towards the mainstream church, supporting the decision of alternative worship groups to hold services in 'secular' venues.

Another alternative worship group which also holds activities in a café is Urban Seed in Melbourne which aims at 'engaging faith, community and culture' (http://www.urbanseed.org/index.php, accessed on 7/7/2006). Credo Café is the venue for Urban Seed's open lunch programme which is aimed at those from the city's street culture. Apart from the lunch programme, Urban Seed also runs weekly worship on Sunday which normally includes a call to worship, meditation

or songs, a prayer of confession, scripture reading and a sermon, response, communion and offering, prayers of thanks for gifts and for others. Another group called Godspace in Perth emphasises creative ambience in worship. According to their webpage, their meeting does not have singing, didactic teaching, or liturgies associated with established churches. However, it has 'ambience, discussion, interaction, art, a variety of contemplative exercises and experiences' (http://www.geocities.com/g_westlake/Godspace.html, accessed on 7/7/2006).

Two alternative worship groups in New Zealand deserve particular attention because of their involvement with the arts. Side Door in Christchurch is highly involved with the arts and music. On their website, they proclaim their need for alternative worship because for them it is an exploration of creativity which provides a space and place for them to rest, contemplate and meditate; involves the whole person using all the senses; and builds community (http://www.sidedoor.org.nz/church.htm, accessed on 7/7/2006). Their worship aims to offer an eclectic mix of music, art, poetry, interactivity and installations which is experiential (http://www.sidedoor.org.nz/church.htm, accessed on 7/7/2006). Each year, they also run two installation arts projects at Easter and Christmas. These installation arts aim to provide 'an interactive, mixed media, multi-sensory experience' (http://www.sidedoor.org.nz/art.htm, accessed on 7/7/2006). These artistic ventures are reminiscent of the NOS which also placed emphasis on the use of visuals and EDM that would also provide sensory experiences. Cityside in Auckland also claim that they are 'committed to engaging

with contemporary culture, particularly through the arts' (Riddell et al, 2000:107). Like Side Door, they also hold an art installation for Easter (Riddell et al, 2000:107). They currently run an event called Sonar which is a combination of music-making, projected visuals and prayer stations (http://cityside.org.nz/node/18, accessed on 7/7/2006). Moreover, like the NOS, they also use visuals in their weekly service on Sundays (Guest & Taylor, 2006:57).

Based on this commentary on the activities happening in alternative worship groups in Australia and New Zealand, two characteristics of these groups can be identified. Firstly, it is their intention to develop connection with the urban dwellers in the city by holding activities outside the church buildings, e.g. café in the city centre. This finding reflects the latest idea of church development - 'liquid church' (Ward, 2002) which emphasises relationships built outside the church building. The theorisation of the liquid church will be looked at more closely in the following chapter. Secondly, it can be seen that some of the groups stress the importance of sensory experience in worship practices. By including arts installation in their Christian activities, they apparently underscore the importance of sensory experiences in religious practices. Such emphasis on experiences in Christian practices surely has comparison with some findings in Chapter Four in which a Christian mission team foregrounds bodily experiences, e.g. dance in their discourse about worship. This observation will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

North America

Alternative worship groups in North America have a different agenda towards the church when compared to most of the alternative worship groups in Australia. The Australian groups tend to emphasise that their motivation is to try to find a new way of worship that is relevant to themselves as opposed to those in the mainstream church[28]. Alternative worship groups in North America are generally clearer that their intention is to bring others into the church. Alternative worship groups which use contemporary music in their services include Urban Christian Center in Detroit; Alternative Worship Service at Northbridge United Methodist Church in Northridge, California; Alternative Worship at St.Paul's, Waterloo, Illinois and contemplative worship group at St. Andrews, Ontario, Canada (www.alt-worship.org, accessed on 7/1/06).

Urban Christian Center based in Detroit inner city uses drama, music and language specific to their local youth culture by incorporating music styles and aspects of youth culture which are popular among the young people in their local community. Their website also highlights 'cultural relevance' in their activities (http://www.alt-worship.org, accessed on 7 January 2006). Alternative Worship Service, on the other hand, tries to utilize live rock music, drama, dance and multimedia to deliver worship in ways that are culturally specific to young people. Similarly, Alternative Worship at St Paul's, Illinois, uses different forms of

contemporary music such as jazz, folk, rock and many others along with video clips, drama and dance to deliver worship in contemporary styles. The contemplative worship group at St. Andrew's, Ontario, includes drumming, stretching, scripture, silence and prayer in the sanctuary. They are categorised according to their level of involvement with contemporary music instead of traditional Christian music, e.g. hymnody and organ music. They can be understood as Christian groups which aim at using contemporary music to engage with a particular demographic group, i.e. young adults in their teens, twenties and early thirties.

Furthermore, twenty-three US Christian groups are listedthe directory of the alternative worship website (<http://www.alternativeworship.org/directory_grouplist.htm>, accessed on 7/7/2006). Amongst them are two groups which have elements that have similarities to the NOS. For instance, Church of the Apostles in Seattle, WA, describe their worship as a 'techno-modern' mix of art, ambient music, projection and video (<http://www.apostleschurch.org./community_worship.php>, accessed on 7/7/2006). Their use of the EDM and video art are reminiscent of the NOS elements found in Till's article (2006). Moreover, The Door in Memphis, TN uses messages from the Bible illustrated through graphics, video clips, music and *dance* in their worship service (http://www.heartsongchurch.net/, accessed on 7/7/2006).

These elements are reminiscent of those of the NOS.

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[28] This separatist characteristic is suggestive of the ethos of the Jesus People Movement in which different Jesus communes were set up as opposed to the established church as mentioned in Chapter

It should be acknowledged that there are other Christian groups that use EDM in their activities, which are not included in these lists of alternative worship groups in America. For example, they are the 'clubworshippers' in Philadelphia and 'The Cosmic Mass' led by Mathew Fox in California which are not part of the online network. The former Christian group has been mentioned in *Rave Culture and Religion* (St John, 2003) in a discussion on the relationship between rave culture and different forms of religion. Matthew Fox's Cosmic Mass in Oakland, California, is larger in scale and has been criticised traditional evangelicals. Fox advocates Creation Spirituality whose principles include creativity, play, pleasure and God of delight and these principles have been criticised by many Christian theologians (Lau, 2006: 86). It is described as follows in the official website of The Cosmic Mass:

> The Cosmic Mass, rooted in Western liturgical tradition, integrates live music, electronica, multi-media imagery and eastern and indigenous spiritual elements to create a multi-cultural, intergenerational and ecumenical form of worship. Celebration of this Mass has uplifted and inspired young and old of DIVERSE faiths and TRADITIONS from coast to coast! (www.thecosmicmass.org/pages/about_tcm/about_tcm.html, accessed on 8/1/05)

Also, Fox has been significant in the development of a contemporary Christian green/ecofeminist/creation-centred spirituality (Lau, 2006: 86). Like the at participants of the NOS as noted earlier in this chapter, Fox is also concerned about social and environmental issues.

One.

Britain

There are forty-nine British alternative worship groups in the directory of the website, www.alternativeworship.org. Some of the groups are worth noting in particular because they exemplify some key elements of the NOS, that is the use of EDM and visuals. Revelation[29] in West Hampstead , Soul:space[30] in Holloway, Sanctum[31] in Horsham, Search in Basingstoke (<http://www.searchingworship.org/alt%20worship.html>, accessed on 7/7/2006), Ascension[32] in Stoke-on-Trent, B1[33] in Birmingham and Host[34] in Bradford all make use of visuals in their services. Furthermore, Sanctum, Search and B1 use EDM in their services. Creating an ambient atmosphere through the use of EDM and visuals seems to be of prime importance for these groups. This point can be illustrated as follows:

> Sanctum is such an experiment – no sermon – no singing – lots of contemporary visual images – soft lighting – chilled music – participation – room for questions as well as certainties (http://www.sanctum.org.uk, accessed on 7/7/2006);
>
> Scratchy video loops play out on make-shift screens. Ambient music or dance music provides a discrete soundtrack in the background (Search, Basingstoke, http://www.searchingworship.org/alt%20worship.html, accessed on 7/7/2006);
>
> If you try us out, you may find yourself listening to ambient, dance… Video and visual imagery augment spoken communication (http://www.b1church.net/what/, accessed on 7/7/2006)

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[29] http://www.churchnw6.co.uk, accessed on 7/7/2006
[30] http://www.saintlukeschurch.org.uk/services.html, accessed on 7/7/2006
[31] http://www.sanctum.org.uk, accessed on 7/7/2006
[32] http://www.ascension.uk.net/web3.htm, accessed on 7/7/2006

Based on these commentaries available on the groups' websites, it can be seen that they have to some degree borrowed certain aspects of the NOS in their current services.

Apart from the groups put into the directory of the 'alternativeworship.org' website, attention needs to be drawn to two other British alternative worship groups for their comparatively long history in the movement. The first group is the Late Late Service (LLS), a Christian community based in Glasgow, Scotland. Andy Thornton, an early leading figure of LLS, developed the idea after attending the worship event organized by the NOS at the Greenbelt Festival in 1988. In 1990, Thornton along with Doug Gay and a small group of friends, began to organize an alternative worship service which was distinct from soft-rock Charismatic worship. LLS began to take shape in a 'Church of Scotland General Assembly Youth Event' in 1990 as Thornton was asked to lead and organize the music (Parry, 2000:287; Riddell et al, 2000:113). Thornton had an opportunity to experiment in this youth event because it was an isolated worship event. Together with his friends who were interested in media art forms, he created something of an alternative worship service in the event and received positive feedback. However, they realized that it needed refinement to turn the worship service into a regular event. In the following six months, the group began to experiment while they organised a monthly worship event in a local club. However, this club event organised by the LLS did not last long and soon moved to St. Silas's Church in the

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[33] http://www.blchurch.net/what/, accessed on 7/7/2006
[34] http://www.altworship.org.uk/, accessed on 7/7/2006

West End of Glasgow on Sunday evening after persuading a local minister (Parry, 2000:288).

In 1993, the LLS changed from a monthly service to a cycle of four weekly meetings (Parry, 2000: 291). They were: i) a Quiet Service which was 'contemplative' in nature, deploying a lot of visuals and ambient music and acoustic music; ii) a 'Pastoral/Community night' which was for members to discuss and explore faith in a more intimate environment and where music did not play a dominant part; iii) a Celebration Service which included dance music; iv) a Teaching Night which was sometimes led by outside speakers (Riddell et al, 2000:114). Moreover, they began to grow as they gained more exposure in the media and different Christian music events. For instance, Parry (2000:292) notes that in the same year, LLS was commissioned to write music for an hour long music Christmas special broadcast on Radio 1. It should be noted that LLS has appeared on the main stage of the Greenbelt Festival and on Channel Four Television (Riddell et al, 2000:114) By 1995, LLS had expanded from a small group of about twenty to a group of fifty members.

Despite the departure of two leading figures, Doug Gay in 1995 and Andy Thornton in 1997, both due to career reasons, the LLS continued and has been running for over a decade. Its congregation is currently around fifty people (http://www.alt-worship.org/altg.html, accessed n 14/7/06). At the time of research, LLS runs four times a month on Sundays; Quiet Service and Celebration

Service are run on the first and third Sundays while Community Night and Education Night are run on the second and the fourth Sundays. The LLS is actually organised without any full time-workers but instead has eleven co-ordinators who lead in different aspects of the congregation's community life (http://www.alt-worship.org/altg.html, accessed n 14/7/06). Their democratic structures can be illustrated well as follows:

> Over the decade that the LLS has been around the sense of community has grown and strengthened. At times we've had to struggle hard to maintain a fully democratic structure and with a shared sense of responsibility, but over the last few years the tendency has been to 'deformalize' our structures and to try not to remain fixed in one way of doing things. The LLS can be seen as an example of non-linear cooperation, where there is a balance or tension between integration and self-assertion...This year we dropped many 'official' roles (the facilitators) and opted for a more informal 'system of favour' to keep things running, although there is still a steering group that acts as a focus for organization (Riddell et al, 2000:115).

The comparatively less hierarchical structure found in the LLS along with its close connection with other local Christian bodies (Parry, 2000:287) are, from my own perspective, also the advantages to its longevity when compared to the reported hierarchical structures of the NOS(Roberts, 1999:12; Guest, 2002:66).

'Visions' is another UK alternative worship group which has been operating for fifteen years. The history of Visions could be traced back to 1989 when a group of Christians met and discussed using an abandoned warehouse as a Christian music and arts venue as part of the events for a mission in the city of York in the UK (Riddell et al, 2000:122). The group decided they wished to hold

a late-night multi-media service similar to the NOS. With the support of Graham Cray (The Bishop of Maidstone, The Diocese of Canterbury) and an affiliation with the church of St. Michael-le-Belfray, the group held their first 'Warehouse' (the former body of Visions) meeting in August 1991. It was a private experiment open for the church leaders and elders only to give comments, help and advice to the group. The first public service of Visions took place in March 1992 beginning as a monthly Teaching Service which operated for two years. It began with approximately half an hour of 'dance worship' in which original dance compositions written, mixed and recorded by the group were used (Parry, 2000:297; Riddell et al, 2000:123). The worship was then followed by a time of religious teaching. This service would be replaced by a club service every two or three months where 'secular' EDM was played; the service lasted up to three hours (Parry, 2000:297). This club service should be in highlighted in this thesis, as subsequent club nights which I shall discuss in Chapters Three and Four have copied a similar format. The teaching service and club service were subsequently combined to form a Celebration Service where original music produced by the members of Visions was played, along with commercial music.

Visions, like the NOS and the LLS, has an evangelistic agenda similar to that of my research groups. Visions changed its approach to the service to accommodate the needs of EDMC shortly after their first public service:

> This service happened once a month. Over time we gradually realized that this approach wasn't very effective within a culture that is so visual and

> experiential in nature. We experimented, becoming more visual in our teaching; using video and word loops as part of a service which became more integrated in its approach to the subject being presented whilst still being relevant to dance music and club culture (Riddell et al, 2000:122).

Although the group members admit to not being evangelists, they believe that they can indeed generate a good reputation for Christianity in the local scene through their club involvement and community ethics (Parry, 2000:300; originally in www.greenbelt.org.uk/altgrps/altg.html). This can be further elucidated by Parry as follows:

> The three Visions services still take place at St Cuthbert's Church on a monthly cycle and the commitment to dance music and club scene remains. But what continues to enhance its legitimacy as an Alternative Worship group is that far from being an extension of the church youth group or merely influenced by contemporary issues and styles, it has fully immersed itself in the sub-cultures of those it wishes to identify with (Parry, 2000: 299-300).

These decisions suggest that Visions have religious agenda and want to become identified with the club scene in York. These two aims are linked. Likewise, a Christian group that is going to be looked at in Chapter Four also wants to become part of the club scene in order to facilitate their religious agenda, that is evangelisation.

Evaluation

The Christian groups who are involved with this form of alternative worship often try to downplay their evangelistic agenda in the way they describe their ethos. The hesitation to engage in high-profile evangelism can be reflected in

Collins's statements as he defines alternative worship. Although it is crystal clear that the intention of alternative worship is to move people into a *new* form of church, Collins claims that alternative worship is 'not intended to transition people into *existing* forms of church' (Collins, www.alternativeworship.org/definitions_definition.html, accessed on 25/11/05). Moreover, he also states that alternative worship is 'not an attempt to reach particular social or cultural groups' (Collins, www.alternativeworship.org/definitions_definition.html, accessed on 25/11/05). This pretence can be revealed by the following statement which suggests that alternative worship groups indeed target particular cultural groups. Parry puts,

> There has been throughout history a deliberate effort to target and infiltrate a particular sub-culture which has in turn affected the development and presentation of its services and music. But it also needs emphasising that the tendency within the creative worship category is for groups to instigate an Alternative Worship service of their own volition and, primarily, for themselves – each one born out of and reflecting the needs and musical interests of their particular group. Once established, such a worship service will inevitably attract like-minded individuals; evangelism, then, more as a by-product than a root cause (Parry, 2000:300-301).

In light of Parry's argument, alternative worship groups can 'attract' people, Christians or non-Christians who have similar musical tastes as they do. Thus, evangelisation can take place without an overt evangelistic proclamation. The downplaying of overt evangelistic agenda is in some way evidenced here.

The apparent downplaying of evangelism is demonstrated in a case study in this thesis. In Chapter Five, the pastor of a church called Tribe in New York was

asked if there were any evangelistic activities organised by his church. Being a club DJ and pastor of Tribe, Kenny Mitchell replied:

> We use music to set atmosphere, to portray a story in the sense of a journey, and to put out relevant themes we feel are close to God's heart for people that are there. Instead of using the 'pulpit' to get across the sermon/word of God, we are able to use the turntables and the art of Djing to mix up the relevant words, themes, textures we feel need to be portrayed. By doing that there is a high percentage of 'God Tracks' that are played and our hope is that God uses that to touch people or take them to a new place in their thinking or experience of God and his people (personal communication, 31/05/05).

Mitchell's statement implies a notion, 'worship evangelism', which is often discussed amongst the evangelical Christians. When explaining how worship evangelism happens, Morgenthaler says it is mainly through non-Christians' observation of 'the real relationship between worshippers and God' (Morgenthaler, 1995:88). To illustrate this point further, she quotes songwriter and pastor Mark Altrogge of Lord of Life Church in Indiana, in the United States:

> Good worship is just by nature evangelistic. That's why I don't think to myself, "I want to design worship to be evangelistic." In other words, I don't design worship primarily with unbelievers in mind. But I design it *with* them in mind. When we talk together in our leadership team, we say, "Everything we do at Lord of Life on Sunday morning — even Christian things — should be as sensitive and understandable to unbelievers as possible." So, even though our worship is definitely focused on Christians worshipping, I believe wholeheartedly that there is an evangelistic aspect there (Morgenthaler, 1995: 89).

Hence, alternative worship groups can justify their acts of worship not only through incarnation theology which suggests that God can be found in all forms of

human culture (Baker, Gay & Brown, 2003:121), but also through the theological framework of worship evangelism proposed by Gustafson as he defines worship evangelism as 'wholehearted worshippers calling the whole world to the whole hearted worship of God... [and] the fusion of the power of God's presence with the power of the gospel' (Morgenthaler, 1995:93; originally in Gustafson, 1991:50). Although the theological idea of worship evangelism appears legitimate for Christians, such an approach to worship can sometimes seem self-deceiving because it depicts a 'spiritual' realm which is unintelligible to those they want to convert. Therefore such theological framework can be problematic because the receptor audience may not intuit what evangelicals perceive as 'spiritual' realm.

Lynch (2002:49) may help to illustrate further the observation that alternative worship groups downplay the intention to convert. Lynch sees post-evangelical values in alternative worship groups and I shall now turn to elaborate on the idea of 'the post-evangelical'. The term is coined by Dave Tomlinson (1995) who leads an alternative worship group Soul:space based in Holloway at the time of writing (http://www.saintlukeschurch.org.uk/services.html, accessed on 7/7/06). Tomlinson argues, 'to be post-evangelical is to take as given many of the assumptions of evangelical faith, while at the same time moving beyond its perceived limitations' (Tomlinson, 1995:7). Whilst adhering to beliefs such as the existence of God as a reality beyond oneself (Tomlinson, 1995: 93) and the reverence of the Bible as a guide and inspiration for Christian living (Tomlinson, 1995: 104), the post-evangelical also remains critical towards the allegation of

absolute truth in evangelical theological thinking (Tomlinson, 1995: 75). 'Religious truth, for the post-evangelical, therefore emerges out of interaction between the Christian tradition and the personal perceptions, thoughts and values of the individual believer' (Lynch, 2002:40). In light of this, Lynch contends that 'personal authenticity' which alludes to the 'emphasis on pursuing meaning in a way that is true to oneself' (Lynch, 2002:40) is a key characteristic of the post-evangelical beliefs. According to Lynch, evidence can be found in a meeting of an alternative worship group, Holy Joe's, which Tomlinson previously led:

> [In a discussion at Holy Joe's] one man was brave enough to admit that he wanted a more conformist experience of Christianity and that he struggled when faced with too much uncertainty and ambiguity. Thankfully, the group resisted any temptation to argue with him into a different position, and simply reassured him that his feelings were perfectly valid (Tomlinson, 1995:50, in Lynch, 2002:40).

The fluidity in alternative worship groups' theological thinking as reflected in the statement above can be, to a certain extent, compared to the ethos of alternative worship which suggests that Christians reinvent 'faith expression for themselves within their own cultures' (Collins, <http://www.alternativeworship.org/definitions_definition.html>, accessed on 25/11/2005). In such a depiction, alternative worship groups are represented as open-minded and inclusive with regard to religious faith. These groups, then, are perceived to have downplayed conversion – a key feature of traditional evangelicalism.

Nevertheless, the claims that make alternative worship groups appear theologically all-embracing and reluctant to proclaim a missionary agenda can be problematised by the following statement made by Graham Cray as he responds to the claims made by the post-evangelical:

> *Innovation in mission* has always been a characteristic of evangelicalism. We should expect new forms of mission and evangelism to be emerging and they are. Alpha courses, seeker services, network rather than neighbourhood-based church plants, *alternative worship* and youth congregation are already evident; more is surely to come (Cray, 1997:14-15; emphasis mine).

These contradictions regarding the (non)missionary intention of alternative worship may suggest that there are hidden agendas in contemporary evangelical activities owing to the evangelicals' concern about how the Church is perceived by non-Christians. A recent study conducted by two leading Religious Studies scholars, Heelas and Woodland (2005), suggests that people often leave the Church because they find their values are incompatible with those upheld by the institution (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005:120). Some find the Church manipulative while some find it 'dull', 'cold', 'formal', 'unexciting' and 'dead' (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005:, 120, 121). Such negative perceptions of the Church may affect how evangelicals plan and promote alternative worship. It is likely that, in order to make the experience of church appear more exciting, popular EDM which appeals to young people is used by evangelicals and overt evangelisation is downplayed in the way they describe and run alternative worship services. However, what is

implied in Cray's statement above is that a missionary agenda — be it overt or hidden, is embedded in the heart of alternative worship.

Conclusion

This chapter has looked at the contested notion of alternative worship and the historical development of the alternative worship movement by studying alternative worship groups in the UK, North America and Australasia. It has also discussed general observations found in these groups, observing that worship evangelism and incarnation theology are adopted as the theological frameworks to legitimate their acts of worship. Moreover, this chapter has also looked at the contestable idea that alternative worship is an 'innovation in mission' (Cray, 1997:14). Furthermore, a survey on these alternative worship groups also demonstrates Christians' endeavours to express their faith through engaging with popular music culture, that is EDMC. We shall then move onto the first case study in this thesis — Christian club night 'Rubiks Cube' which is organised by a group of Christian DJs who have been trained in a Christian music missionary organization, New Generation Ministries (NGM) based in Thornbury, Bristol. In contrast to most alternative worship groups, NGM exhibits an overt evangelistic agenda, aiming to use EDM to facilitate their missionary goals.