

# **One Tongue or Many?**

A Negotiation of Global and Local through the English  
Language in a Dutch Neo-Pentecostal Church

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*And how hear we every man in our own tongue?*

Acts 2:8 (KJV)

## Introduction

I clearly remember the very first time I visited the City Life Church<sup>1</sup> in The Hague. A friend, who prepared to be baptized this service, had invited me to attend the happening. On this Sunday, the church was about to experience the baptism of a dozen people, and was ready for it: the small swimming pool had been set up and filled with water, the cameramen had installed themselves, and the hundreds of church attendees started praising and worshipping. Although I had come to witness baptism, my focus soon began to shift: I became fascinated by the overwhelming presence of the English language in the church, full of Dutch-speaking people. It seemed to be everywhere; and certainly not limited to the church's name. I started conducting fieldwork in this congregation to further explore this phenomenon. And, indeed the use of the English language is noteworthy.

For instance, the sermons, which are usually held in Dutch, have English titles such as: 'God is a great God', 'No more excuses', 'Vision Sunday', or 'Walk the Talk'. In these sermons, the pastors often use Anglophone Bible translations, such as the New King James Version and the New International Version, or 'the Message'. The Message is a paraphrase of the Bible, which aims to use a more 'contemporary' language. To show an example: the following text (Romans 5:3-5, Message) was often cited:

*There's more to come: We continue to shout our praise even when we're hemmed in with troubles, because we know how troubles can develop passionate patience in us, and how that patience in turn forges the tempered steel of virtue, keeping us alert for whatever God will do next. In alert expectancy such as this, we're never left feeling shortchanged. Quite the contrary—we can't round up enough containers to hold everything God generously pours into our lives through the Holy Spirit!* (Field notes 29 Dec. 2013)

Especially short parts of sentences such as "There's more to come", "Whatever God will do next", and "alert expectancy" are repeated, often integrated in Dutch sentences. Often, the reading was done in Dutch first, and afterwards in English, mostly using the Message. The pastor usually stated that it (the English language) "just sounds better", or "is more powerful" (Field Notes 26 Jan. 14).

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<sup>1</sup> In this paper I will often make use of the abbreviation 'CLC', or 'CLC Den Haag', as is done by City Life Church Den Haag itself, to make this piece more readable. All these names will be used interchangeably.

It is also clear that the English translations or paraphrase play a large role in the preparation of such a sermon. Pastor Mathilde van de Ridder, for example, once used the non-existing word *lepra's* in Dutch, to speak of people who suffer from leprosy, whereas a correct form could have been *leprozen* or *melaatsen*. The English translation however is 'lepers', which comes very close to the self-coined term *lepra's* the pastor used. Other 'creative' linguistic creations include sentences such as "*Wat is jouw next step?*" (What is your next step?). Here, English and Dutch are used interchangeably and combined in surprising new words and phrases.

Furthermore, the different age groups in the church all have English names: Frontline, Oldtimers, Girlz, to name but a few. In addition, the authorization forms present on each seat used for the offering, include biblical texts in English. Moreover, the pastor encourages to donate by means of oral encouragements which also make use of texts from the Message, such as: "the world of the generous gets larger and larger" (Message, Proverbs 11:24). In the 'bookshop' one can choose from a wide range of Dutch and English Christian (mostly Pentecostal) literature. Lastly, the flyers announcing the 'men event', or other gatherings, all use English.

There are also many visiting pastors speaking in English. I have heard for example pastors from Jakarta, Indonesia and Kampala, Uganda, amongst others. These preachers are supported by live translation, usually by one of CLC's pastors. Moreover, many English hymns are sung. I was told, that approximately fifty per cent of the praise and worship should consist of English hymns (Adam); this also matches my experiences during the church services. These songs come from the latest Hillsong<sup>2</sup> albums, and have titles such as 'You never fail' or 'I surrender'.

Not only in church, but also in the personal religious experiences of the believers the English language plays an important role. Many prefer to read the Bible in English, and almost every church attendee possesses a copy of the Message. In addition, many religious books are read in English, just as most listen to English worship music. What I found perhaps most striking were the people who told me they pray in English. In one of the most intimate religious moments one can imagine, the time of individual prayer, native Dutch speakers speak to God in English. Why?

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<sup>2</sup> Hillsong is a transnational network of large, neo-Pentecostal congregations, producing its own, immensely popular Hillsong worship music. In a later part of this writing, Hillsong will be further discussed (p. 25), and a definition of neo-Pentecostalism will be provided (p. 13).

### *The emic perspective*

When I asked<sup>3</sup> my respondents, in Dutch, why the English language was so present in CLC, I received a great variety of answers. The reasons to pray in English and read from an English Bible translation were diverse.<sup>4</sup>

The answer I most commonly received was, as Ruth put it: “English just sounds prettier”<sup>5</sup>. Most agreed that the English language sounds better, or that it is more ‘poetic’<sup>6</sup>, as Paul said. In line with this argument people told me how reading the Bible in English is refreshing. It is very well possible that one has heard certain passages over and over again and has been saturated; the text has been exhausted and one cannot discover ‘new’ elements in it. When one reads the same passage in English, it could be refreshing: one sees connections, questions or messages to which one had been blind before.

Another common element in the answers was the supply of Anglophone Pentecostal materials available to the believers. Ruth uses for example the ‘Holy-Bible app’ on her smartphone, which enables reading the Bible in countless languages and translations. Chloe pointed out that the body of Pentecostal literature is mainly written in English. This, she says, has made her develop her ‘spiritual vocabulary’<sup>7</sup> mainly in English. Moreover, the connection to the presence of English in the rest of society was also underlined. Advertisements and TV-shows are mainly in English, so why not the church? Also, some respondents mentioned that their conversion<sup>8</sup> had taken place in an Anglophone environment; when they were working, or doing an internship abroad, or when they attended a Disciple Traineeship<sup>9</sup>. English is the language in which one has felt most closeness to God; hence, one keeps using this language regularly in moments of prayer and reflection.

Some responses were somewhat less common, but should also be mentioned here. I, for example, heard a few times that “English is closer to the original texts”<sup>10</sup>. I was highly surprised by this statement. Lea even said that this was “just a plain fact”<sup>11</sup>. Another interviewee told me that there are spiritual connections to the Anglo-Saxon world, instead of

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<sup>3</sup> I asked the specific question: why would one would speak English to God when Dutch is one’s mother tongue?

<sup>4</sup> In order to prevent confusion, every quote translated from Dutch to English will be highlighted by a footnote with the original Dutch translation. In this way, it is also clear which quotes have been originally in English, and which not.

<sup>5</sup> “Engels klinkt gewoon mooier”

<sup>6</sup> ‘poëtischer’

<sup>7</sup> ‘geestelijke woordenschat’

<sup>8</sup> As my reader shall note later on in this writing, one’s talk about one’s conversion is not a self-explanatory given. One constructs the narrative of one’s turn always after the event concerned, which causes all sorts of political issues to be integrated in them. Therefore caution is needed in coping with the concept of conversion.

<sup>9</sup> A ‘DTS’ is a concept I come across often in my encounters with Dutch Pentecostals. It basically is a year-abroad-programme for youngsters, where one is taught (neo-Pentecostal) faith, and where one also participates in evangelization campaigns, or outreaches. The founding organization is YWAM, Youth With A Mission; also other organizations and churches host such trajectories, but then named differently.

<sup>10</sup> “Engels staat dicht bij de grondtekst”

<sup>11</sup> “gewoon een feit”

for example the German-speaking world. The German speaking world is too liberal, whereas City Life Church originates in the Anglophone Great Awakening. English is thus a language charged with a spiritual dimension (Paul). Another given explanation coined was the use of English as a strategy to reach out to The Hague's large expat community.

Some of the arguments made sounded convincing to me. Indeed, City Life Church operates in a highly globalized religious field, and Dutch society is also full of Anglophone elements. Moreover, it can indeed be refreshing to look at an often-read text in a different language. But mostly, this inquiry was puzzling: what exactly does it mean that English sounds 'prettier', and why would it be so? Why does one state that English is closer to the original texts, whereas mainly a paraphrase of the Bible (the Message) is used in church? How can it be a strategy to impact expats when there are already many other (fully international) churches where one can become member of a church where only English is spoken? And, is the idea that English 'just sounds better' enough reason to sing half of all songs in English, to pray in English, and to read an English version of the Bible?

It was clear from many answers that my respondents had consciously started thinking about this question; as I had asked them to participate in this research, it had never caught their attention as much as it had caught mine. One must be careful not to misinterpret, but it seemed as if the answers given did not match the ways in which people actually dealt with English. It felt as if I was questioning an obviousness, something completely natural. The church members did not so much question; the use of English seemed merely a given, but not to me.

### *The etic perspective*

To come with explanations for this practice, I started a thorough search for academic literature describing or discussing similar phenomena. After a long time, I found the description of the French scholar Cédric Mayrargue. In his research in the Francophone African country Benin, he encountered many Pentecostals who incorporated English sentences in their worship practices, such as 'Praise the Lord' (instead of *Louez le Seigneur*), or an English pronunciation of 'Amen'. Most of the Anglophone influences are brought to Benin by churches from Ghana and Nigeria, such as the Church of Pentecost, and the Redeemed Christian Church of God, but these might also appear in independent churches. Élisabeth Dorier-Apprill takes notice of a similar phenomenon: people in Kinshasa who would naturally speak French or another regional language, follow Bible classes in English, often offered by foreign churches (Dorier-Apprill 2001, 304). Mayrargue writes: "English seems to have a greater evocative power than French, even though it is not understood by all those who are listening to these messages" (Mayrargue 2001, 286). Also, in the fieldwork I conducted, this became obvious. My respondents said that although they read from scripture in English, they understand it best in Dutch; this also means that they often have to

search for the meaning of words in dictionaries, Yet, they still hold on to the English language.

Dorier-Apprill understands this in the light of the upward mobility of the young people who are involved in these practices (2001, 304), but only briefly discusses the matter. Mayrargue, in a somewhat more elaborate fashion, situates the use of English in what he calls 'modernity'. This use of English is, together with the type of clothing (Western suits instead of the local dress) and the great use of technology (massive audio and video systems instead of traditional instruments and sounds) categorized as 'modern' (2001, 285-6). Unfortunately, Mayrargue does not describe what he means with modernity; in the light of the ongoing, immensely complicated debate about the term's meaning, a definition would have been helpful. Nonetheless, implicitly, Mayrargue seems to define modernity in the abandoning of its opposite, that is, 'tradition'. Although it is unfortunate that he does not elaborate more, nor distinguishes between modernity as such and perceptions of modernity by those who employ these 'symbols of modernity', it has inspired me to observe a resembling development in CLC Den Haag. It will be a vital part of my main argument, which I will now present.

### *Main argument and outline*

In this thesis, I will prove that the use of the English language in the church services, other activities of CLC, and the private praying and Bible reading of its adherents, is part of a two-sided negotiation: that of the global and the local, functioning in an inextricable linkage. This negotiation of the use of English in CLC Den Haag takes place in two different instances: firstly, it operates in a discourse presenting CLC as 'modern' and distinguishing itself from 'traditional' churches; secondly, the English language serves as a mediator of authority from global Pentecostal stars to the local pastors of CLC Den Haag.

To properly build this argument, first of all the City Life Church should be introduced, and the methodological issues of the fieldwork should be laid out. Afterwards, the debate on the global and the local in the study of Pentecostalism will be investigated. After having set up a solid framework on this matter, this thesis will continue by identifying the global environment in which CLC functions, and which role the English language has in this context. Then, the local *milieu* of City Life Church will be examined, in connection to the use of English. In this locality, two main functions of English will be identified. Firstly, English is of great importance in the identity construction of CLC, in which it is presented as a 'modern', 'dynamic' and 'contemporary' church, whereas this stands in contrast to 'traditional', 'static' and 'old-fashioned' churches –the use of English is an important strategy in the construction of this dichotomy. Secondly, the English language –spoken in a similar fashion and vocabulary as important Pentecostal figures– is one of the key mediators of authority to the local CLC Den Haag. In this discussion there will also be room for other techniques mediating

authority. Finally, the conclusion of the relation of the global and the local will be discussed, and the implications of this research and the opening for further investigations will be considered.

## Introducing City Life Church

City Life Church Den Haag is based in a former Roman-Catholic church building in the south-west of The Hague, a lower middle-class neighbourhood. On Sunday mornings, CLC hosts three church services, with together approximately 1200-1400 visitors. During the week there are many activities organized for all sorts of age groups, which have catchy names: elevate (25-35), frontline (35+), the all stars (high school students), etc. The 'senior pastors', leading the congregation, are Erald and Mathilde van de Ridder. Statistics of church membership were not available, but according to my own experiences in City Life Church Den Haag, members are predominantly young, that is between 20 and 40 years old. In addition, most people in CLC have a background in the historic orthodox reformed denominations<sup>12</sup> and in Evangelical or more classical<sup>13</sup> Pentecostal denominations. Next to this group, there is a considerable presence of, especially young adult, migrant Christians, attending the church services; most of them have their roots in Latin-America and Sub-Saharan Africa. I rarely came across members without any background in Christianity (Field notes 29 Dec. 2013).

In 1995, the independent Evangelical congregation *Sion*, in *Voorburg*, suburban The Hague, received its new leaders, Erald and Mathilde. Before their coming, it is said that this church was in decline: "They asked for help. (...) We become older, greyer, smaller."<sup>14</sup> (Paul). However, after Erald and Mathilde began their ministry, it is said that *Sion* began to flourish. After some years a new, larger building was needed, and in 2007 the former O.L. of Fatima Church was bought from the Roman Catholic Church in The Hague, which was in the process of a large reorganisation. In 2010, *Sion* changed its name, and started calling itself 'City Life Church'. In the same year it also 'had the privilege of welcoming congregations in the family', in Den Helder<sup>15</sup>, Utrecht, Assen and Zwolle (clcdenhaag.nl). In the year 2013-2014, CLC Den Haag further expanded its church network by experimenting with two 'church campuses' in Tilburg and Rotterdam. In both cities there are currently church services being held on a weekly or biweekly basis. Finally, in April 2014, CLC became part of the Hillsong network, officially confirming its close relationship with this important player in the neo-Pentecostal market.

It is interesting to note that the history of the church is explained by my respondents, and the official CLC-website as 'the journey' of Erald and Mathilde. Apparently it is not the congregation, but the pastors who are most important in determining the identity of CLC;

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<sup>12</sup> These denominations are the *Gereformeerde Kerken (Vrijgemaakt)* (Reformed Churches [Liberated]), the *Gereformeerde Bond binnen de Protestantse Kerk in Nederland*, (The Reformed Council within the Protestant Church of the Netherlands), and the *Christelijk Gereformeerde Kerken* (Christian Reformed Churches).

<sup>13</sup> Most classic Pentecostals come from independent Evangelical or Pentecostal congregations or the *Vergadering van Gelovigen* (Plymouth Brethren).

<sup>14</sup> "Ze vroegen om hulp. (...) We worden ouder, grijzer en kleiner."

<sup>15</sup> "het voorrecht gehad om een dochtergemeente te mogen verwelkomen in de familie"

they decided to search for a new building, they felt the need to change the name, and they initiated contacts with 'new' movements in the Pentecostal field (Jedidja). The history and the identity of the church and its pastors are deeply interwoven, which is a crucial given in understanding the dynamics of the church. The central position of the pastors might therefore be well suited to form the starting point for a further inquiry into CLC Den Haag.

The senior pastors stand on top of the well-developed and strong hierarchical structure of CLC. Erald and Mathilde are ranked highest in their congregation, assisted by a team called *staf*. The staff members are five couples, including the son and daughter of Erald and Mathilde with their partners. They coach the different groups in the church: these are the 'teams' and 'connect groups'. Every church member is encouraged to become a member of a team, in which one can 'serve', and a *connectgroep* to keep in touch with fellow church members. These serving teams have different specialties: there are technical support teams, to provide the church with multimedia facilities and to help in recording and filming, there is the *welkomteam* which makes sure visitors are properly welcomed in church, there's the children's team, and so on. Different staff members are responsible for the teams. The *connectgroepen*, which basically every CLC-member attends, are biweekly house gatherings. In these get-togethers, biblical and personal issues are shared. Most groups have approximately ten to fifteen members, of whom one person is 'connect-leader', and one 'assistant-leader'. Then, for every three individuals in the connect-group, there is a 'bubble-leader'. Above the connect-leader, there is someone who holds responsibility of a collective of different connect-groups. And these leaders are then supervised by a staff-member responsible for the connect-groups. All leaders report in a very detailed fashion to their superiors: it is reported which technical problems have occurred during a service, the exact number of church attendees, the problems at stake in the connect-groups, and so on. These detailed information sheets are sent to the top of the pyramid, where the most urgent issues can be discussed by staff and senior pastors. The senior pastors are set under the guidance of an advisory board of men consisting among others of Gary Clarke, pastor from Hillsong London, and Peter Paauwe, leader of the *Doorbrekers*, a resembling Dutch church network. Such an advisory board is very common in churches such as City Life Church.<sup>16</sup>

It is also noteworthy to look at how the church structure is established. To become a leader of one of the groups, or teams, one has to be asked. The only way to climb up the ladder of power in CLC is by being admitted to do so, by one's superiors. That is, one can be asked to join the staff, or become a connect-leader, but one can not officially apply for a vacancy in such a position. That is not to say that one cannot express one's interests in a certain task, but in the end, the staff will decide whether you are capable of fulfilling the task, and whether your faith is of such a level that one can serve as an example.

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<sup>16</sup> One of the core ideas of the Beréa movement, of which Erald and Mathilde have been part before they founded the CLC network, states that "Every leader needs a leader" (Hoekstra, Ipenburg; 407)<sup>16</sup>. Hillsong, the current network of Erald and Mathilde, similarly works with 'accountability structures'.

In addition, gender divides and stereotypes are vital to the ordering of the City Life Church. It is believed that men and women have different tasks and characteristics. Men and women mostly meet in separate groups, as they ought to prefer different ways of forming a community, and speaking about and expressing their faith. There are different connect-groups for men and women, and there are special events for men and women. A men event usually features meat, sports and cars, whereas women on the 'Jij-mooi' mornings can be pampered in the church's beauty salon. This discourse is furthered by stimulating members to read books, such as 'Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secret of a Man's Soul', by John Eldredge, or 'Captivating: Unveiling the Mystery of a Woman's Soul', also written by John and his wife Stasi Eldredge. These books, available in the CLC book shop, enhance the gender divisions employed in CLC: that is, a woman wants to be beautiful and longs for protection which her 'masculine' husband is more than willing to provide. This has also implications for the task division in the church: women for example lead the 'soft' healing ministry, whereas the leading advisory board only consists of men.

Although gender certainly is an important part of it, the central theme of CLC's teaching is the concept of prosperity, or blessing. It is believed that God grants his servants all sorts of benefits: healing, material wealth, happiness, or a partner. Because God wants his followers to be joyful, he provides his flock with all things needed, in order to live a good and successful life. Every church service, and also in the connect-groups and individual times of prayer, it is investigated which things God is willing to grant you next; one seeks to discover 'God's plan' in one's life. Such matters require prayer and are brought to God. God's answers are heard in all sorts of ways: through dreams, bible verses, images popping up, or through other people (Ezra & Chloe). This theology becomes clearly articulated in the following example drawn from a sermon by pastor Mathilde. It also displays the very practical, banal implications of God's generosity. Preceding this example, Mathilde explained how one should proclaim prosperity over oneself: "You just have to speak: 'God wants to help me'". Then she gives the example of her son who has been given a house:

*"Our son, (...) he said: "I'm sure, Lord you give me a house." And he had to think of something, he contacted a person, and within one-and-a-half day he had an amazing house. (...) It's on a good spot, in a great neighbourhood, and actually a rent which should be €350 up. But there's a great blessing. Suddenly he got this blessing. And it's very close by. Mother can walk there. In fifteen minutes, I can walk to his place. (...) I said: "Boy, I can clean now and then there." (...) He gets a new bathroom, for the price of the old one. He gets a new bathroom, and a new kitchen. (...) It's in the second-best city quarter of The Hague -on that side. He can walk to the dunes and the tram stops in front of his house. (...) It is one minute from a new shopping centre,*

*which just got a new HEMA<sup>17</sup> -women find that important haha. The Lord has come to help me, that's what it's about." (M. van de Ridder, 11 Nov. 2012)<sup>18</sup>*

CLC, or at least its pastors, have been connected to different church networks. Erald and Mathilde have first been inspired by the Beréa-movement; a Dutch Pentecostal denomination with approximately 5500 members tumbled down in 2005. When this movement fell apart, Erald and Mathilde became under the influence of the G12 movement, which emphasized the Great Commission and a 'cell-based' church structure.<sup>19</sup> This inspiration, however, did not last long. In 2007 Hillsong organized a concert in *Sion*, and from then on, further contact grew between CLC and the international megachurch. In April 2014, CLC became part of the so-called 'Hillsong Family network', providing the congregation with speakers from the Hillsong network and more intensive coaching and education for its leaders. Sarah told me that it is also in this period that some 'classical' traits of Pentecostalism, such as *glossolalia* were mostly abandoned in the church. In the services one would, for instance, also never speak of demons, and the Last Supper was no longer celebrated during the Sunday services. This is not to say that these ideas and practices have also disappeared from the minds and experiences of the faithful: church members interpret this merely as a strategy to make the church more accessible to newcomers. Distinct rituals and vocabulary of Dutch Pentecostalism have largely been set aside to make room for the message of blessing, healing and prosperity, interwoven with manifestations of mainstream popular culture: this popculture is present in the worship music, the church interior, and the underlying consumerism in CLC's theology.

The City Life Church Den Haag can best be characterized as a neo-Pentecostal church. As Allan Anderson already noted, this term has been applied to different types of churches (Global Pentecostalism 11); therefore its definition will have to be further specified. I will do so by means of the description of J. Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu, from his book *African Charismatics*. He underlines the neo-Pentecostalist "megachurch-philosophies, world-dominating agenda for Christianity, and religious entrepreneurial ambitions that motivate people to translate their salvation into practical everyday achievements in business,

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<sup>17</sup> HEMA is a chain of Dutch department stores

<sup>18</sup> "Onze zoon (...) hij zei: 'Ik weet zeker, Heer, u geeft mij een huis'. En hij moest aan iets denken, en hij heeft contact gevraagd met een persoon. Binnen anderhalve dag heeft hij een fantastisch huis. (...) En Jozua die heeft een fantastisch huis op een mooie plek in een goede buurt. En eigenlijk een prijs waarvan je zegt, dat moet €350 meer zijn, maar er zit een hele zegen. Een hele zegen. Op eens krijgt hij de zegen. Opeens krijgt hij de zegen. Moeder kan zelfs lopen: ik kan zelfs op en kwartiertje daar naartoe lopen. (...) Ik zeg jongen, ik kan een keertje poetsen daar. (...) Hij krijgt een nieuwe badkamer voor de prijs van het oude. Hij krijgt een nieuwe badkamer, een nieuwe keuken. (...) Hij krijgt een nieuwe keuken, in de éénnabeste wijk bijna van Den Haag. Aan die kant. En hij kan zo naar de duinen lopen, en het is aan de Randstadrail. Fantastisch. Hij woont aan de langste straat van Nederland, de laan van Meerdervoort. Eén minuut van een nieuw winkelcentrum dat net een nieuwe Hema erbij krijgt. Vinden vrouwen belangrijk. (...) De Heer is mij te hulp gekomen, daar gaat het mij om.

<sup>19</sup> The G12 idea accounts for a structure of cell groups, resembling connect groups, of twelve people. Moreover, twelve leaders should be in charge of the congregation. The number twelve is drawn from the number of Jesus' disciples. The idea of a 'cell' refers to being a part of the body of Christ. Pastor Erald also tried to split his church into cell-groups but this did not work out as hoped (Jedidja).

education, economics and family life” (2004, 1). The practical everyday nature of salvation, becoming visible in success in business, relationships and health, the global image CLC tries to obtain, and the entrepreneurial focus on growth of the church, make City Life Church Den Haag fit this description rather well. Although Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu applies this term to the specific context of African Christianity, the term is also applicable to CLC; in that sense it is a universal description.

## **Methodology and Terminology**

In order to investigate the use of the English language in City Life Church Den Haag, I chose to conduct fieldwork. In my opinion, a qualitative analysis would render most justice to the very complex issues at stake. Religious experiences and language are very personal elements of the believer's life, which is influenced by an immense web of powers, desires, and structures. Therefore it is needed to learn in which environment, in whose life, and in which way, the English language is integrated, to find out what other elements in one's life might be connected to this practice. Such complexities fail to be grasped by an entirely quantitative methodology; hence, I decided to design my research in a qualitative fashion. I conducted fieldwork for approximately nine months, with varying degrees of intensity, from October 2013 till June 2014. For I had many obligations next to this project, and my MA studies, I could not be present at the site of my research as often as I would have liked. That is to say, that it was not possible for me to attend many church services. I did however interview many people. And, in my everyday life I sometimes came across people from CLC or likeminded churches, who helped me stay in touch with the theme of my research. I also followed the church's social media networks, which kept me aware of CLC's church life. Although it would have been helpful to spend a longer period of time in the church without 'breaks', I appreciated the spaces in between the moments of fieldwork for they provided me with ample opportunity to reflect on my research.

### *Interviews*

An important part of my fieldwork consisted of interviews. In general, this was a pleasant activity: I found the stories of my respondents interesting, and most people liked to be interviewed. I spoke with twenty people, all active members of CLC Den Haag. I conducted 10 interviews with individual respondents, and 5 interviews with couples. The interviews usually took place at the homes of my respondents –which greatly helped me in shaping an image of their lives– and the interviews took about half an hour to one-and-a-half-hour. To set a framework for my sample, and to evaluate its representativeness, I asked each interviewee about age, education, relationship status, and religious backgrounds. Eleven of my respondents were female, and nine were male. At least three-quarters of them was between twenty and forty when I spoke to them. A group of similar size also claimed to be higher-educated, that is holding a degree from a university (of applied sciences). Only one quarter of the interviewees was single when interviewed; the others were all in a relationship, of whom thirteen were married. One of my interviewees was not raised in a church; one lived her childhood in a Catholic migrant parish; three other interviewees held a background in evangelical churches, and the fifteen others were born and raised in historic reformed churches of various denominations. All my respondents were Dutch nationals.

All interviews were semi-structured. The most important questions I posed circled around one's life history and religious background, one's faith, one's involvement in City Life Church, and the use of English in one's faith experiences. I asked questions, such as: What is faith? How do you express your faith? Could you describe your church? Why did you choose to go to CLC, and not to another likeminded church? When do you notice English in church? Why is that, do you think? Is the English language also involved in how you live your faith? Of course, wherever I felt it to be of added value, I posed follow-up questions, and questions about themes which were not necessarily present on the questionnaire, such as gender or authority in the church. To inform my respondents about my project, and to grant me permission to use the information from the interviews, I asked them to sign an informed consent form, which they all did.

This sample came about by using the snowball method. I started with two CLC members I knew preceding my research. I asked them to look for interviewees, and also interviewed one of them. Already quickly, my first interviews were scheduled. After each interview I asked the respondents to connect me to others. In these requests I held my sample in mind, and sometimes asked for elderly people, males, lower-educated, and people with non-Dutch origins. I 'checked' my sample, lacking statistics about the congregation, by paying attention to the people present in church, and by asking my respondents about the CLC audience. After the last interviews I noticed that I could not find more than twenty people: I had exhausted the network I built in CLC Den Haag. In addition, the voices I had heard offered me so many resources to think through the theme of this thesis, twenty interviews sufficed for this particular research.

In my second interview –at that stage I had not yet decided whether I wanted to focus on the City Life Church, or whether I wanted to conduct research among a larger group of neo-Pentecostal Christians– my interviewees raised the necessity of asking for access to the church as a researcher. Of course I agreed to do so. The respondents brought this up to the staff of the church, who accepted my fieldwork project. But I only got to know this indirectly, via my respondents. The staff members were hard to reach, for their contact details are not easily available, nor do they all respond to their e-mails. In the end, one staff member agreed to be interviewed.

Although the snowball method provided me with a considerable number of interviewees, some critical remarks should be made. When I asked for other people to be interviewed, my respondents usually referred me to someone high up in the hierarchy, since he/she is deemed to have more knowledge of faith. As explained in the 'introduction to CLC', one's position on the ladder is thought to reflect the development of one's faith, and developing faith is part of an evolutionary learning trajectory, in which one should grow. This system reflected clearly a Foucauldian relation between knowledge and power: he who possesses (religious) knowledge has power. Of course, this also functions *vice versa*: when someone holds an important position in church, one is also deemed to have much

knowledge about faith. As a result, I have interviewed much more people higher up in the church ranks, than 'ordinary' church members. People referred me to 'senior' members, since they assumed they could further my research with their more extensive knowledge of faith and church. During the process of snowballing I got aware of this and I tried to 'correct' this phenomenon. In the end, I have interviewed seven persons without special positions in the church, and thirteen who were more or less higher up in the hierarchy.

The overrepresentation of high-ranked respondents has also implications for the other factors in my sample. Faith and prosperity are inextricably linked in the City Life Church, for it is believed God will reward those who serve him. Those 'important' men and women I interviewed, of whom one thinks they have a great faith, are also more prosperous and 'successful'. They are happily married, have a well-paid job, and an interesting career, they have obtained degrees from universities or universities of applied science, and are capable of leading a church organization. Hence, one should take into account the possibility that my sample is higher educated, less single, and financially better-off than the average CLC-member.

In addition, the set-up of the interviews is noteworthy. It obviously matters when one interviews only one person, or a couple. There must have been cases in which people would have said something different than their partner, but felt unable or restraint to do so. In an interview with a couple it is evidently important that one attempts to make both interviewees respond to the questions; though sometimes I did not manage to obtain answers from every interviewee. Moreover, the nature of the questions was rather intimate; when interviewed with your husband or wife one can be hesitating to provide answer deviating from social norms. Does one really believe all things that are expected from one?

The sample may not be flawless, but that is however not to say that it is not useful, on the contrary. It provides this research with fascinating and insightful accounts of everyday religious lives of various people. As long as one reflects on the flaws in this sample and incorporates the implications flowing from this, the collected material can be of good use.

### *Other methods*

Interviewing was not the only method used in conducting fieldwork in CLC; as a participant-observer I also attended five church services and I analyzed another five sermons from the internet. Due to my limited time frame, I have not been able to visit as many church services as I would have liked. Therefore I chose to analyse another five online sermons from the CLC website. It was not an easy task to position myself during church services, for much is asked from CLC's audience: clapping, singing, cheering, laughing, listening, proclaiming and praying. During the first service I attended, I decided to join as much as possible. I thought this would help me in appropriating 'knowledge' and perhaps even the experiences my respondents claimed to have. In addition, I wanted to avoid as much as possible the

attention of the ‘welcome-team’, which is expected to ‘scout’ new visitors and make them feel at ease. Not only would it be a hurdle to explain what I was doing, I also tried to find out how a church service works for a ‘regular’ church attendee in CLC. This is also the reason why I, at the entrance –where most of the hosts are located– made sure I did not look insecure about where to be seated, or where to drop my coat.

After the service –I attended either the second (starting at 11:30 am), or the third service (starting at 01:15 pm)– I stayed a few times for coffee, but only when I encountered some of my respondents. Adding to the nice chats I had with them, this formed a helpful opportunity to be introduced to new respondents. It also enabled me to further investigate the dynamics between church members, the composition of the church’s audience, and the fascinating church interior.

Not just inside the church there was a wealth of information to discover; the internet provided me with all sorts of additional sources: podcast sermons, recordings of events and services, information about the pastors, and the social media channels of the church and its staff and senior pastors. It was of great help to find out more about the church and its pastors, and to further explore how the church and its leadership present itself. Moreover, tweeted messages and pictures, the written and audiovisual sources present on the website, all complemented the analysis of interviews, sermons and services.

In addition, it was helpful to look at what information was not accessible. I could not find any contact details online, apart from a standardized message one could send to the church office. Also information about the membership of the congregation was absent. In the description of the history of CLC, there is only attention paid to the pastor’s history (clcdenhaag.nl). Nonetheless, this narrative does not pay attention to the somewhat controversial Berea-network, by which CLC –then *Sion*– was influenced<sup>20</sup>. The respondents I asked about these issues would argue that this is done to be an open church towards newcomers, without all sorts of complicated church language.

It was unfortunately not possible for me to attend all events. Of course, time constraints played a large role in this, but also the nature of the activities. Because the separation between men- and women events was so strictly drawn, I could not access a vital part of the church’s activities. The morning beauty sessions and the ‘girlz-parties’ were restricted terrain, as were the ladies toilets, of which my respondents told they are full of shiny glitters; they are really the most ‘bling-bling’, luxurious bathrooms they have ever seen. Although I have not seen them myself, given the experiences in the church, I am strongly inclined to believe my interviewees on this matter.

Moreover, I wanted to avoid becoming to intimately part of the faith and personal lives of my respondents. It is therefore that I did not ask to join for example the connect groups. When one respondent asked me whether I wanted to come with him, I decided not

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<sup>20</sup> This is probably because Berea failed –in 2005 it fell apart after accusations of fraud.

to go. I felt that I would alter the group dynamics too much in this very intimate setting; I did not want to ruin a precious moment for these men. In addition, I would also be uncomfortable myself; it did not feel appropriate to join. I knew that when coming along to a connect group, very intimate questions about life and faith would be posed to me as well, to which I could not provide the 'correct' answers. Since I was afraid this would harm my access to the field, and it would make me feel less at ease in the environment of CLC Den Haag, I did not attempt to attend the connect groups.

Already in the interviews and during the services I was confronted with this type of questions: what do you believe? Do you also go to church? How do you like our services? I usually replied that I went to church myself as well –to a PKN-church<sup>21</sup>. In this way, I could be open about my own religiosity and at the same time avoid politicized typologies such as 'traditional', 'modern', or 'liberal', which I did not want to initiate in our conversations. The respondent would then approvingly nod and say something like "Oh but that's okay, as long as Jesus stands at the core, right?"<sup>22</sup> (Rachel), or make a similar comment. At first, this came across as a quite disturbing habit: how can these people judge upon my religiosity? Later on, when the dichotomous relation of modernity and tradition became more evident in the research, these comments helped me understand the normativity of City Life Church's discourse on 'modern' and 'traditional' churches.

This part of the research has been consciously conducted by means of a bottom-up approach. After I had found out about the strong hierarchical ordering of the City Life Church, I suspected that when I would look for more contact with the board of the church, my respondents would have felt pressure to answer in a certain fashion, or that I would have been asked to speak to a limited group of people. I wanted to remain independent, and to hear the voices of the people in the institution instead of the other way around. My research has been discussed among the staff members since it was brought to the table by one of the respondents, but this did, as far as I know, not obstruct the research in any way.

### *Terminology*

In order to clearly mark the discourse of City Life Church on 'modernity' and 'traditionalism' in this writing, and to set it apart from the author's speaking of these denominations, the term 'historic church', or 'mainline churches' will be used to present an 'etic' approach to these particular denominations. The term 'traditional church', deeply incorporated in the discourse of respondents and pastors of CLC, is too much charged with value judgments on denominations such as the *Protestantse Kerk in Nederland*, the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken*, the *Gereformeerde Kerken (Vrijgemaakt)*, or the *Gereformeerde Gemeenten*; it

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<sup>21</sup> That is the largest Protestant denomination in the Netherlands, with many different currents. Hence, my own identity remained somewhat unclear.

<sup>22</sup> "O, maar zolang Jezus maar centraal staat toch?"

presents an emic description. There should be distinguished between this normative description, and a more neutral term; therefore this text will propose the term 'historic churches'.

Moreover, it is hard to determine whether City Life Church should be called a denomination, a church network, or a church. In principle, the term 'network' fits the state of CLC best, since it is not a 'classic' denomination or church, but merely a network of affiliated people. Therefore this term will be used in this thesis. Another important point: it was not easy to differentiate between church members, or people attending the church. It did not become clear when one exactly becomes member; by filling in a membership form, by being baptized as adult, by engaging in tithing or other donations, or by being part of a connect group? It seems to be the case that CLC does not conceive of membership as most mainline churches do; rather CLC focuses on the (number of) activities people attend: how many people go to the church service? How many people are in connect groups? These numbers are namely very well known among the staff and church members and are important to them, for they reflect the success of the church. They are often repeated in church services to underline the growth rate of the congregation.<sup>23</sup> At least to belong to the church, it is of prime importance to participate in many activities: most respondents are occupied with the church at least two to five evenings a week. The Sunday services therefore have a less central position than in most historic churches. By lack of better solutions, however, I will use the terms 'members' and 'attendees' to speak of CLC's audience.

Finally, by calling CLC a neo-Pentecostal or neo-Charismatic church, this text wants to position CLC in the worldwide network of likeminded churches, and describe it as different from more classical Pentecostal churches, which are less focused on healing, and (material) blessing. When I talk about the 'global Pentecostal' realm or domain in this text, I include the whole Pentecostal movement –including more classical Pentecostals– unless it is stated differently.

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<sup>23</sup> On the church's vision Sunday, many stats and graphs were displayed, showing the percentage of growth of CLC Den Haag, a growth indication for the future and even the number of babies born and the amount of pregnant women in church. This example accounts for the highly organized, entrepreneurial management of the church. (Field notes 26 Jan. 2014)

## The Global, the Local, the Pentecostal

The plurality of the global Pentecostal movement is hardly contested in the scholarly debate about Pentecostalism. One is deeply aware of the differences between the Pentecostalism as lived in, for example, the urban environment of the Ghanaian capital Accra, the context of a small rural village in Missouri, USA, or in a shanty town on the Brazilian shores. All sorts of circumstances, such as education level, income, local customs and culture, shape Pentecostalism on the ground. Although the notion of one worldwide Pentecostalism is widespread, the local branches of the Pentecostal tree cannot be comprised in a single all-encompassing definition or description; the very locality of Pentecostalism never ceases to surprise and provoke thinking about its inventive and adaptive nature. Yet, there is a globalized, transnational network of Pentecostals. This for example becomes clear in CLC's ties to the worldwide Hillsong network and to churches in countries such as Uganda and Indonesia.

To explain this intermingling between global and local, the anthropologist and expert in Pentecostalism André Droogers uses the term 'glocalisation' to point out how the "universal and the particular" are inseparable (2001; 51). This notion has originally been developed by Ronald Robertson in his *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture* and points out clearly that the global is always expressed locally, and thus it is subject to change, adaptation and alteration on the ground. Also the negotiation of Pentecostal faith is shaped by its very particular surroundings, and differs in each and every context. A great number of case studies and analyses of Pentecostalism, underline this phenomenon (Anderson 2006; Corten & Marshall-Fratani 2001; Cox 2001; Dijk 2009; Freston 1998; Gifford 2004; Robbins 2003; Wilkinson 2012).

It is noteworthy however, that the focus of these case studies is on the global South. It is as if the main purpose of the 'glocalisation-argument' is to undermine the assumption that Pentecostalism in the majority world is a product exported by the global North. These case studies convincingly argue, that although European, and North-American missionaries have implemented, and still implement, their belief systems and church structures, African or Latin-American Pentecostals are not passive recipients but act with agency; they transform these structures and appropriate them locally. In fact, an own charismatic culture has developed (Kwabena Asamoah-Gyadu 2005). Globalisation is in this matter not a one-sided colonial influence. Object and subject, missionary and believer shape each other's religious experiences.

In the light of this argument, the recent interest for migrant Pentecostals in the global North can also be explained. Transnational churches such as the Ghanaian Church of Pentecost (Daswani 2010), or the Redeemed Christian Church of God from Nigeria (Burgess 2009), form valuable examples of denominations which attempt to expand their sphere of

influence towards Europe or the United States. Examining this step goes even much further in destabilizing the proposed colonial influences of Western Pentecostalism. The emphasis in many studies is the missionary attitude towards the new host country, which is often also the former colonizer (Währisch-Oblau 2006; Laan 2006; Jansen and Stoffels 2007). These are also the countries from which Christianity has been brought to sub-Saharan Africa and Latin-America. Migrant Christians place emphasis on their role as missionaries in a secularized country. As a reversal of roles, former colonized subjects, now attempt to rechristianize their former colonizers.

These very interesting observations about power and agency, however, tend to overlook the many instances where Pentecostalism is not solely a majority world phenomenon. Although the shift of gravity of global Pentecostalism southwards is real, this does not mean that the development in the global North ceases. The scholarly debate has successfully nuanced the image of Pentecostalism as a uniform, especially Western, movement, to an emphasis on its appropriation in the majority world and its very local translation in different contexts. But this image should be further polished, for it does not completely render justice to Pentecostalism in the minority world. The shift towards Pentecostalism in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America may be justifiable, but the other side of the world should not be neglected either –the study of global Pentecostalism should be a truly global endeavour.

The need for a more thorough exploration is primarily applicable to the European continent; in North-America considerable attention is, and has been paid to Pentecostalism, probably because of its much more prominent position in society.<sup>24</sup> But especially in Europe, there is much less attention for this form of Christianity. Nonetheless, in the last years some scholars have invested time and effort in exploring a ‘European Pentecostalism’. But as the volume ‘European Pentecostalism’ edited by William Kay and Anne E. Dyer shows, the various manifestations of Pentecostalism and their *milieux* might differ too much, to share them under one header (Kay & Dyer 2011). It remains to be the case that many displays of Pentecostalism and current developments in the field are not seen, or at least not described. That is however not to say that nothing has happened in this field; rich ethnographies have been written on specific contexts (f.e. Coleman 2000; Klaver 2011; Versteeg 2010), but unfortunately they are few. This thesis would like to add to the development of this body of knowledge.

The particular phenomenon of the dominance of the English language in a Pentecostal congregation outside of the English-speaking world is therefore an exciting lens to think about a ‘European’ Pentecostalism. It immediately makes clear that one cannot

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<sup>24</sup> One should note here among others the excellent works of Tanya Luhrmann and Susan Harding. *Harding, Susan. The Book of Jerry Falwell: Fundamentalist Language and Politics. Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 2000.* And *Luhrmann, Tanya. When God Talks Back: Understanding the American Evangelical Relationship with God. New York: Vintage Books, 2012.*

study this field as an isolated subject; the English language draws great attention to the interconnectedness of the local context and a more global scale.

In addition, Europe, especially Western Europe, offers a very distinct environment to Pentecostalism. It is an area much different from the most researched 'mainlands' of Pentecostalism: in contrast to the Americas and Africa, the future of Christianity is under severe pressure. A view on the development of Pentecostalism in Europe might therefore provide a different take on Pentecostalism, and perhaps even on religiosity in Europe. How does, if at all, Pentecostalism manage to adapt to this specific context, and is the European continent really as 'secularized' as often said? Although these questions are not explicitly at stake in this thesis, it is my hope that this analysis of a Dutch neo-Pentecostal church and its interactions with the global and local might contribute to a further thinking on these matters.

## CLC and the Global Pentecostal

Pentecostalism is *par excellence* a global phenomenon (Meyer 2010), already from the start. Most often the 1906 Azusa street revival is taken as the starting point, but an ongoing debate takes place about where to locate the origins of global Pentecostalism. Simultaneously, revival movements were active in Wales, Estonia, India and Korea, which formed the basis of new independent denominations, often characterized by 'Pentecostal' ideas and practices (Global Pentecostalism 1). Moreover, quickly after these revivals, intercontinental mission efforts were initiated. The Swedish Andrew G. Johnson and the Norwegian Methodist T.B. Barrat, for instance, who were strongly influenced by the Azusa street revival, brought Pentecostalism to Scandinavia and other countries in North-Western Europe. Via printed magazines, their messages were quickly spread all over Sweden and Norway. But the area they aimed to reach was much larger. Already in 1907 missionaries were sent to Hamburg in Germany, the Swiss Zürich and to Denmark. From Scandinavia then, missionaries were heading towards other parts of the world. Already by 1910 the Pentecostal ideas had even reached China (Alvarsson 2011).

As shown, the first wave of Pentecostalism was already highly globalized; but today's neo-Pentecostalism is even more so. The many transnational networks of churches span multiple countries and continents. The already-mentioned 'Redeemed Christian Church of God' and 'The Church of Pentecost' are churches originating in West-Africa spread through the extensive diasporas of Nigerians and Ghanaians. Examples of similar church networks are Action Chapel International, and the International Lighthouse Chapel.

The many denominations and church networks which do not operate on an international level do encounter and integrate elements of worldwide Pentecostalism in church literature and music. The exchange of books, prayers, sermons, and worship songs is enormous, and also those outside international church networks are engaged in this; I often encounter Christians from the Dutch mainline churches who use this material. That is also how Hillsong music spread so quickly throughout the Pentecostal world; even on a visit to a Ghanaian church a few years ago I heard many Hillsong tracks. The books on manhood, by John Eldredge, and books written by Joyce Meyer circulate in resembling patterns.

Especially because the neo-Pentecostal churches employ state-of-the-art techniques, their message can be spread easily. One does no longer need printed books, recorded sermons and worship songs; no, one can nowadays listen all-day long to podcasts of Joel Osteen, in Houston Texas, or Erald van de Ridder in The Hague, just on the internet. Pentecostal broadcasting companies air shows, sermons, music performances on a non-stop basis, all over the globe. Youtube boosts a large number of Pentecostal video clips as well. And when one 'likes' a preacher's Facebook page, installs one of the countless Bible-apps, or

follows a church on twitter, one can ensure to be immersed in Pentecostal thoughts and ideas all day long, without even having to leave one's house.

This global engagement does not only exist online, rather it is also present in the offline world. Globalization has been facilitated by new and cheaper transport modes. Many of the people I have spoken to have gone abroad to attend a DTS. A 'DTS' is a concept I come across often in my encounters with Dutch Pentecostals. It basically is a year-abroad-programme for youngsters, where one is taught (neo-Pentecostal) faith, and where one also participates in evangelization campaigns, or outreaches. The founding organization is YWAM, Youth With A Mission; also other organizations and churches host such trajectories, but then with different names. Usually, one firmly learns the principles of faith, and also attempts to unravel God's plan with one's life –that is for example, what should I study, where should I live? Ruth told me: "During my DTS I received a text about Jonah who had to go to the big city".<sup>25</sup> After her DTS in Africa ended, she decided to move to The Hague for this matter. Next to these trainings, there are many other opportunities for (young) neo-Pentecostals to 'aid' and evangelize in the global South, or attend conferences in neighbouring countries.

### *CLC & Hillsong*

As said, further contact with Hillsong grew after the 2007 concert in *Sion*; it was CLC's chance to become part of Hillsong's international network. In 2012, City Life Church Den Haag organised an international Hillsong conference, which increased CLC's visibility in the Dutch Pentecostal field, and strengthened bonds with Hillsong.

Hillsong is originally an Australian church, founded in 1983, and was then called 'the Hills Christian Life Centre'. The church became well-known for its worship music called Hillsong. Therefore the name was changed into that what we know today: Hillsong church. After continuous growth the church started to expand from Australia to the rest of the world. In 1999, it took over a London Pentecostal church, which is now called Hillsong London, but also in other cities churches have been planted: in New York, Paris, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Amsterdam, Seoul, Moscow, Kyiv, Konstanz, and other places. Its teachings can best be described as neo-Pentecostal; central are blessing, prosperity and healing as evident fruits of a faithful life. Hillsong claims to welcome tens of thousands of church attendees every week. The heads of this impressive church network are the 'senior pastors' Brian and Bobby Houston.

In April 2014, after Hillsong created an extra layer in its network structure, CLC became part of the so-called 'Hillsong Family' –that is not the same as being a 'Hillsong church' but it expresses that one is closely tied to the church network. By means of this

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<sup>25</sup> "Tijdens mijn DTS kreeg ik een tekst door over Jonah die naar de grote stad moest gaan."

membership, CLC may welcome more international speakers via the Hillsong network, and it may further identify with the image of Hillsong. The originally Australian megachurch is namely an incredibly strong brand in global Pentecostalism. Being affiliated with the enormously popular worship music, the charismatic speakers, and the spotless lay-out of its communication, provides CLC with great opportunities to further grow. In addition pastor Erald and his son receive coaching sessions on a monthly basis, by Gary Clarke, the pastor from Hillsong London. Also, it is almost standard to place the special 'Hillsong Family' logo next to the CLC Den Haag logo, on the website, flyers and documents. Hillsong thus not only supplies CLC with immaterial and material goods to further build the church, but it is also used as a symbol of a successful church, to which one can adhere.

### *English*

In this global Pentecostal context, English is the dominant language. Because a large part of the Pentecostals lives in the Anglophone world, most material is available in English. Great numbers of Pentecostals can be found in the United States and in the former British colonies in Africa. Moreover, due to the overall process of globalization many people have learned to master the English language properly. Hence, English has become a language which one could also integrate in one's faith.

Moreover, when very intimate developments in faith take place in an Anglophone environment, faith experience and language become interwoven. It is as Petra told me in an interview. During her DTS she started to read the Bible herself in a serious and structured manner. Because she attended an Anglophone Bible school, and she read an English Bible, she says: "I think I became more used to the English translation than the Dutch, because I just knew the English translation better"<sup>26</sup> (Petra). Up till today, even though she is back in the Netherlands, Petra continues to read English Bible translations, and she also prays in English. I came across many Dutch people who read English translations and pray in English; for most of them, this was connected to similar DTS- or Bible College experiences.

For CLC, globalization and the English language have become an inevitable aspect of church life. Due to globalization, many church members developed a religious connection to the English language, either by experiences abroad, or by the consumption of Anglophone literature, music, and sermons. CLC cannot but adapt to this environment. Therefore international speakers are invited, Hillsong hymns are sung, English Bible translations are read, and English terminology is used. It is as Mechteld Jansen writes: "The supply and

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<sup>26</sup> Ik denk dat ik gewoon meer gewend ben aan de Engelse vertaling dan aan de Nederlandse, omdat ik de Engelse gewoon beter ken."

influence of Anglo-Saxon literature, courses, music and style models of preaching and life is so overwhelming that it is almost impossible (...) to devoid oneself of it" (2010).<sup>27</sup>

This globalization did of course not only take place within the Pentecostal movement: it is an all-encompassing process which is highly influential in society as a whole. Labour, nutrition, housing, holidays and religion, are all dependent upon actors outside of the nation-state borders: our contemporary world is one of globalization. But, as will become clear in the following chapter, globalization, and the accompanying use of English have also very local implications.

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<sup>27</sup> Although Jansen wrote this primarily concerning migrant churches, the same influence is felt among 'autochthonous' Evangelical and Pentecostal Christians.

## **A local Appropriation: English distinguishing ‘Modern’ from ‘Traditional’**

This chapter will attempt to unravel the first of two local appropriations of the global Pentecostal English. The use of the English language in Bible readings, prayer, worship moments, Pentecostal books, promotion material, and so on, will be set in relation to the construction of CLC’s identity as a ‘modern’ church. This specific part will focus on what this perception of modernity<sup>28</sup> entails. What does it mean for CLC to be ‘modern’, and why is it apparently of such importance to present oneself as such? Firstly, it will be examined what CLC conceives of as ‘modern’, and how this is expressed in church life. It will become clear that being ‘modern’ is set in sharp contrast to being ‘traditional’. Therefore, also the construction of this concept, in the context of City Life Church will be discussed. Afterwards, of course, the role of the English language should be considered: how does the use of English operate in this specific identity discourse? As a fourth point, it will be analyzed how this dichotomous framework of modernity and tradition functions in the local self-representation of CLC towards its own members, and it will be discussed who these members actually are.

### *To be ‘modern’*

The concept of modernity is central to the self-understanding of City Life Church. The first search result for ‘CLC Den Haag’ found via Google is a sponsored link which states “Contemporary, Dynamic, Modern Church”<sup>29</sup>. In the fieldwork I conducted I asked people to describe their church. Many respondents answered by means of one of these three terms (contemporary, dynamic, modern), or related concepts (change, progressive, worldly, etc.). These descriptions function in a complex web of qualities that are combined, used interchangeably, and closely linked. One will for example note how dynamics and change are related to growth; growth again refers to being young, and youthfulness is subtly connected to being contemporary. But the overarching theme here is ‘modernity’ –it entails both the dynamics and contemporaneity of CLC Den Haag, with all its connected qualities. In this section, it will be explored what modernity entails in the narrative of the City Life Church Den Haag, what purpose this narrative serves, and how globalization and the English language function in this delicate conceptual web.

For clarity’s sake, the analysis of modernity in CLC will be structured along the lines of two other concepts: being ‘dynamic’ and ‘contemporary’. It is my experience that these two are best suited to accurately explore modernity in this context, because most terms employed during the interviews share a deep connection to either one of the two. As these

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<sup>28</sup> Of course, the nature of modernity, and its relation to religion have been subject to large scholarly debates. In this text, however, an academic conception of the term is not central; rather, the meaning and use of ‘modernity’ in the everyday life context of CLC Den Haag will be discussed.

<sup>29</sup> “Eigentijdse, dynamische, moderne kerk”

categories are already brought to the table, and connected to modernity, by CLC itself on their website, the importance of these terms is additionally underlined. Of course, one should be aware that the church's discourse might differ from the believer's everyday life perspective, but the interviews, field notes, and other accounts do only support and reinforce each other in this respect. My respondents repeated the connections mentioned above and linked the same terms to each other. After deconstructing and then reconstructing this system, I believe this to be an accurate representation of the thinking and speaking on modernity in City Life Church Den Haag.

Let's start with the idea of a 'contemporary' church. When my interviewees think of a contemporary church, its main characteristic is being part of society: it is thought that the church should be open towards today's culture. Hence, for example the Hillsong worship music sung shares many similarities with today's popular music from all sorts of genres. Its 2014 album 'The White Album' is for instance inspired by dubstep and trance music. Moreover, the manner in which the worship takes place resembles concerts of popular music: the church band plays on a large stage, usually with electric guitars and drums, while a well-orchestrated light show accompanies the music. In addition, the physical involvement of the church adherents during moments of worship resembles the attitude of an audience at a mainstream concert of popular music.

There is a conscious strategy underlying this idea: a contemporary church would have the potential to be more effective in its missionary work. When the church manages to move closer to the life of 'ordinary' people outside of the church, it is thought to be easier for people to come to Christ. Therefore, this immediately draws a connection between worldliness and growth, for being 'worldly' is part of the desire to grow. After a church service I visited, I had a tasty *cappuccino* in the church's 'welcome lounge' with Boaz, one of my interviewees. He illustrated this point nicely. We were engaged in some talk about the organization of the church, and its teachings when he said: "In this church we want to do things in such a way, that we are not strange to the world outside"<sup>30</sup> (Field notes 27 Apr. 2014). That is, I think, the core of the contemporaneity proposed by City Life Church Den Haag.

Hannah, another interviewee, said something similar. She told me what she thinks of the abandoning of speaking in tongues in church: "I don't think it [speaking in tongues] adds much to a church service, because people who're quite new don't understand it. So, in that sense I don't think it's useful"<sup>31</sup>. A similar thing I heard from Paul. Paul told me in an interview he really likes classical liturgical music. He even told me that he had often attended the early mass in a Roman Catholic Church before heading towards his 'own' neo-Pentecostal service. I asked him whether he did not miss this in the City Life Church. He said:

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<sup>30</sup> "In deze kerk willen we alles zo doen zodat we niet raar zijn voor de wereld daarbuiten"

<sup>31</sup> "Ik denk dat dat niet zoveel toevoegt aan een kerkdienst omdat mensen die vrij nieuw zijn dat niet begrijpen."

“if you understand the vision of City Life Church well, it’s that the services of CLC are enormously accessible, and focused on new members”<sup>32</sup>. Matthew states in this respect: “We try to mirror society”<sup>33</sup>. Thus, by making one’s own practices contemporary, that is to resemble the outside, more and more people should be drawn to the City Life Church.

The second component of CLC’s ‘modern’ identity is ‘dynamics’ -often connected to this concept are notions of (positive) change and progress. Most of the members I interviewed stressed the importance of the church as an ever changing whole, which should never become static. A church should not stand still; it has to keep moving. The focus on change and growth seems really omnipresent in CLC. The year theme of 2014 presented on CLC’s ‘Vision Sunday’ is “What’s your next step?” (Field notes, 26 Jan. 2014). This ‘step’ might involve promotion in one’s career: building a relationship, having children, attending church activities such as connect groups, men’s or women’s events and specific church courses, raising one’s donations to the church, climbing in one’s social status, or uplifting any other aspects of life.

The change anticipated is always positive, which fluently intersects with the church’s ideas on blessing and prosperity. It is believed that the true believer will be blessed by God. Most sermons also circle around this idea of God going to do great things in one’s life. “What does God have in mind for you?” is a question I heard being repeated over and over again. Pastor Mathilde speaks in one of her sermons about this: “There’s a new possibility, and there’s more than you think there is. That is for all your circumstances. (...) God can give you a job, a house a new spiritual family, God can give us things dear people” (M. van de Ridder, *Nooit te Laat*)<sup>34</sup>.

The church interior is a good reflection of this focus on constructive change and alteration. It is seen as vital to keep changing the church, to remain, or become even more attractive for outsiders. During my fieldwork period, focus was laid on renewing the entrance of the building (Field notes, 18 May 2014), new audio- and visual installations, and the construction of a new gallery in the church. Dynamics, or change are thus intimately connected to progress and growth. In this connection to growth and mission, dynamics is close to being contemporary. Again one of Hannah’s explanations beautifully summarizes and illustrates this process:

*“What I like about our pastors is that they remain progressive”<sup>35</sup>. (...) They keep looking at how we can keep growing, in numbers of course, but also in profoundness.*

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<sup>32</sup> “Mis ik dat? CLC, als je de visie van CLC begrijpt, is het dat de diensten van CLC enorm laagdrempelig zijn, en gericht zijn op nieuwe leden. Dus daarom doen we het denk ik niet.”

<sup>33</sup> “We proberen op de maatschappij te lijken”

<sup>34</sup> “Lieve mensen, er is een nieuwe mogelijkheid. En dat is meer dan je denkt dat het is, en dat is voor al je omstandigheden. (...) God die kan ons een baan geven, een huis geven, hij kan ons een nieuwe geestelijke familie geven. Hij kan ons dingen geven lieve mensen.”

<sup>35</sup> Hannah interchangeably used the terms progressive and modern, when I asked whether these are different or the same, she answered they are similar.

*And, that they keep looking at what can be changed, what can be better? When we got more contact with Hillsong, Nick and Christine Kane<sup>36</sup> came. (...) When they were in our church, pastor Erald asked: “what do you see? What can be bettered?” And then they went through the church and gave tips how to change things, and they actually started working on these things.”<sup>37</sup>*

### *Not to be ‘traditional’*

It is striking to note how these descriptions of modernity exactly counter those of ‘traditional churches’; according to the interviewees they are not contemporary and dynamic, but conservative, and distanced from today’s society. It is as if the labels ‘traditional’ and ‘modern’ form two sides of the same coin: for their meaning they cannot exist without each other. ‘Traditional churches’ is a rather broad category in the City Life Church discourse. It ranges from orthodox Calvinist denominations, such as the more orthodox reformed churches and mainline protestant churches. It even includes mainstream Pentecostal and evangelical denominations. In the overarching CLC-narrative employed by my interviewees, and the preaching pastors, these currents all have a good deal of qualities in common, namely their staticness, and their inability to be ‘contemporary’.

The first main characteristic of traditional churches conveyed by most respondents has to do with a sense of disconnectedness from the everyday life of my interviewees. A connection to everyday life is implicitly equated here to a connection to the contemporary world. If a church does not succeed in making this connection, it is ‘from the past’ or ‘old-fashioned’. Moreover, the notion of tradition evokes an image of distanced, incomprehensible rituals and doctrines. Interestingly, only one of the interviewees did not have a background in a traditional church.<sup>38</sup> Hence, it largely dominated the narratives of my respondents. Ruth told me the following:

*“I always had to go (to church) in skirt. It was just boring. It was the same every week, and I didn’t really get the sermon. (...) Faith itself barely did something to me. Also as a teenager I thought I knew and had heard basically everything already, but I kept going because of my parents. So it was more a sort of tradition; I just had to go. That was part of Sunday morning. But on Saturday night I went out with my friends and did*

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<sup>36</sup> Nick and Christine Kane are Australian pastors from Hillsong, and are currently most well-known for their work in the ‘A21 campaign’ against human-trafficking.

<sup>37</sup> “Wat ik wel goed vind aan onze voorgangers is dat ze altijd vooruitstrevend blijven, dat waren ze in die tijd ook. (...)Dat ze altijd kijken hoe kunnen we blijven groeien? In aantal natuurlijk en diepte, en dat ze continue kijken wat kan er veranderen, wat kan er beter? We kregen toen op een gegeven moment veel meer contact met Hillsong, en toen kwamen Nick en Christine Kane (...) zij waren bij ons in de kerk, en toen zei pastor Erald – precies zoals hij is- wat zien jullie? Wat moet er volgens jullie anders? En toen zijn zij door de kerk heengegaan, van dit zou ik anders doen. Echt tips gegeven, en daar zijn ze ook echt mee aan de slag gegaan.”

<sup>38</sup> This does not so much represent the background of most church adherents; rather it tells us about the background of those slightly higher up in the hierarchy whom I have mostly interviewed.

*fun stuff. So, it wasn't that I was really active with my faith. It was in my head, but not in my heart.*"<sup>39</sup>

Ruth clearly states that she did not like going to church, because she did not feel connected to the church service; it did not make sense. She labels it as 'tradition', instead of a lived experience, which she claims to have now in CLC. Moreover, she presents this habit as not in connection with the rest of her lifestyle, as she used to go out much. Ruth sketches a firm distinction between 'fun', on Saturday evening, and boredom on Sunday morning. Miriam, another interviewee, said: "in the reformed church (...) I also had to wear a skirt, and I am so anti-skirt"<sup>40</sup>. In other words, the only time she had to wear a skirt was in church, disconnecting it from the rest of everyday life. Lea told me that going to church, the reformed church (liberated), "was going to a church service on Sunday, and then finishing the church part". In this perspective, also the abandoning of Pentecostal 'tradition' can be seen; apparently *glossolalia* is part of the 'traditional', thus should be set aside. This shows how a gap is felt between the "traditional' church and the daily reality of my respondents.

In connection, many interviewees call CLC a 'young' church, and stress that "the regular churches shrink, whereas CLC grows. Indeed, there are many young people in City Life Church"<sup>41</sup> (Mary). In this discourse, 'young' makes clear that City Life Church, and is perceived as part of a 'new generation', a term often heard in the neo-Pentecostal discourse, whereas the 'old', 'traditional' churches clearly are not. The 'traditional' churches no longer fit our society; hence it is but a logical given that they implode. It forms an implicit recognition of the religious market: when the supply of a church does not match the societal demand it is bound to close down.

One should also note here that youth and future are closely connected in this discourse, just as is more widely the case in society. Articulating a narrative of being 'young' and 'fresh', helps positioning the self, or the community in the contemporary world, whereas at the same time, 'traditional' churches at the other side of the dichotomy are made something of the past, something "which used to be"<sup>42</sup> (Mary).

Secondly, traditional churches are imagined to be static and conservative, that is, unchanging. Lea for example states about her former church: "(...) it was very conservative. It stood still."<sup>43</sup> Ezra is even much stronger in his reply, and provided me with an interesting example of this idea. He explains why City Life Church is much different from his former

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<sup>39</sup> "(...) altijd in rok het liefst. Het was gewoon saai. Het was elke week hetzelfde, en gewoon van de preek snapte ik eigenlijk nooit af. (...) Het geloof deed me zelf eigenlijk vrij weinig. Ook als tiener dacht ik toen van ik heb het allemaal wel gehoord en gezien hier, en ik ging mee voor mijn ouders. Dus het was zeg maar een soort van traditie, ik moet gewoon mee, dat hoort er gewoon bij op zondagochtend. Maar op zaterdagavond ging ik lekker stappen en met vrienden leuke dingen doen. Dus het was niet dat ik echt heel actief was met mijn geloof. Dus het zat wel in m'n hoofd, maar niet echt in m'n hart.

<sup>40</sup> "In de hervormde kerk moest ik ook altijd een rok aan, en ik ben zo anti-rok."

<sup>41</sup> "De gewone kerken krimpen terwijl wij groeien. Er zijn veel jonge mensen in CLC."

<sup>42</sup> "van vroeger"

<sup>43</sup> "Het was heel conservatief, het stond stil."

reformed church (liberated). (Interestingly, he also regards some other evangelical churches as non-dynamic, although these seem to be much closer to the City Life Church in form and theology.) When I asked him, to describe his church he mentioned amongst others the following characteristics: “(...) young, progressive, energetic (...)”<sup>44</sup>, hence, I asked him what ‘progressive’ meant in this context. He said:

*“Look, in my reformed church, only psalms were sung which had been sung for hundreds of years. In an evangelical congregation, they sing Opwekking<sup>45</sup> of ten years old. And with us, if you haven’t attended church for three months, the whole repertoire of songs has changed. There are always new teams, new activities, a new vision. There’s a lot of change.”<sup>46</sup>*

When Matthew and Lydia said that CLC is dynamic, I also asked them the meaning of this word. Matthew’s response is similar: “it is changing continually”. Afterwards he set this in contrast to the congregation of his parents: “my parents’ congregation ages, and shrinks”. Lydia then adds how CLC is different: “There are a lot of traditions thrown overboard in CLC. We’re talking here about communion, and doing your confession before participating in this. The children are not baptized. We don’t have certain days of fasting, for crops and labour for example. Just these tradition things; we don’t do these in CLC.”<sup>47</sup>

This means that abandoning tradition is done to become ‘modern’, as we have seen in Hannah’s example of speaking in tongues, and Paul’s illustration of classical liturgical music. Apparently, ‘tradition’ hinders becoming ‘dynamic’ and ‘contemporary’. It is as the saying ‘to stand still is to fall behind’; the ‘static’ and ‘conservative’ nature of ‘traditional’ churches leads to an inevitable decline. City Life Church on the contrary, is ‘ever-changing’, ‘dynamic’ and ‘modern’, therefore CLC cannot but grow. In this specific explanation of the decline of mainline Christianity in the West and the success of CLC Den Haag, ‘dynamics’ and ‘contemporaneity’ merge: the ‘traditional’ church is believed not to change –although today’s society does. As a matter of consequence the ‘traditional’ can no longer keep up with the modernizing world around it. City Life Church however, imagines itself to be open towards society, adaptive to its changes, and thereby able to maintain one’s position in the present, that is, the ‘modern’.

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<sup>44</sup> “Jong, dynamisch, energiek”

<sup>45</sup> *Opwekking* is the name of a collection of, literally translated, Revival Hymns. These are immensely popular in mainline Pentecostal and Evangelical churches, and are today also sung in the more orthodox reformed denominations.

<sup>46</sup> “Kijk in mijn gereformeerde kerk werden alleen maar psalmen gezongen die ze al honderden jaren zongen. In een evangelische gemeente zingen ze opwekking van 10 jaar oud. En bij ons, als je drie maanden niet geweest bent, is heel het arsenaal aan liederen weer veranderd.” Er zijn altijd weer nieuwe teams, nieuwe activiteiten, nieuwe visie. Er is veel verandering.”

<sup>47</sup> “Er zijn veel tradities overboord gegooid in CLC. We hebben het dan over avondmaal en daarvoor belijdenis doen. De kinderen worden niet gedoopt. We hebben geen biddag voor gewas en arbeid. Gewoon die traditie dingen; die hebben we niet in CLC. ”

### *The role of the English language*

The English language has a distinct function in this negotiation process: it serves as a connection between the global Pentecostal domain, and the local City Life Church. English is perfectly suited in this local context to build and display the link towards a greater global faith community. This link then becomes an important part of one perceiving the self as 'modern'; for to be 'modern' entails situating the self in a transnational, world-encompassing sphere. The English language is probably the most powerful and clear manifestation of being part of such a global sphere. Speaking English, as a performative act, turns one into a global subject. But how exactly are globalization and the use of English articulated in CLC's idea of 'modernity'?

The use of English in the City Life Church is part of the wider aim to be a 'contemporary' church. Since English is used *en masse* in the media, everyday vocabulary, advertisements, and magazines, it has become a very prominent language in today's Dutch society. Especially in an urban environment, such as in The Hague, one cannot cross a street without being confronted with English terms such as 'sale', and 'huge discounts', or posters announcing exciting parties and concerts, in English. Since English is taught on a high level in schools, and it has become the main instruction language in many studies at the Dutch universities (of applied sciences), the expansion of English has been further facilitated. In this respect, reading or singing in English in church has much to do with Matthew's earlier-mentioned remark: "we try to mirror society". Next to the language used, the communication style of popular advertisements, video clips, and other communications, are also reflected in CLC's church life. In the weekly 'church-news videos', which are of an impressive quality, I once heard the then hit song 'Happy' by Pharell Williams, used as background music (Field notes 18 May 2014). In the church news, the church's coming activities are presented by a trendy young man, wearing an equally trendy cap, presenting in a 'MTV-style': short video clips of a very professional quality, which announces events, are alternated with shots of the presenter introducing them, and adding practical details. In these popular expressions in the City Life Church, the English language is also an important component; the video clips are mostly sung in English, and as said, invitations or announcements for an average event usually feature English titles or descriptions.

The English language and its connection to globalization, is not only 'contemporary', it can also be regarded as 'dynamic'. The idea that one is singing songs from Australia, and listening to preachers from Uganda or Indonesia, demonstrates the broad range of possibilities implied in globalization and its manifestation in the English language. It allows for the image of having an open access to all sorts of ideas, influences, goods, and the participation in a global movement. Being inspired by these, CLC is prevented from becoming 'static' or 'unchanging', for the link to the global ensures growth and progress. It is for a reason that CLC's pastors pose the question "What's your next step?" in English,

instead of Dutch. English, in its context of globalization, embodies such notions of positive change and growth.

In addition, speaking English in church enhances the difference between CLC and the 'traditional', 'old-fashioned' and 'static', Dutch-speaking churches. For it is thought that these are not 'contemporary', they do not move with the globalizing world around them. They remain isolated from the rest of society, and are not open to the dynamics and possibilities of globalization, let alone the globalized Pentecostal movement. The 'traditional' churches miss out on all the exciting possibilities and constructive changes provided by the global. Instead of a vibrant Christianity, it remains a 'static' and local form of religiosity.<sup>48</sup> It is important for CLC to conceptualize of oneself as global for it stands in contrast to the local, narrow-minded petit bourgeois image of 'traditional' churches. Speaking English can therefore be seen as part of a performance declaring one's dynamic and contemporary identity, and distancing the self from all negative values attributed to that what is 'traditional'.

Lara Deeb, an anthropologist who worked in the Lebanese Shi'i community, offers in this respect a very clear perspective on the use of the term 'modernity'. Despite that her fieldwork area seems distant from the environment of City Life Church, her observations may very well be of use in the context of this thesis. In her ethnographic account she namely also focuses on the unravelling of the meaning of modernity used in a non-academic, everyday setting. Very relevant to our topic is that she regards "Thinking about modern-ness as ultimately dependent on a notion of progress (18)". Being 'modern' is here associated with all sorts of positive conditions such as "organization, education, cleanliness, hygiene, etc. (19)", whereas the opposite, being 'traditional' is linked to all sorts of negative characteristics: "chaos, ignorance, dirtiness (19)". In the City Life Church these positive and negative qualities differ, since the context in which they are employed is another one. Being 'modern' stands here for dynamism, progress, change, youthfulness, being alive, a form of contemporaneity and growth. Whereas 'tradition' involves conservatism, underdevelopment, aging, decline. The normativity of this comparison, however, does resemble CLC's discourse. Deeb continues with a very simple, though powerful observation: "At its most basic, modern meant "better than" (19)." And that is exactly the core of CLC's speaking of 'traditional' churches. CLC imagines itself to be better than those denominations portrayed as 'traditional'. Speaking English in church and in personal worship moments is one of the means to produce and reinforce this attitude.

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<sup>48</sup> In many popular expressions of Pentecostalism, religion is seen as something completely different from 'Christianity'. Religion entails merely rules and customs, whereas being Christian involves experience, feeling and 'the heart'. As a fine example, one could watch the clip 'Why I Hate Religion, But Love Jesus' by Jefferson Bethke on Youtube < <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1IAhDGYlpqY>>

### *To whom this discourse appeals*

Taking into account the self-identification of CLC in relation to these ‘traditional’ churches, the importance of the background of its membership should not be underestimated. When one’s identity is constructed with so much reference to this particular frame, it is worth investigating not only how this background is imagined, but also whom this construction serves? In this perspective, it is not a matter of coincidence that a large, perhaps even the largest, part of the people who belong to the City Life Church congregation have their roots in those churches labelled ‘traditional’. Many church members come from the *Gereformeerde Kerken (Vrijgemaakt)* (Reformed Churches [Liberated]), the *Protestantse Kerk in Nederland* (Protestant Church in the Netherlands), and the *Christelijke Gereformeerde Kerken* (Christian Reformed Churches). As already mentioned, only one of my interviewees had no experience with historic churches; the other nineteen interviewees mainly have been part of orthodox Protestantism and of more classical forms of Pentecostalism, before turning to CLC Den Haag. Although that does not necessarily mean that ninety-five percent of the church attendees come from a ‘traditional’ background –I namely believe my sample to be not entirely representative in this respect– it does indicate a very strong presence of individuals to whom this discourse can relate.<sup>49</sup>

Central to the narratives I encountered is conversion; one’s life history can be divided in a period before, and a period after this decisive moment. For these Pentecostals, it is their conversion experience which distinguishes between the categories BC and AD; before and after ‘getting to know’ Jesus. That is however not to say that the two are separate entities; the description of one’s life before conversion can only come into existence after the disjunctive event –later to be described as conversion– has occurred (Gooren 2010). When one describes the part of ‘one’s life in sin’ it is only with reference to having become ‘cleansed by the blood’, that one can do so; otherwise one would not have appropriated these specific terms to construct one’s narrative. The same goes for the discourse on modernity and tradition as employed in City Life Church; one can only look at one’s former church as ‘traditional’, when having acquired a ‘modern’ lens through which to re-examine the world.

Whether or not ‘real’ transformation is visible in the lives of the newly-converted will not be my focus point here; rather, I will examine how one’s conversion, one’s coming to Christ, is narrated. And, although the debate on the supposed continuity or disjunction in Pentecostalism is an interesting one (Asamoah Gyadu 2005; Daswani 2010; Gifford 2004,

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<sup>49</sup> Moreover, it might also appeal to the young migrant Christians, another considerable group which caught my attention with their presence in the church services. These youngsters often feel limited in being part of a migrant church, since their own congregations are very close communities focused primarily on their country of origin. The participation and emancipation in Dutch society, by means of for example their education, are not reflected in their church. City Life Church might offer the environment in which they can negotiate their Dutch identities and faith better than in their original churches. This of course, can for clarity’s sake, not be properly explained in this writing; a more extensive view on this particular group in the City Life Church would require much more research.

Robbins 2003), this will not be at stake in this text. This thesis will only use the conversion narratives to come to a fuller understanding of the particular audience in City Life Church addressed in its identity discourse.

The conversion narrative of my respondents, distinguishing a godless from a god-loving state, coincided remarkably often with another disjunction in life. Around three quarters of my sample moved from the countryside to the 'big city', The Hague. In the common divide between rural and urban, the characteristics of 'modern' and 'traditional' churches intertwine and are further consolidated: it is the city which is a space of dynamics, innovation, and modernity, whereas the countryside is said to be traditional, unchanging and old-fashioned. Although my respondents did not always connect that what they hold as 'modern' with the 'urban', the normative typology is strikingly similar. When one reconsiders the message Ruth received –God told her to move to the 'big city'– there is a clearer link between the narrative of conversion, urbanization, and modernity. Her conversion namely demanded her to move to a large city, as was commanded to Jonah. In addition, it is also the strikingly high number of respondents which made this shift from the rural to the urban. Not surprisingly, in much ethnographic material, though mainly in the global South, urbanization and Pentecostalism are also closely linked (Daswani 2010; Togarasei 2005; Soothill 2007).

It is in this literature on the global South more specifically the rising middle classes, and the 'upwardly mobile' that are in particular drawn to Pentecostalism (Mayrargue 2001). I am also inclined to apply this terminology to the group of respondents in CLC. They strongly rely on mass culture and consumerism for their identity formation. This becomes interestingly expressed in the home interiors of my respondents. The furniture was, I recognised, mostly bought at *IKEA* and (lower) middle-class stores such as *Xenos*. The couches and beds I saw were often loaded with many coloured pillows (red, purple) and candles were placed in the windowsill mostly in matching colours. The interiors were in general decent, neatly fit, and as far as I can remember many houses had dark wooden floors, of the type that is often used by large housing corporations in The Hague, renting out (former) worker's houses. Also, in some of the households involving women, large wooden letters saying 'LOVE' or 'HOME' were present in the living room –I had seen these before in many other middle-class households. For clothing goes the same: I have not encountered people with an exceptional taste; all my respondents dressed 'normal' and decent. For men this meant a (t-)shirt with usually a pair of jeans, and for women often a jeans with shirt, or a short dress. Most clothing looked as if it was bought at the local H&M or Zara –interestingly, pastor Jozua also tweeted about Zara "There's a new #Zara in town.. Just amazing! 3 storeys.. #goodstuff" (7 Dec. 2013, @JoshRidder).<sup>50</sup> As a final observation, I would like to mention the coffee and tea served. At the opening of the service, usually a short clip is shown in which new visitors are welcomed, and a free cappuccino is offered to them in the 'welcome lounge'. This cappuccino is, I have to say, of good quality, as were the drinks I had

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<sup>50</sup> Similarly the official CLC twitter account retweeted a tweet by the The Hague municipality about the opening of the Marks & Spencers in The Hague (19 Febr. 2014 @CLCDenHaag).

at most of my interviewees. I remember Ruth's organic camomile tea and the 'authentic Italian' coffee Paul made me with his trendy coffee percolator. These are, I think, good examples of the mainstream consumerism typical for this specific group. I realize that the above might be a very personal take on what middle-class, mainstream consumerism and upwards mobility is, but I hope to have sufficiently made clear by means of these examples how this group can be described.

In short, the dichotomous discourse perceiving the self as 'modern' and one's past, and other churches as 'traditional' fits very well into the conversion narratives I came across. Finding Christ in neo-Pentecostalism is closely linked with urbanization, and class-mobility. This upwardly-mobile identity is then played out against the *petit bourgeois* image of 'traditionalists' mainly from the countryside. The English language is a tool in this complex negotiation; to pray, worship, or listen to sermons in English, is one manner to position oneself towards a 'living' faith and towards feeling 'modern'. Engaging in speaking English is a performative action which reproduces a powerful, normative discourse, and simultaneously enables the self to locate itself on the positive side of this framework.

### *Of the global and the local*

The English language forms, in its reference to the Global Pentecostal realm and to the broader development of globalization, a connection between City Life Church Den Haag and the worldwide. However, the preceding discussion has shown that the English language functions not just as a language, but obtains a wholly different meaning in the specific context in which it is spoken. Although the act of speaking English seeks to present oneself as part of a global movement, the global image matters to CLC only because of the very local discourse on 'modernity' and 'tradition'. Ironically, it is exactly this local negotiation which requires a global self-representation, found in the English language. English is highly suitable for such a local appropriation for it is closely associated with the development of globalization. Hence, it can 'hide' the localness of its appropriation. Moreover, there is a large supply of Anglophone material available. There are all sorts of books, sermons, songs and clips produced by Pentecostals in Anglo-Saxon countries, Australia, and parts of the global South. And, equally important, the audience of the City Life Church has a reasonable proficiency in English, acquired in the Dutch education system, and through Dutch mainstream culture.

Here, an interesting paradox becomes manifest: it is the local context, which ought to be presented as 'global', but its 'global' representation –the English language– is adapted to a very local setting to serve its particular goals. José Casanova describes this as the "paradox of the local character of Pentecostalism." He states that Pentecostalism everywhere around the world is "an uprooted local culture engaged in spiritual warfare with its own roots". In addition, "it is in their very struggle against local culture that they prove

how locally rooted they are" (2001, 437-8). This analysis strikingly-well resembles the situation in CLC: the strong inclination to negatively relate to the local Dutch context displays the very local roots and identity of City Life Church.

However, a nuance has to be made: Casanova only takes examples from struggles against local cultures such as "Afro-Brazilian spirit cults in Brazil; against Vodou in Haiti; against witchcraft in Africa; against Shamanism in Korea" (2001, 437-8). These are however animist cultures, instead of the 'traditional' Christian culture CLC Den Haag responds to. That is to say, that the stance of Pentecostals towards the specific cults Casanova mentions, situated in the global South, will be much more hostile than CLC's attitude towards the 'traditional' churches, although the latter is also distinctively negative. I would say that CLC does not entirely fit Casanova's description that "Pentecostals are (...) everywhere leading an unabashed and uncompromising onslaught against their local cultures" (2001 437-8). CLC is, in relation to a 'traditional' Christian culture less violent; it proclaims, as we have seen, that the 'traditional' churches do not have a 'living' faith, which still is a serious accusation, but the term 'uncompromising onslaught' would misfit. Important to realize is that many church members have family or friends in the 'traditional' churches, of whom it is hard to judge that they do not have a 'real' faith. The rhetorical solution I often came across in conversations is to say that there are people in the 'traditional' churches who have a 'living relationship with Jesus', but that this does not occur as much as in CLC (Sarah). Some even stated that in the end the beliefs of these churches are similar; it is just the appearance that differs.

This shows how the very locality of the discourse employed might also problematize some of the black- and white divisions; the complex, lived reality of someone's life does not always fit the general framework of a worldview. Eventually, the discourses separating 'local' and 'global', 'traditional' and 'modern', shape, but are also shaped by its audience. Although the structures and narratives laid out here are, I believe, accurate representations, they function differently in the life of each and every individual in CLC.

## The English Language as Mediator of Authority

Another local appropriation of the English language is found in the mediation of authority. This section will explain how pastors of the City Life Church Den Haag employ the English language to strengthen their position, and to perform more powerful speech acts. For ordinary church members a similar conclusion will be drawn. In order to properly lay out this process, the global Pentecostal structures in which City Life Church is situated –a.o. that of the Hillsong network– will be taken into account, along with leadership in the wider Pentecostal *milieu*. Finally, the negotiation of the global and the local will be analyzed, with respect to the English language, and other strategies employed to obtain ‘global’ authority.

### *The global*

Hillsong is immensely important in the church life of CLC Den Haag. The network provides many guest speakers, often delivering a sermon at the three Sunday church services; it offers the possibility to participate in international Hillsong conferences, for church leaders, women, and lay people; furthermore, it is a strong inspiration for CLC’s video and audio productions which strongly resemble the clips produced by Hillsong. Perhaps most important, it is Hillsong music which dominates the worship moment. Only songs from the latest Hillsong album are sung; half in English, and half in self-made Dutch translation. Through all these mediums, CLC Den Haag makes itself strongly dependent on Hillsong.

It is not strange that CLC is willing to closely affiliate itself with Hillsong, for it is one of the –if not the– strongest brand of worldwide Pentecostalism. Especially the worship music is well-known among a wide audience, including non-Pentecostals. A spokesman of the church estimated that every week around forty-five million people sing Hillsong hymns (Pulliam Bailey). I remember, when visiting a church in Accra, Ghana, some years ago, I received as a gift, a disc with all sorts of different worship songs: there were clips of groups performing in the native *Ga*, or *Twi* language, along with for example the song ‘Eagles Wings’ by Hillsong. In addition, I know many young adults from orthodox Protestant, and mainline Protestant denominations who listen to Hillsong music on a regular basis. The worship music is an important key to understand the globalizing success of this transnational church network (Riches & Wagner 2012). Hence, it is a logical given that City Life Church incorporates this music and strongly identifies with Hillsong –after all, CLC also wants to be successful church.

### *Power- and Leadership structures*

CLC's leaning on Hillsong directs us towards an understanding of the dominant power structures in the (neo-)Pentecostal field. CLC aims, by moving closer towards Hillsong, to achieve some of its success; thereby it reflects the hierarchical ordering between these two churches. On the one hand there is the Hillsong network, with churches in all sorts of thriving and 'dynamic' cities (New York, London, Paris, etc.) with its mother church in Sydney, Australia. As explained in the methodology section, the pastors represent the identity of a church: the histories of the congregations are narrated by the journey of the couples leading the church; this is the case for the City Life Church Den Haag, as well as for instance Hillsong Sydney. These couples usually call themselves 'senior pastors'. The senior Pastors of Hillsong are Bobbie and Brian Houston. Other important figures in the network are Hillsong London pastors, Gary and Cathy Clarke, Carl and Laura Lentz in New York City, and Nick and Christine Caine who are active in the A21 campaign against human trafficking.

The pastors believe that they are appointed by God; he sent them the vocation to take up this particular function –they have received an 'anointing'. The gifts of each and every pastor are different; one is a gifted speaker, another one is specialized in healing practices. What is important to realize, is that, because the church is installed by God, the church is "not democratic" as Jedidja put it. A preacher does not acquire his or her authority from being appointed by votes, his authority is God-given. Ephesians 4:11, stating "And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers" is often used in the Pentecostal world to account for these structures as installed by the 'Lord of the church'.

The same goes for the structures within the City Life Church. One's position is attributed to one, on the basis of showing faith. What this faith entails is judged by one's ecclesial superiors who can ask one to climb the hierarchical ladder of City Life Church. One can only become a bubble-leader, an assistant connect-leader, a connect leader, a team leader, a staff member or a pastor by being admitted to do so. This system is based upon the idea of God endowing humans with prophetic and other spiritual gifts; it is God who gives pastors and teachers, and it is God who gives the ability to leaders to select their future succession. In practice, this means that the higher one's function in church is, the closer one is to the divine, or as often said 'the further he or she is in faith'. This grants an authoritative position in the church.

However, alternative explanations of authority are also possible. I do not intend to provide my readers here with a full and complete discussion of how these authorities are constructed; but, I hope to render visible one of the many more processes of shaping the authority of the CLC-pastors. It is namely my claim that the complex web of power at play in the globalized neo-Pentecostal world, not only functions as a hierarchical network of levels, ranks and layers; it is also the place where authority can be harvested. This global labyrinth

of hierarchical divisions and tensions is the place where authority can be found, namely in the interaction with that of others.

The authority of, for example, pastor Erald van de Ridder, heavily depends on his bond with other authorities: his power is mediated through befriended pastors and preachers. Erald and Mathilde search for confirmation and expansion of their authority through the encounter with more important persons in the field. As discussed, the first step for Erald and his wife was to become member of the Berea-network, after which they attempted to participate in the G12 network, to finally having associated themselves with the Hillsong network. Erald is now building authority through his meetings with for example Gary Clarke, the pastor of Hillsong London, who coaches Erald every month. It is revealing that many respondents stressed these visits; apparently they matter.

A similar development takes place now with the son of Erald and Mathilde: Jozua van de Ridder. He has been asked to join the staff team, and has also been given the title 'pastor'. Jozua acquires authority in relation to his father; because of the close connection to pastor Erald which he can demonstrate, authority is constructed. In addition, pastor Jozua has started accompanying his father on his monthly trips to London, to also receive coaching from pastor Gary Clarke.

#### *Obtaining authority: the 'discursive family'*

A certain degree of closeness or association to more successful leaders is vital in obtaining this form of authority; but what are the strategies employed to do so? What tactics might strengthen and deepen the affiliation of pastor Erald, with Hillsong's superstar preachers, or other more charismatic men and women? I will discuss two examples here; one that is a discursive strategy, and another involves that what I will name 'linguistic imitation'. In the latter, the role of the English language will also be further considered.

The first strategy involves CLC's reimagination of its hierarchical structures as a family. Within CLC, it is an often repeated sentence: "we are one big family"<sup>51</sup> (Field Notes 19 Jan. 2014). All connect groups and teams, and all individuals, are part of the one family with God as father.<sup>52</sup> One speaks, as is common in large parts of Christianity, of brothers and sisters, in the church. The gatherings of women in church are labelled 'sisterhood', and it is argued that people can have 'spiritual' fathers and mothers, as examples in faith.<sup>53</sup> The

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<sup>51</sup> "Wij zijn één grote familie"

<sup>52</sup> It strongly resembles the image of the church as one body. The image of the body of Christ however, implies an equality (1 Cor. 12), whereas the image of the family, also with regard to the gender discourse in CLC, leaves more room for the church's hierarchy to be established.

<sup>53</sup> In this respect, Ps Mathilde names as her examples "Bobby Houston, Holly Wagner, pastor Cathy Clarke, Joyce Meyer, Christine Caine, Victoria Osteen, Lisa Osteen, Marilyn Skinner and Helen Burns" (L. van de Ridder 2012, 9). As a woman, she ought to have female examples.

conception of family in City Life Church is also strongly hierarchical, with the husband as leader, with a supporting wife on his side.

The idea of the family is also brought to the table on a much smaller scale. There is ample attention for the position of Jozua and Lydia, the son and daughter of Erald and Mathilde<sup>54</sup>. In practically each church service they are praised for being such great, god-loving children, and all sorts of rather intimate family matters are shared. Ps Mathilde, who sometimes calls herself 'mother' of the congregation, tells in her sermon about the honeymoon of the two newly-wed to Malta. Also, all church members had been cordially invited to Jozua and Chelsea's wedding ceremony, which took, of course, place in the City Life Church. Furthermore I heard her speak, in her sermon, about Erald who had to scare away an animal from their storage room, about how they are moving to a new house, about her daughter Chelsea who does not listen to her mom's advice, and so on (Een Beter Leven).

It is as if this exemplified pastor family is connected with all other CLC (family-) members, through a constructed closeness ordinary church members can feel towards the family. In other words, in order to maintain and strengthen their position as head of the large 'CLC-family', and as part of the Hillsong Family, Erald and Mathilde have to provide a spotless image of their own family, and make this visible. In addition, the family van de Ridder has to be accessible to the CLC-audience, and suggest an intimate connection with the 'brothers' and 'sisters' in the congregation.

This very same process also forms the link to other congregations and denominations. The 'extended' CLC-family is also felt to be an integral part of CLC's church life. For example, in an interview with the pastors from CLC Utrecht, pastor Ankie states that she sees pastor Mathilde "really as a spiritual mother." (L. van de Ridder, 26). In a sermon in CLC Utrecht, Mathilde says: "My daughter just came to the front. And it's fun because we also call Utrecht our daughter, haha -our 'daughter congregation'."<sup>55</sup> (M. van de Ridder, CLC Utrecht). Similarly, CLC Den Haag is connected to Hillsong by having become member of the 'Hillsong Family Network'. On virtually every document printed or distributed by CLC, the City Life Church logo is accompanied by that of the 'Hillsong Family'. It should be noted that the connection between Hillsong and CLC primarily flows via the leading couples, or as the CLC website states it: "(...) we (that is Erald and Mathilde) have been invited by Brian & Bobbie to become part of the 'Hillsong Family'. This is a great privilege, and we are looking forward to what God will do in the future that is ahead of us." This enables the family metaphor not to become too abstract, but remain relatable to the senior pastors, with whom most church members feel a warm connection.

By placing oneself, as church or senior pastors, in one of these symbolic family relations, one actually situates the self in the field of neo-Pentecostal power play; moreover,

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<sup>54</sup> For an example, please read the quote of Mathilde van de Ridder on the next page, about blessing.

<sup>55</sup> "Mijn dochter kwam net naar voren, en het is grappig, want wij noemen CLC-Utrecht ook onze dochter, onze dochtergemeente, haha."

it allows for a certain mobility by building connections with other pastors, preachers and ministries. It is here that one can clearly see that the concept of family is key to the CLC-hierarchy, and comprises of multiple types of family-relations; in a connect-group, as leaders, or in bonds between churches. These 'family-types' in turn, all engage in a complex interplay with the 'real' nuclear family van de Ridder.

### *Obtaining authority: linguistic imitation*

As a second strategy, the imitation of language should be explored. In the sermons delivered by the pastors working in, or visiting City Life Church, a distinct language, verbal as well as non-verbal, is spoken. This is manifest in the vocabulary of the church which –despite the idea that one is a church open to society– is not easily comprehensible for outsiders, with concepts such as 'anointing', 'deliverance', 'healing', 'blessing', 'ministry'. The non-verbal communication I witnessed, especially during the sermons, also stood out; the pastors speak with much intonation, building climaxes, and then exclaiming their message in a manner that seems to be in between whispering and screaming. These messages are accompanied by heavy gestures and movements. In addition, the role of humour is not to be underestimated –in CLC, and in other neo-Pentecostal churches I have visited, humour is strikingly present, mostly treating gender differences. I heard jokes about men who like meat and cars, and women who care about their nail polish (Field notes 26 Jan. 2014 ; 18 May 2014). Of course, every pastor has his or her own style, depending on whether someone is young or old, man or woman –nevertheless, in general, the abovementioned observations are widely applicable.

These language games are highly present in the global Pentecostal movement. One will, when seeing Joyce Meyer, Bobbie Houston, or Joseph Prince, inevitably recognize patterns one can come across in City Life Church Den Haag. Not surprisingly, pastor Erald and Mathilde have extensive experience in the neo-Pentecostal world; they are invited to speak in other congregations themselves, receive international speakers and attend worldwide conferences –they are exchanging members within this particular community through which they are shaped and to which they contribute. In the contact with others, they practice themselves in being and becoming a (Hillsong) Pentecostal leader. When comparing, it is also clear that the CLC pastors are not as experienced as for instance their role models Bobbie and Brian Houston; they are more fluent in their speeches and hardly make any slip of the tongue, they come across more self-confident, make better contact with their audience, and their performances are more convincing. In the connection with these more charismatic<sup>56</sup> persons, Erald and Mathilde become more charismatic themselves.

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<sup>56</sup> Charismatic has here two meanings, which are intertwined in the neo-Pentecostal discourse. Firstly, as outside the Pentecostal context, it means to be a powerful, convincing person. Secondly, it refers to the *charisma*, the gifts of the spirit. To be a powerful speaker, is in this case a 'spiritual gift', granted by God himself.

One's closeness to another important figure brings one closer to the divine, which in turn makes one more gifted and experienced. This is how authority is mediated.<sup>57</sup>

An excellent example of this can be found in the practice of live translation, when guest speakers deliver sermons in City Life Church. When pastor Gary Skinner of the Ugandan Watoto church spoke in CLC, it was pastor Erald who stood on his side, literally translating, sentence for sentence. When pastor Gary raised his voice, so did pastor Erald; when pastor Gary changed his intonation, so did pastor Erald; when pastor Gary made a gesture, so did pastor Erald. Towards the end of his sermon, pastor Gary spoke that "all of life is sacred"; even eating a "big fat juicy steak", he yelled through the church. Pastor Erald not only provided the congregation with a Dutch translation of this message, he spoke his sentences in the exact same intonation, and even imitated pastor Gary's gesture of bringing the steak to his mouth. This translation, from English to Dutch, perfectly displays the process of mediating authority. By exactly mirroring his more charismatic colleague, and physically standing next to him, it is him speaking pastor Gary's words. It is Erald, in his communicative performance, associating himself with pastor Gary, repositioning himself, and aiming to be perceived as a more successful, practiced and charismatic preacher. It is not a coincidence that the practice of live translations is so frequent in the neo-Pentecostal world, where the mediation of authority is so vital.

The mediation as seen here, is not only of interest in understanding CLC's church structures, it is also a vital part of the negotiation of the global and the local. The English language, as part of the wider neo-Pentecostal communication network, is translated from a global realm to the Dutch context of CLC Den Haag. It fits what we have noted before: the global is locally appropriated. The moment when pastor Erald translates pastor Gary, it is the moment that the global becomes quite literally recontextualized in the local. The process of acquiring authority, and the relocation, or transfer of charisma, are therefore inextricably linked to issues of globality and locality.

Interestingly, in other moments during church services, the Dutch language is translated into the English –Bible readings are done in English, original Hillsong hymns are sung, and some people pray in English. This shows the deep ambiguity involved in the game of negotiating the local and the global; on the one hand, the global has to be appropriated in a specific environment, but on the other hand, the church has to present itself as global – although it is exactly this need for a global self-perception which is so very local. In order to maintain, and further build authority, or charisma, a visible bond with the global Pentecostal domain –where this authority can be found– has to be kept visible. Hence, after a translation into Dutch, the local, one should retranslate the self again towards the global. The local cannot sustain the self without presenting its global dimension; therefore, when the global

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<sup>57</sup> This can also perfectly go for the individual layman or –woman. English, in for example personal prayer or Bible reading, might also be a way in which to obtain more authority, or the power to pray more 'effectively'. However, for the sake of clarity, I have chosen not to elaborate on this.

descends and becomes local, it cannot exist as such, and thus has to be redressed in a global disguise.

In short, also in the mediation of authority, the English language is part of an appropriation of the global Pentecostal, to the local City Life Church Den Haag. Speaking the English language in different acts of worship, prayer, and preaching, mediates authority to the local *milieu*. But in becoming local, it requires a certain globalness, since it is there where its authority originates. The paradox of City Life Church's negotiation is that the global is translated into the local, but that the local cannot be accepted as Casanova already observed (2001 437-8). Therefore the 'global-having-become-local' has to be re-imagined as the global, to both undermine and underline the local character of CLC Den Haag.

## Conclusion

I started this thesis by narrating the remarkable presence of the English language in the City Life Church Den Haag. The popular Hillsong hymns are sung, the pastors often incorporate Bible verses from the New International Version, or the Message paraphrase, into their sermons. In addition, the church structures, age groups, and events mainly have English names. On a more individual level, I encountered many people who told me about their prayers and meditational moments, in which they address God in English. People claim that English 'sounds better', is 'more beautiful', or that there are theological reasons to employ this language. This writing found different answers however, and argued for another interpretation of this phenomenon.

The employment of the English language in the context of the City Life Church Den Haag coincides with the negotiation of the global and the local. In two examples, it has been made clear how this interplay functions: firstly, the English language contributes to a normative discourse which identifies the self as 'modern', whereas other churches are labelled 'traditional'; secondly, it is part of the mediation of authority from global Pentecostal leaders to the local pastors from CLC Den Haag. In both cases, the global is essential for the local identity.

The construction of the terms 'modern' and 'traditional' are highly politicized projects in CLC's identity discourse. To be 'modern' is to be 'dynamic' and 'contemporary'; that is, constantly changing, growing, and being open to today's society. 'Modernity' is experienced to be a mode of feeling at home in the urban, 'dynamic' environment of The Hague, and it entails having 'a better life' –being happily married, having a good job, and making progress. This 'better life' stands in sharp contrast to 'tradition'. It refers to the 'traditional churches'; many, if not most, CLC members were born and raised in these mostly orthodox Protestant denominations, or classical Pentecostal and Evangelical communities. These churches, however, are imagined to be static, conservative, and unable to adapt to society. They are presented as isolated, unchanging bulwarks, not allowing oneself to have the best life there is.

The great disjunction between the 'modern' and the 'traditional' is characteristic of the narratives of rupture, operating in the Pentecostalist discourse. This rupture is further underlined by the use of English in a religious setting: English is conceived of as 'modern', for it is closely associated with the outward mainstream culture, and it signifies the development of globalization which in its dynamics is believed to bring change and progress. Speaking English distinguishes the self from the traditional. English is thus experienced as a trait of the global, but its use in the very local construction of 'modernity' vs. 'tradition' alters its meaning on the ground –the global becomes locally appropriated.

A similar appropriation takes place in the mediation of authority. The pastors from City Life Church attempt, by demonstrating a certain closeness and affiliation to more successful Pentecostal leaders and preachers, to strengthen their own authority. Building one's charismatic leadership can be done by discursively connecting oneself with these stars of the Pentecostal heavens, for example by positioning the self in a symbolic 'family relation' to the authoritative other, as CLC has done by becoming member of the 'Hillsong Family' network. Another technique involves imitation in speaking; the intonation, gestures, vocabulary, and facial expressions are copied to create an affiliation through which one can share in a more charismatic preacher's authority. Speaking English is an important part of this process: through speaking the language in which the authoritative figures display their power, including the distinct vocabulary and non-verbal communication, the pastor can obtain a larger authority himself. In this, the English language is again part of the interplay between global and local powers and identities: the authority of the global is locally appropriated, for instance by Pastor Erald's translation attempts.

But in both the case of CLC's modernity discourse, and the mediation of authority, what is locally appropriated cannot be presented as local; it can only be labelled as global. The local context requires this idea of 'globalness' in order to be successful in its local context. It is namely the global character of the English language which is perceived as 'modern', similarly, it is the global which enables the mediation of authority. In other words, producing the narrative of CLC as a global church is one of the reasons why it can be such a successful local church –it permits City Life Church to perceive itself as 'modern' and authoritative. Although the global turns local, it has to remain perceived as global, for the local remains dependent on the global for its identity. This play evokes an endless negotiation of global and local, constantly de- and re-contextualizing identity and authority.

Amidst these negotiations, characterized by the very locality of the matters dealt with, the particular nature of Pentecostalism in CLC Den Haag is brought to light. It shows how the local context of a Dutch Pentecostal congregation deeply shapes and forms its being, as is the case everywhere around the world, in Brazil, Ghana, or the United States. It also underscores that indeed, (neo-)Pentecostalism on the European continent, is as in other parts of the world, characterized by its own localness –which considerably differs from other contexts– and hence is certainly worth a more profound investigation. In the end, all the very local histories of church members are comprised in this discussion; from the global Pentecostal community's discourse, these elements are taken and transformed in such a way, that these can respond to the challenges and questions on the ground. These local productions and adaptations of the global are at the basis of Pentecostalism's plurality; it is a faith which constantly transforms and is transformed, it is colourful and dynamic, and above all, different at each and every place.

The role of the English language in non-Anglo-Saxon Pentecostalism is another element which asks for further research: my work here, and that of other authors, has been

but an exploration. More and different questions should be posed: is the use of English in different contexts comparable? How is the role of English in German or French Pentecostalism? And if so, how is English used in Congolese, Chinese, or Brazilian Pentecostalism? Which Pentecostals predominantly use English? What role does English take in an entirely Anglophone church which is mainly visited by Dutch-speaking believers, as for example Crossroads, or Hillsong Amsterdam? For what other reasons is the English language employed? Does the English language serve as a 'liturgical language'? Moreover, how does this example relate to the many other instances of languages other than the vernacular used in cults and prayers?

There are many more questions to pose in this respect; the English language in the City Life Church Den Haag is a truly thought-provoking practice. While writing this conclusion, and having found some answers, it comes to me as a slightly less puzzling phenomenon; nonetheless, it will remain incredibly fascinating to me. The English language powerfully captures the plurality, as well as the commonality, the global and the local, of the tongues of Pentecost. These tongues are engaged in incessant dialogue and negotiation, with each other and with their own *milieux*: in the end, every man hears in his own tongue.

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