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Richman, Naomi (2021) Homosexuality, created bodies, and Queer fantasies in a Nigerian Deliverance Church. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 50 , pp. 249-277. ISSN 1570-0666.

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JOURNAL OF RELIGION IN AFRICA 50 (2020) 249–277

Journal of  
Religion in  
AFRICA

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# Homosexuality, Created Bodies, and Queer Fantasies in a Nigerian Deliverance Church

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## Abstract

In recent years the use of ‘gay cure’ therapies by religions has become a major public controversy in the West. Deliverance, or exorcism, is pointed to as an example of a Christian practice used to try and change a person’s sexuality. Pentecostal churches specialising in deliverance have become particularly popular on the African continent in the last few decades, where beliefs that homosexuality is immoral and un-African are also widespread. At the same time, public discourse about African attitudes to sexuality in the West tends to misunderstand the way religion contributes to cultures of heteronormativity in Africa. This article analyses how African deliverance churches view same-sex relations by investigating a large Nigerian deliverance church publicly accused of practising conversion therapies. It argues that the church’s views on homosexuality derive from its theological understanding of human creation, and that there is more scope for queer expression than first appears.

## Keywords

gay-conversion therapies – Africa – homophobia – gay rights – deliverance – Pentecostalism – spiritual warfare – African sexuality

## 1 Introduction

In 2017 a series of articles appeared in the British daily tabloid newspaper the *Liverpool Echo*, ousting a local Nigerian Pentecostal church for practising ‘gay cure conversion therapy’ (Parry 2017a, 2017b, 2018a). The article was the

outcome of an undercover investigation conducted by a reporter who had attended some church services and sought private counselling from its leaders, under the pretense that he was experiencing confusion over his sexuality. The leaders invited him to attend their upcoming deliverance programme, which would involve intense prayer and fasting over a three-day period.

The newspaper's exposé generated tensions among the local community, and a public protest outside the church premises soon followed. Alongside others, members of the Liverpool University Students Union and the Merseyside Skeptics Society took to the streets to oppose the 'hatefulness' of the church's treatment of gay people (Parry 2017b). The debate eventually reached the chamber of the House of Commons, where the MP for Walton, Dan Carden, called for an 'outright ban' on the practices of the church—which was outed publicly as Mountain of Fire and Miracles (MFM)—on the grounds that its 'disturbing and dangerous gay cure therapies' involving 'rituals and starvation' had 'no place in 21st-century Britain' (Parry 2018b).

At the time, I happened to be conducting ethnographic research of my own into the church and had been attending several of its other branches. Established in Nigeria in the late 1980s, the church had since undergone rapid growth and boasted hundreds of congregations around the world. As I watched the conflict unfold, I was struck by how the church was depicted as a gay cure or 'pray the gay away' church, even though it was a deliverance ministry (Parry 2017b, 2018c).<sup>1</sup> It viewed deliverance as the answer to virtually any self-diagnosed problem. As its flagship practice, anybody and everybody who came through its doors was advised to undergo it. On the other hand, that the church leaders in Liverpool saw homosexuality as a problem in the first place was not surprising. The church had typically conservative views on sexual ethics. Marriage and sexual relations were central aspects of its teachings, and its beliefs about what was acceptable and unacceptable generally followed the standard line taken by the evangelical religious right: sex was something that should only take place within the confines of a heterosexual Christian marital union.

However, behind all the rhetoric, it seemed that the issue being contested in Liverpool was not simply about whether it was right or wrong to be gay. For the protestors, sexual desires spoke to something of the inherent nature of the individual—they were a matter of identity—but for the Pentecostals they were incidental to the person's 'true' created self. Sexual orientation, in other words, was a fixed attribute for the former party, reflecting its status as a 'protected characteristic' in the eyes of the law, following the 2010 UK Equality Act. But in the eyes of the church, sexual desires were made up of much more fickle stuff. They could change, be cultivated, or even be manipulated by nefarious

spiritual agents. Desires did not, in short, necessarily say very much about who a person really was. What materialised as a moral dispute in Liverpool grew out of a difference of opinion about what it is to be a person, and what it is to have desires.

This article is about how African deliverance ministries like MFM view same-sex relations. I must be clear at the outset that my goal in writing it is not to justify or legitimise either antigay beliefs or the use of religious practices like deliverance to try and change a person's sexuality. Instead, my objective is anthropological, to represent my informants as accurately as possible and hopefully in a way that they recognise, even when their beliefs are ones that I do not share. The analyses offered here are therefore to be read as purely descriptive rather than normative statements. I am motivated to address the need for informed, 'insider' understandings of why some churches use deliverance to 'cure' same sex desires, and how the use of this practice by a Nigerian deliverance church sits within the broader cultural, historical, and theological context. The article is therefore not only intended as a contribution to scholarship on African religion and sexuality, but also as a resource for interested campaigners, journalists, and agency workers who have expressed the need for more intricate understandings of what deliverance is and how it intersects with beliefs about sexual orientation.

## 2 Navigating a Political Minefield

Over the last few years, the use of so-called religious 'conversion therapies' to 'cure' individuals of homosexuality has become a firm fixture in public debates about LGBT+ rights in the UK. In line with efforts to introduce legislation against these practices in other liberal countries like Australia, Canada, and Germany, in 2018 the British government issued its LGBT+ equality plan that also promised to bring 'forward proposals to end the practice of conversion therapy in the UK' (LGBT Action Plan 2018). In March 2020 gay conversion therapies reappeared in the headlines after a handful of activists sitting on the government's LGBT+ advisory panel resigned loudly in protest of the slow progress being made toward the criminalisation of these practices. The debate was resuscitated in the halls of parliament, and pledges were renewed to end conversion practices. The government made a formal commitment to legislate the banning of conversion therapies in May 2021.

It is fair to say that in recent years the use of conversion therapies to 'cure' homosexuality has emerged as a major site of political contestation in British society. However, despite the fact that some of the most vocal critics of

conversion therapies speak from a religious standpoint, public discourse about the issue has nevertheless tended to ignore this, unfolding instead along well-worn fault lines: religion, with its 'rituals', derision of the body, and narrow views on sexuality is positioned as a way of life that stands in direct confrontation to a secular, liberal ideology, which prefers to think about moral problems in terms of 'rights' and 'identities'. In the Liverpool incident this antagonism was sharpened by the fact that the actors under investigation were not only religious but African. In these sorts of scenarios, national and cultural identity emerges as further ground for producing Otherness; here, between the modern British values of liberalism on the one hand, and the supposed intolerance of non-Western cultures on the other. I have found these mechanisms of estrangement to be unhelpful and damaging, not only in the way they present a caricature of what it means to be religious, but also in the way they reinscribe harmful prejudices about what it means to be non-Western, in this case African, in the process.

Scholars writing at the intersection of Christianity and sexuality in Africa have for some time recognised the ways in which debates about the problem of homophobia in Africa are grounded in a perception of Africa as 'backward', which, as Adriaan van Klinken puts it, 'allows the West to see itself as "progressive" and "modern" in contrast (van Klinken 2018, 2013; Awondo, Geschiere, and Reid 2012). Drawing on the work of the postcolonial African theorist Achille Mbembe, van Klinken demonstrates how discussions about homophobia in Africa serve as just one example of the way that the West asserts its 'difference from the rest of the world' and 'develops a self-image' through distancing itself from 'absolute otherness' (Mbembe 2001, 2). At the same time, the part played by religion and, in particular, by theology in the heated debates around homosexuality in Africa tends to be less explored in the academic literature, and less understood in the broader public discourse (van Klinken 2013). This is problematic given that articulations of homophobic sentiment across the continent today are so often justified by references to Christian, and specifically evangelical, concepts.

To lay my cards on the table for a moment—I am a cis-hetero woman who is neither African, nor a Christian. I am a scholar of religion motivated to improve understanding of religion and its social and cultural manifestations in contemporary societies. Here I want to intervene in debates about deliverance and gay conversion therapies by underscoring the truth that being religious is, of course, not incompatible with being queer—even in those cases where explicit denunciations of queerness are the official party line taken by a church or other religious body. I am disturbed by the assumption so often made that leaving a demanding or abusive religious community means leaving

a religion behind altogether, rather than recognising that the resources for experiencing healing and love also exist within religions and can be productive for those persons for that very reason. This claim is not born of a lofty optimism, as there is a great deal at stake here—for LGBT+ persons facing rejection from their families and religious communities, a further rupture, this time from their personal faith, can in some situations compound the trauma they are already suffering. Being openly queer or being religious is not a choice anybody should be compelled to make, whether that is by a faith body or an LGBT+ one. And learning to celebrate one's LGBT+ identity does not have to mean eliminating one's religious identity.

Writing on American Fundamentalism back in 1991, Susan Harding invited scholars to participate in a 'better politics than one grounded in a totalizing or uncritical opposition between fundamentalist and modern' (Harding 1991, 393). She called on social scientists to work harder to represent those 'cultural "others" ... deemed inappropriately religious or otherwise problematic or repugnant' (Harding 1991, 376). In the last twenty years, anthropologists of Christianity have taken heed of Harding's call by reflecting in considerable depth on what it means to take seriously a belief system like Christianity that is at once familiar and foreign to the anthropologist. Both anthropology and Christianity are cultural discourses originally produced in the West, and whose genealogies are historically entangled with one another, yet anthropology tends toward bracketing the kinds of metaphysical truth claims to which Christianity is fundamentally committed (Kahn 2014; Robbins 2003; Richman 2019).

In light of this problematic, and also in light of the epistemological possibilities raised by the so-called 'ontological turn' in anthropology, the move to engage theology more robustly in anthropological analyses has emerged in recent years as a productive approach in the anthropology of Christianity (Holbraad and Pedersen 2017; Lemons 2018; Robbins 2020; Furani 2019). I use this theologically engaged approach to anthropology here to illuminate how theological reasoning operates in the production of antigay polemics in deliverance churches. This also involves drawing on theological concepts and categories in my analysis, as well as cultivating an ontological openness to my informants' spiritual realities, both in the field and in my writing.

The first part of this article presents an overview of the theology of deliverance Christianity and its contemporary manifestations in Africa. The key beliefs of the Nigerian Pentecostal deliverance church that was the subject of the *Liverpool Echo* investigation, Mountain of Fire and Miracles (MFM), are introduced. In the next section we meet Philip, a long-standing MFM-goer who has hostile views toward homosexuality. Attending to the role of theology

in these debates, I argue that the church's position on homosexuality derives from its theological vision of human bodily creation and rightful relations between created persons. In short, homosexuality is seen as wrong insofar as it runs counter to an understanding of God's intentions for human sexuality. Against a backdrop of spiritual warfare theology, which sees God as engaged in a cosmic conflict with Satan, homosexuality emerges as *de facto* demonic in origin. Humans are seen as vulnerable to the interferences of Satan, who manufactures confused sexual desires with the aim of wreaking havoc on the world. These theological interpretations are then situated in relation to Western Christian and African histories of sexuality.

Finally, the third section examines the ways that the language of Pentecostal liturgy creates opportunities to experience and experiment with queer desires. These queer experiences are sublimated aspects of the church's ironclad commitment to heterosexuality. Shining a light on them allows us to see beyond what appears hegemonic. It is for that reason that this intellectual move represents an act of 'queering' because it signals a 'critical stance' that is 'skeptical of existing identity categories' and instead is 'more interested in understanding the production of normativity and its queer companion, nonnormativity', as Siobhan Somerville describes it (2020, 2).

### 3 Spiritual Warfare and the Call to Deliverance

In Nigeria and across West Africa, Pentecostal churches are becoming increasingly vocal in their warnings about the devil. Many share a growing concern that the existential threat he poses is becoming more widespread and more severe. The shape and form that this threat is imagined taking can vary from region to region, and from church to church. Local machinations of demonic power are grounded in specific understandings of evil and its manifestations, concepts that have undergone multiple, substantive transformations in different regions since the arrival of missionaries to West Africa, and since the episodes of Christian revival that have punctuated the last century or so of African religious history (Meyer 1999).

From the 1980s and '90s, the Pentecostal churches that prioritize preaching about the demonic have become progressively influenced by the writings of American evangelical proponents of spiritual warfare theology (like C. Peter Wagner) and fiction (like Frank Peretti) in their own teachings. This theology maintains that the world is caught up in a battle between God and the devil, good and evil. The war plays out on both a global, macro level, as well as in the lives of individuals and their personal struggles. The scriptural

basis of spiritual warfare is taken from Ephesians 6:12, which is understood to say that the enemies Christians face are spiritual and demonic rather than physical: 'For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places'. Another important influence on African spiritual warfare today has been the work of the highly successful British deliverance minister and author Derek Prince, who toured West Africa in the late 1980s. In one of Prince's key publications, he explains this theology: 'There are two kingdoms in opposition: the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Satan ... these two kingdoms are engaged in mortal warfare and the war is coming to its climax in our day as this age comes to a close' (1987, 7).

Spiritual warfare theology can be used as a template for organising all areas of social and cultural life, generating cognate binary oppositions like good/evil, light/dark, and so on. Another biblical passage used to support this strong cosmological dualism is taken from Matthew 12:30, where Jesus says, 'He who is not with Me is against Me' when delivering a demonically possessed boy. The spiritual conflict is linked to the end of days when eventually the battle between the kingdoms of God and of Satan will reach a climax, and Jesus will return from heaven to earth (Acts 3:19–21).

The fact that this battle will unfold on an epic, cosmic scale does not make it at all irrelevant to the day-to-day lives of Christians. In fact, many evangelicals believe that it is in their individual lives that the most important struggles between God and Satan take place. The Christian body itself is imagined as a site of spiritual warfare where demons wrestle with the Holy Spirit for control of the person. As such, it becomes the focus of techniques that are designed to deliver the subject from evil. 'Deliverance' is in fact the name given to the spiritual practise designed specifically to empty the individual self of negative forces. Christians are rallied to participate in spiritual warfare against evil spirits by harnessing the weapons and armour available to them, such as prayer, the recitation of scripture, fasting, the direct casting out of spirits, and more (Ephesians 6:16–17) (Richman 2020).

The call to undergo deliverance therefore takes as a theological given that Christians who have been born again are not necessarily immune to attacks by evil spirits. Born-again Christians say they have the Holy Spirit inside their very bodies, and although this divine presence repels evil spirits it does not prevent Christians from experiencing various degrees of demonic harassment. In situations where this harassment has been allowed to mature into a state of complete demonic possession, the demon takes over the faculties of a person entirely. In this case deliverance is conducted to expel the offending spirit and

restore autonomy back to the individual, whose motives can now be realigned with those of the Holy Spirit. As a result, deliverance is not only seen as something that is needed on the social level to target satanic structures embedded in the wider cosmos, it is also necessary on the individual level for the sake of one's own spiritual and bodily integrity.

This idea that the world is embroiled in a battle between good and evil is also central to the Nigerian deliverance church, Mountain of Fire and Miracles ministries (MFM) (Adogame 2012; Gifford 2016; Hackett 2011; Marshall 2016; Richman 2020, 2018).<sup>2</sup> Although something of a latecomer to the Pentecostal megachurch scene in Nigeria, the church has defied expectations to become the largest deliverance church and make its founder and general overseer, Dr Daniel Olukoya, a household name. Olukoya is a Yoruba Christian who grew up attending an African Independent church, Christ Apostolic Church (CAC), and went on to obtain a Ph.D. in microbiology at the University of Reading (UK). He then returned to Nigeria to work as a medical researcher and in 1989 established a prayer fellowship in his living room in Yabba, with peers from his days as a student at UNILAG. Today the church's official headquarters are in Lagos, although it now claims to have established around 500 branches around the world, mostly serving Nigerians in the diaspora.

MFM has a strong ascetic leaning and its teachings and practices are highly preoccupied with confronting the devil. This orientation means that the atmosphere at MFM is often deliberately more serious and unsettling than that found in the many flamboyant and exuberant neo-Pentecostal churches in Nigeria, especially those that preach the prosperity gospel. MFM teaches that Christians must be 'trained' in the 'science' of spiritual warfare so that they can unite as 'prayer warriors' in an 'aggressive end-time army for the Lord' (About MFM 2017). Prayer and fasting are central practices—not to be conducted only during dedicated public deliverance sessions, but also privately and on a regular basis. The church teaches that virtually all personal challenges have spiritual origins, and so solutions should also be sought in the spiritual realm. Depending on the size and locale, MFM branches hold special deliverance programmes once or twice a month that involve a weekend of dedicated group prayer, fasting, and exorcisms that take place through the day and night. Personal deliverance can also be sought from a pastor privately, who will first conduct a detailed interview designed to drill down to one's 'spiritual foundations' and identify the root of the problem.

The church attracts a wide cross-section of society, and especially young persons and women. Its specialisation in deliverance means that it also appeals to those who may formally belong to other churches but are looking for an intense and targeted approach to address a stubborn problem. Others like its

no-nonsense, hard-line message about the dismal spiritual state of the world today. The many fantastical stories about witches and demons circulated in the church and developed in Olukoya's many publications also bring worshippers through the doors. Indeed, the church has a good self-understanding of its niche and appeal, and has even developed a kind of popular lexicon of its own. It is peppered with many catchy idioms coined by Olukoya ('spiritual insecticide', 'prayer points', 'destiny vultures', and 'vagabond anointing', to name a few), some of which have caught on in other churches and contributed to the church's overall celebrity.

#### 4 A Church within a Church

Another belief that is foundational to the church maintains that we are all created perfectly by God and destined to flourish in life. This flourishing not only encompasses the physiological (health), and the material (wealth), it is a holistic flourishing as in the African concept of flourishing, or *Alaafia* in Yoruba. Most of all, flourishing is something we are entitled to in our romantic and reproductive lives.<sup>3</sup> The most important spiritual domain is the Christian family home. Not only is marriage 'the best thing that can ever happen to man', (Olukoya 1999, 7–8) but it is imbued with eschatological promise since it offers humanity a 'foretaste of what to expect in heaven' (Olukoya 1999, 8). Olukoya describes it as a 'church within a church' and a 'world within a world' (Olukoya 2012b).

The general idea is that spiritual and moral formation begins and ends in the family domain, and so the state of a person's public affairs is determined by the state of their domestic affairs. The distinction between the interior and the exterior can be scaled up from the home (to a church, a nation, the world) or scaled down, (to the bodily subject); either way, the idea is that sanctity begins 'in the inside' and flows outward to affect the whole cosmos. This is why Olukoya says, 'The Bible says that God is not too worried about sins outside the body, as He is worried about sins in the body, i.e., fornication and adultery' (Olukoya 2001). It is telling that this is actually an hermeneutic inversion of Matthew 15:11, when Jesus counters the Pharisees by telling a crowd, 'What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them'. Keeping the boundaries of the body intact is presumably so important to the church that it justifies this reversed interpretation. Overall, the model of the body in operation here imagines the self as highly porous and susceptible to invasion by evil spirits (Brahinsky 2020; Homewood 2019; Bjork-James 2018).

Marriage is also a 'church within a church' because it is one of God's initial creative acts. The archetypal union of Adam and Eve as described in Genesis 2 demonstrates that marriage was there at the start, a divine rather than a human institution. It also means that the model of the Christian home is strictly heteronormative: male husband and female wife happily married, with a gaggle of morally righteous and immaculately dressed children, who are well schooled in the art of spiritual warfare. Divorce is not permitted, nor any other romantic lifestyle arrangements that might compromise the success of the Adam-Eve marriage model. In theory, the moral opprobrium directed at homosexual relationships is not particularly exceptional. Olukoya condemns it alongside a rather wide-ranging list of sexual or bodily practices that he considers deviant, ranging from 'uncontrollable sexual desires' to 'incest' (Olukoya 2012a, 53).

In practice, however, certain sexual sins are judged significantly worse than others. The rise of nonconformist sexual lifestyles and new familial structures and arrangements—especially same-sex relationships and transgender identities—are thought to pose some of the biggest threats to the Christian family setup. Olukoya also frequently comments that 'the Devil has attacked the institution of marriage more than any other thing on earth', and has 'taken his headquarters to the home' (Olukoya 1999, 9). As the cradle of holiness, the family home becomes the most expedient place for the devil to disrupt. One of the primary ways he does this is by causing sexual and gender confusion, deceiving people into believing that their desires for the opposite sex, or desires to *be* the opposite sex, speak to something of the way they were born and hence created by God. Satan is thought to have made considerable headway here since the acceptance of nonheteronormative gender and sexual identities is becoming a part of the status quo. The normalisation of queer culture suggests that the Last Days are imminent, and God will soon battle Satan in a great showdown before Christ returns.

## 5 American Apocalypse

The arguments my informants at MFM presented against homosexuality spoke to these growing concerns and generally followed similar lines of reasoning. Philip, for example, was a dedicated member of a branch of MFM in the state of California.<sup>4</sup> When he wasn't working he was often running errands for the church. Our paths crossed a few years after he had migrated to the United States from Nigeria. He wanted to earn a better living, but this meant leaving his wife behind. He lived in a small, simple apartment, saving up for infrequent trips back home to see his wife when he could.

Philip had been raised in a Catholic church in Nigeria and became born-again in his twenties, having been inspired by the transformation in character he had witnessed in a close friend who had started attending a Pentecostal church. This friend was a known womaniser, and so Philip resolved to observe him for some time to check whether he had ‘truly changed for good’, as he put it. He was eventually satisfied that his friend’s conversion was authentic, and so Philip committed to giving his life to Christ the Pentecostal way. However, things were not always smooth sailing, and Philip sometimes found himself backsliding into his old habits. He wanted to focus on his spiritual growth, and so decided to seek out a more serious and disciplinary congregation. He first arrived at the strict Holiness church, Deeper Christian Life Ministries (‘Deeper Life’), where he stayed for some time before he discovered MFM. Someone he had met recommended the church, and later that same day he saw an MFM bumper sticker on a car, which he took to be a sign from God. He particularly liked that MFM adhered to the same stringent rules regarding sexual modesty that were in place at Deeper Life—no jewellery, makeup, and so on—but felt especially ‘moved’ at MFM. He believed that the spiritual rigour there was unmatched.

Moving to America had brought its own set of challenges. While it may have presented better economic opportunities, Philip had come to believe that American society was in a state of deep spiritual decay. In losing their faith, the American people had wandered into the darkness. Forgetting God had left them spiritually blind to the devil’s agenda, and a kind of rot had been allowed to take hold in American society. Unlike in Nigeria where churches were flooded with worshippers, in America people prioritised work over faith, even on Sunday mornings. The area of American society that had most fallen victim to demonic intrusion was the family home. The insatiable pursuit of money left American parents with little time to instill godly virtues in their children. The hardest thing of all to stomach was the nonconformist sexual lifestyles Philip observed, living as he did in the liberal state of California. In an interview Philip said:

This is like Sodom and Gomorrah, the things going on in the world today. But the story of Sodom and Gomorrah shows us that actually this is nothing new. It’s like in the story of Lot when they wanted to fornicate men [with] men, women [with] women, and they didn’t know those women were actually angels. When you look at these gay, lesbian, and transgender things, God never makes mistakes. These people cannot be born like that; they need to go for deliverance. When you say that you are gay or transgender, you are saying that there is a mistake. But it’s just that we

don't know what we want and there is so much chaos in the world; the devil is playing tricks with people, he is giving lies from the pits of hell! When I hear that people say, 'Oh, I want to be a man, a woman ... why would a man want to be with a man? This is ungodly, it's a thing of this world. Because of this, the wrath of God comes on men. And when society embraces these things, accepts them, it seems normal. But it's not. Homosexuality is a thing of the world.

Philp's account presents homosexuality as the outcome of one of two possibilities: it is either innate or acquired.<sup>5</sup> If it is innate then it must be a fixed identity, imprinted on an individual at birth. The problem with this is that it naturalises nonheteronormative sexual identities as inherent features of creation. According to this logic, to suggest that they are innate is therefore to suggest that God has accidentally gone against his own blueprint for human sexual difference, making a mistake.

Naturally, for Christians like Philip this is impossible, and means that same-sex attraction must be a habit that persons acquire through their choices and actions. Rather than describing a fixed identity, being homosexual entails experiencing a series of misdirected sexual desires. Desires, unlike identities, are things that come and go. As such, they are incidental to the person rather than revealing something about their inner essence and how they were created by God. This also means they can be healed by deliverance. Considered in this way, deliverance is the spiritual practise of restoring to a person the bodily and spiritual integrity they were born with. This is why Olukoya advises those suffering from 'sexual perversion' to pray the prayer 'Restore me to the perfect way in which you created me' (Olukoya 1999, 100).

One thing to notice about this kind of theological reasoning is that against the backdrop of strong cosmological dualism, the world and the devil often end up collapsing into one another. They become interchangeable placeholders for anything running counter to the divine. Yet the claim that the devil is responsible for the dissolution of Christian sexual morality in the modern world poses a conundrum in that it erodes the sense that humans are entirely accountable for their own choices. Pentecostals resolve this tension between human and supernatural (demonic) sovereignty at least to some degree, with recourse to humanity's sinful nature.

It is sin that opens the door to demonic harassment, even if the prospect of sin is made attractive by the devil in the first place. Sin, and especially sins of a sexual nature, introduce demons into the body. Physiologically, demons enter the subject via the bodily openings, and the sexual openings in the body are especially prone to becoming sites of demonic incursion. In fact, sexual

intercourse is the most common way to ‘catch’ a demon: Olukoya calls the ‘sex gate’ the ‘most successful gate used by Satan’ (Olukoya 2018). The kind of demon one attracts also tends to reflect the kind of sin in which one engages. Masturbate, and you may attract a ‘demon of masturbation’. Engage in sexual relations with a person of the same sex, and you will likely attract a ‘demon of homosexuality’. Homosexual desires in this system become the product of demonic interference, confusions or illusions elicited by Satan to subvert the divinely created order. Having same-sex desires and acting on them are wrong insofar as they go against a celestial vision of perfect human relations. As a result, the Christian marital bed ends up being the only domain in which sex is not just free of sin but necessary, virtuous, and even beatific.

This idea that there are ‘rightful’ relations between two opposite sexes and that these relations are nonnegotiable is therefore a central part of why same-sex affairs are seen as wrong at MFM. My interlocutors suggested that God’s intentions for human sexuality can be discerned through observations about the differences between men and women—biological, spiritual, and psychological. The key idea is that all of creation bears the design of its creator (Romans 1:20 and Psalm 19:1). Olukoya teaches about how God created different anatomies for males and females; the term ‘woman’, for example, comes from the fact that she is the ‘womb’ of the man (‘womb-man’). Women are ‘weak’, ‘soft’, and ‘passive’ in character, whereas men have ‘strong’, ‘hard’, and ‘active’ personalities.

These gender oppositions are mirrored in corresponding perceptions of biological sexual difference. The design and function of the phallus, for example, reveals its moral and Christian purpose to take on the active role, both in sexual intercourse with a woman and in the marital dynamic as the leader of the home. Female sexual morphology similarly tells us something of the role God intends for her in relations with her husband. Femaleness is to woman what being submissive in marriage is to being penetrated during sex. Biological properties common to sexual differences in humans are seen to reinforce certain cultural perceptions about gender, which in turn enhance the validity of those readings of sexual biology. Scripture, biology, and human social life all point to the same conclusions about what God intends for human sexual relations. In fact, this was precisely the argument that the MFM pastor in Liverpool presented to the undercover reporter who said he worried he was a homosexual: ‘God gave you your penis and make [sic] it a rod, and now he created another thing like a hole that it fit properly into it.... So for you to have a penis, it means you are a man. That is the way you are created’ (Parry 2017a).

According to this theology, sexual intercourse with a member of the same sex is wrong because it goes against divine design for human sexual biology. It is immoral because it is unnatural, and unnatural because it is immoral. Notice that in this schema it is taken as a given that sexual intimacy denotes penetrative sex, and also that same-sex encounters are consistently represented in terms of male-on-male penetration. In other words, homosexuality tends to be gendered male here. A man who is penetrated by another man violates God's created order by embodying the position intended for females. Sexual relations unfold according to a penetrator/penetrated model of interaction in which a man must assume the role of the former, and a woman, the latter (I return to this in the final section).

What we therefore see here is the way that beliefs about human sexuality and desire are grounded in theological ideas about what it means to be an embodied person who is created by God. Same-sex desires and acts are wrong first and foremost because they contravene an understanding of God's vision for human sexual relations. The subsequent claim that they are demonic derives from the doctrinal commitment to spiritual warfare, which holds in suspicion anything and everything that goes against this vision.

## 6 From Sodom to San Francisco

The biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah from Genesis 18–19 serves as an important interpretive lens for Philip. His typically Pentecostal way of reading scripture provides him with a way to contextualise the sexual Otherness he feels confronted by in America. The story speaks to him prophetically, and reassures him that 'actually, this is nothing new' (Haynes 2018; Tomlinson 2012). It is also because there is a scriptural precedent that Philip can uphold his faith in the eventuality of divine justice.

In the biblical narrative God announces to Abraham that he intends to destroy the city of Sodom because of how severely its citizens have sinned. Abraham bargains with him to not punish the righteous people of Sodom with the wicked, as though the two are equally deserving (Genesis 18:23). Abraham and God eventually agree that if as few as ten righteous persons can be found in the whole city, God will spare it from destruction (v. 32). Shortly after the citizens of Sodom fall into a sort of frenzy, demanding that Abraham's nephew, Lot, give up the visitors he is sheltering in his home (angels in disguise) so that they can fornicate with them. Lot refuses and offers up his two virginal daughters instead. The people of Sodom reject Lot's proposal, and at the point they

are about to force entry into the house the angels intervene and strike the men with blindness (19:11). In the end, the city of Sodom is too far gone to be saved, and God destroys it with fire and brimstone (v. 24).

For Philip California is a modern-day Sodom. It is pagan and idolatrous, and full of people with ‘uncontrollable sexual desires’, as Olukoya might say. Sexual confusion caused the Sodomites to pursue the angels, and today they disorient people into pursuing romantic relations with those of the same sex. The Sodomites’ attraction to the angels correlates to the kind of wrongful relations Philip is concerned about; both examples involve misdirected desires, and both run counter to God’s intentions for human sexuality. The story is also premonitory in that it foretells the divine wrath that will be unleashed onto the world for normalising homosexuality. Just as it was in Sodom, the divine punishment will transpire on a communal level as well as on an individual basis, justifying the need for mass and individual deliverance. The trope of blindness also forms an important prophetic parallel: the Sodomites lose their sight, and Americans too are spiritually blind to the devil’s falsehoods.

What is not made explicit in the biblical account, however, is that the sin of the Sodomites is specifically *homosexuality*. In fact, the text refers to the people of Sodom in only two ways: as ‘great sinners’ (God says, ‘And they have sinned very heavily’, מְאֹד, כְּבִדָּה, קָבְדָה), and as ‘evil’ (Abraham uses the common word for evil, רָשָׁע). There is also no indication in the Hebrew that the disguised angels and the citizens of Sodom were groups of people of the same sex.

Some have argued that the story may have originally served to condemn the inhospitable attitudes of the Sodomites to the visiting angels, or that the crime of the Sodomites may have actually been their attempt at nonconsensual sex, i.e., rape (Cocks 2017; Greenberg 1988; Jordan 1997). Either way, the effort to explicitly identify homosexuality as the sin of the Sodomites first emerges in Philo and is then taken up by John Chrysostom, Augustine, and numerous other influential thinkers of the early church.<sup>6</sup> It serves as a dominant interpretation of Genesis 19 throughout the medieval period, but even then many writers continue to use the term ‘sodomy’ (*sodomia*) to refer to the category of sexual excess more generally, of which homosexual lust was considered a subset (Greenberg 1988; Cocks 2017). What remained relatively constant, however, was the association of sexual decadence with social decay, natural disaster, and, ultimately, apocalypse (Cocks 2017).

It was in the early modern period that the story of Sodom reached new heights of popularity, and its common usage was tightened further to singularly denote same-sex copulation. Sodom served as a convenient symbol for Rome in anti-Catholic polemic and Protestant apology—representing ‘the

ultimate adversary of the true church'—and so took on a new meaning and significance in the post-Reformation context (Cocks 2017). The story of Sodom became co-opted into a new Protestant vision of history: the Sodomites were said to have inherited the sins of Ham (Noah's son), which were passed on to their descendants, who eventually became the Catholic church.<sup>7</sup>

It is illuminating to observe how this genealogy has been revived by American evangelists in recent years. For example, Scott Lively, an anti-LGBT+ pastor and activist, redevelops this Protestant genealogy retrospectively, identifying homosexuality as the sin in question and explicitly inserting it into the narrative.<sup>8</sup> He argues that when Ham's son 'sexually molests' his grandfather, Noah, he sets into motion a pattern of homosexual conduct that gets passed on to his descendants, the people of Sodom (Lively 2014). Incidentally, it is worth noting that Lively was also responsible for petitioning Ugandan legislators to criminalise homosexuality in the lead-up to the passing of the 2014 Ugandan Anti-Homosexuality Act. This highlights the critical role that the American evangelical lobby has played in the manufacturing of antigay policies across Africa in recent years, as well as the ways that the Bible has been used more generally in service of producing certain cultures of gender and sexual normativity.

## 7 African Christian Perspectives on Sexuality

On the African continent, in contrast, homoerotic behaviours and relationships had a protracted and complex history before missionary and colonial intervention, with of course considerable variation between ethnic groups (Epprecht 2010, 2008; Gueboguo 2006). While heterosexual marriage and reproduction were indeed given an 'extremely high and prodigiously over-determined value' in most African cultures, the idiosyncratic sexual desires of individuals were tolerated on the whole, so long as they were acted out discreetly (Epprecht 2008, 40). Sex play between members of the same sex was not typically classified as 'sexual intercourse' proper; where it occurred prior to marriage it was recognised as acceptable practice for marriage. It did not, in other words, reveal something of the inner sexual essence of the individuals involved (Epprecht 2008). In cases where same-sex actors were married (to partners of the opposite sex, that is), other motivations might be entertained for same-sex relations. For instance, anal intercourse between men was sometimes seen as the ritual means by which men inoculated their masculinity from female pollution, or even accrued power and virility (Geschiere 2017; Epprecht 2008).

Today it is a widely held view in Africa that homosexuality has been introduced through contact with the West. As such, it is often seen as an acquired sexual preference. Many African Christians tend to see homosexuality as a secular import and argue that prior to the colonial encounter African sexuality was strictly heteronormative. This view also builds on a self-perception of 'African' sexuality as virile and rapacious, an internalised essentialism born of the colonial tendency to entangle understandings of race with sexuality and violence. African men are also portrayed as hypermasculine and hypersexual by born-again Christians, who see their new identities as more 'enlightened' and their machismo more 'domesticated', to borrow a term Elizabeth Brusco uses in the Colombian evangelical context (Brusco 1995). According to this logic, if a turbocharged sexual appetite is the default for African men, then homosexuality could not possibly have existed in Africa before Western interventions. One of the key arguments against same-sex relationships in Africa today therefore centres on the belief that homosexuality is not only unnatural, but un-African (Hoad 2007).

It is against this backdrop that African leaders in church and politics have in recent years used homophobic rhetoric to whip up anxiety around the threats that globalisation, secularisation, and Westernisation pose to an 'African identity'. This strategy also serves to distract voters from the economic and political failures of the state, an 'easy way to unify a fractured public' as Kapya Kaoma and others have argued, and indeed, to attract followers (Kaoma 2014; Bompani and Valois 2017; Tamale 2013, 2009). However, as Kaoma points out, if homosexual identities, at least according to the modern construction of self, are a Western import, so then is the culture war on homosexuality emerging from the American religious right (Kaoma 2009). Mounting international pressure on African countries to adopt gay rights is seen by some as a liberal encroachment—especially when wrapped up with the language of human rights, which for many is merely shorthand for secularisation (Kaoma 2014, 236–239). From this perspective, the liberal West's lobbying against the criminalisation of same-sex encounters in Africa amounts to a kind of moral neo-colonialism, yet another effort to reassert control over African bodies. African antihomosexual sentiment becomes 'a response to not only current political and economic interventions and aid stipulations from the West, but also represents a reaction against the colonial legacy' in general, according to Barbara Bompani and Caroline Valois (2017, 65). For C. Izugbara the tendency to deny that same-sex encounters were local cultural practices is an expression of 'allegiance to heterosexist patriarchal values', and hence an internalised response to the colonial vilification of Africa as the 'sexually backward other' (2004, 23).

## 8 Queer Fantasies

After our interview Philip and I made our way to the church to attend an evening service. The compound was situated at the end of a wide and dusty road, surrounded by a high metal fence. The congregation was made up of mostly Africans who had moved to the United States, as well as a few Hispanics. As the praise and worship part of the service got underway, the pastor called on us to surrender ourselves to God so that he could enter and fill our bodies. We prayed that night for God to know the depths of our love for him, and to love every bit of us in return. As we swayed between the pews, I couldn't help but think of Philip and his wife, separated by many hundreds of miles from each another. The prayers invited Philip to channel his love—a love that was frustrated by distance—to God directly, whose presence can be felt anywhere. In the absence of his wife, Philip asked to be 'touched' by the Spirit and driven to ecstasy (de Witte 2011). It seemed to me that his prayers were an act of romantic displacement: in substituting God for his wife, Philip may have been opening the floodgates to an experience of love that was accessible in the here and now.

In this final section I explore how the language of Pentecostal worship creates opportunities for believers of any gender or sexual orientation to channel erotic feelings to the divine, and also to experience divine presence erotically. The prevalent use of metaphors of sexual union to describe the human-divine encounter in Pentecostalism allows for a spiritual experience to be indexed by the subject as a sexual experience. This mode of worship is flexible in that it can accommodate the kind of erotic displacement Philip might have been practising when he prayed. I suggest that this liturgical context may therefore incidentally produce the conditions for queer fantasies, imaginings, and desires to play out as legitimate spiritual experiences in what is otherwise a rigidly heteronormative space.

I am not so much interested in uncovering homosexual identities here but the diverse kinds of erotic experiences that humans participate in, which for some can involve sexual fantasies about persons of the same sex. This is a suitable epistemological strategy because queerness is bigger than the LGBT+ identity experience, and because the act of queering in an African-embedded context in particular invites us to reimagine our theoretical assumptions about what sexuality is, and what LGBT+ studies tend to implicitly include and exclude. Indeed, 'the idea of queerness must remain paradoxical in Africa', S.N. Nyeck argues, 'in order to safeguard its critical nature and ability to puzzle' (2011, 195, in Spronk 2019, 34). In illuminating the queer spaces hidden in the shadows I respond to the recent appeal to 'open the black box of institutionalized or

compulsory heterosexuality' in studies of African sexuality, and unearth 'the existence of queer possibilities and affordances within the supposed iron law of heteronormativity that often remain unspoken in monolithic accounts' (Spronk and Hendriks 2020, 10; cf. Gaudio 2014; Hendriks 2016; Spronk 2018). Scholars interested in how religion intersects with sexuality in Africa are also starting to take up this call. Nathaneal Homewood, for example, has sought to unmask the 'modes and meaning of queer participation' in an otherwise 'sanitised', 'heteronormative', and 'normal' Zimbabwean Christianity by investigating the ways in which queer expressions 'go through and not against religion' in that context (2016, 248, 257).

In short, I am not suggesting that Philip was a closeted homosexual. What I am suggesting is that the heavy use of romantic metaphors to describe human relationships with the divine in Pentecostalism may be inviting worshippers like Philip to experience spiritual presence as an erotic encounter with God. This God, at least at MFM, is imagined to be male, and yet worshippers of both genders enter a romantic union with him during worship. The use of metaphors in the liturgical context is vital for the production of these queer openings: metaphors are inherently ambiguous linguistic devices that generate meaning without fixing it. They invite comparison between referents but resist stability in such a way that keeps meaning open and suspended. The interpretation offered here is driven by attention to religious language and phenomenological observations of the ritual context, rather than by a story about an MFM-goer who is also LGBT+. While I am certain that these people exist, I have not yet in my research encountered anybody at MFM who is also openly and comfortably 'out', for obvious reasons.<sup>9</sup>

At MFM prayer is not always violent and can also be about invoking love. Pastors consistently instruct worshippers to pray for the Holy Spirit to 'fill and overflow' them, or for Christ to 'touch' them with his 'sword'. Members describe experiencing God's love in romantic and at times visceral terms: they say God 'swept me off my feet', that his touch set off an 'electric shock' that 'rippled down my body', that he made me 'hot' or that he 'filled my body with honey'. The nonverbal sounds of glossolalic speech evoke the sexual murmurs of lovers and the practice of the laying on of hands generates moments of physical vulnerability and intimacy among members of the same (as well as different) genders. In these moments, God's power to overwhelm, to penetrate, and to make whole is invoked. Worshippers might also be slain in the Spirit, losing control of their motor functions and entering into a kind of trance. They report having had intense and highly pleasurable climactic bodily experiences. After they have been slain, or been exorcised, they may rest on the floor in a kind of postorgasmic reverie. This generates feelings of relief, calm, and contentment.

Pentecostal worship sessions evidently ‘manifest embodied discursive performances of repressed sexuality’ that ‘signify erotic relationships between the divine and the believer’ (Nadar and Jodamus 2019, 3, 2). This remains so even when many other explicitly sexual discourses are ‘constructed as indecent’ and sinful, as Nadar and Jodamus suggest (2019, 2).

In fact, in evangelical movements in general, spiritual development is understood as the process of cultivating a personal connection with God. The metaphor often used to represent human-divine intimacy is the nuptial union: the believer enters into a relationship with Christ by becoming his bride. The ‘bride of Christ’ metaphor is here taken from Ephesians, where Paul creates a taxonomy of power that parallels the role of a wife with the function of the church: wives are to submit to their husbands as the church submits to Christ (5:21–24). The church was therefore known as the ‘bride of Christ’ for many centuries (see also John 3:29 and intermittent references in Revelation). Going back further than this, the use of erotic metaphors to describe the kind of love shared between God and his people feature prominently in ancient biblical poems like the Song of Songs and the stories about the prophet Hosea.

Through the influence of the pietist and mystical strands of Christianity, marital union has emerged as the central symbolic paradigm for describing spiritual encounters with God in the evangelical tradition. Amy DeRogatis’s work, for example, demonstrates at length the ways in which evangelical rhetoric today is theologically grounded in metaphors of sexual union between humans and the divine (DeRogatis 2009, 2015; Moultrie 2011). In the American evangelical sex manuals she investigates, worshippers are encouraged to ‘open up’ to God’s ‘spiritual sperm’, which is described as having salvific and curative qualities. According to this model of divine-human interaction, both men and women are ‘brides’ in their receptive postures toward divine penetration.

However, the impulse to index spiritual presence as a sexual encounter is by no means peculiar to the Christian evangelical tradition. Interestingly, in the indigenous Yoruba religion spirit possession and the ritual discourse surrounding it were articulated through a web of sexual metaphors, from horsemanship to sexual penetration, as Lorand Matory has shown. This meant that in principle both male and female supplicants could become ‘wives’ or ‘brides’ of the gods, the *òrìṣà* (Matory 1994).<sup>10</sup> In other words, becoming a ‘bride’ of a particular spirit was something open to both men and women, and the possessing spirits themselves might also have been of either gender. In practice, it was mostly women who were ‘mounted’ (*‘òrìṣà- gùn -un’*) during possession rites, although male possession priests, such as the priests of *Sango*, might become ‘wives’ by dressing in women’s clothing, cosmetics and jewellery (Matory 1994, 501). In addition, on occasion male ritual priests were known to sexually

penetrate one another as a means of enacting possession by the *òrìṣà* (Matory 1994, 2008).

Building on Matory's work, George Ajibade has suggested that there was a 'ritualised homosexuality' embedded in traditional Yoruba possession rites (2013, 972). With the decline of indigenous religious practice and the rise of Christianity, this 'homosexual praxis' has been 'transferred' into the Christian worship context (2013, 971). A classic example is found in the popular Yoruba Christian hymn:

Alárinà ni È. mí Mímó. jé. (The Holy Spirit is the intermediary)  
 Èmi jé. aya Jesù mi jé. o. ko. (I am the bride and my Jesus is the groom)  
 Jò. wó. mú mi dé ò. dò. o. ko. mi (Holy Spirit please take me to my husband)  
 Kí n lè bó. ló. wó. aninílára (So that I can be free from oppressors)

AJIBADE 2013, 971–972

Here we see evidence of the 'attachment to Jesus Christ in bride-groom relationship, regardless of gender of the singer' (Ajibade 2013, 971). Contemporary Yoruba Christian liturgy therefore retains the indigenous apparatus of spirit-human interaction but reimagines it in terms of a nuptial union between the worshipper and Christ. While the 'groom', or mounting spirit, becomes gendered male in the form of Jesus in the new Christian context, the role of the 'bride' seems to remain open to persons of either gender.

The template for human-spirit interaction we see at play in the MFM worship setting evidently draws strength from the indigenous framework as much as it does from the Christian. Both religious systems imagine the communion between the spirit-medium and the spirit as a sexual union: the human is the mounted or the penetrated, and the spirit/the divine is the mounter or the penetrator. MFM's development and Christianisation of this penetrator/penetrated model of interaction builds on these permutations, even though, like other African Pentecostal congregations, the church distances itself from African traditional religions. Although this model at MFM is phallogocentric insofar as active agency lies with the male penetrator, it is nevertheless more basic than a model purely grounded in sexual difference because it allows for males and females to occupy different positions in the symbolic order. In the MFM worship context, this means that the divine presence remains male, and yet both males and females are told to submit their bodies to be filled with Christ's 'sword'.

It is against this backdrop that invisible spaces where same-sex fantasies and desires are imagined can emerge. Male-on-male spiritual penetration becomes a symbolic and experiential possibility, and male expressions of romantic love

for a masculine creator can be legitimated through invocation of the nuptial metaphor. Heterosexual men like Philip may therefore be able to channel sexual desires for an absent partner to a male God, and open up their bodies to God's penetrative love.<sup>11</sup> The reliance on a model of sexual interaction that is fairly flexible in application means that these declarations and experiences can take place within this relatively public space, without drawing attention or inviting condemnation. Queer possibilities exist as a tolerated and subconscious libidinal undercurrent to the 'normal' and 'natural', rather than a 'resistance politic of total disengagement from regimes of normal' (Homewood 2016, 257). Even at a place as seemingly hostile to LGBT+ identities as MFM, it seems that experiences of queer love and intimacy can find their footing, albeit in the shadows.

## 9 Conclusion

It is fair to say that the matters of same-sex relationships and LGBT+ rights have become a key site of political contestation on the global stage in recent decades. As we saw in the Liverpool incident, the debate often serves as a weapon for distancing the secular from the religious, the liberal from the conservative, or the Western from the African. Yet in mapping these dichotomies onto one another without qualification we run the risk of participating in the very moral dualisms that produce ideologies of normativity to begin with. This can only perpetuate them further.

In this discussion pushing past this impasse has involved several analytical moves: first, it has demanded a close analysis of not only the religious but the theological basis for beliefs about sexuality, which are grounded in understandings of desire, the created body, and rightful human relations. None of these ideas exist in isolation from one another. Instead, they overlap and intersect to produce a totalising vision of God's plan for human relationships that sees readings of biology, morality, and scripture to be mutually supporting. Drawing out the theological arguments these Christians use to justify an anti-gay position is important for representing them accurately, and in ways they can identify. If part of the anthropologist's task is, loosely speaking, to 'contextualise' a set of beliefs within a given cultural context, then in the case of Christian subjects that context surely includes Christian theological concepts as much as it includes others.

This takes me to the second point; Christian theology is not an ahistorical discourse produced in a vacuum, even if the truths it professes are considered

timeless by its followers. The theology of sexual relations in circulation at MFM, for example, is studded with voices, each of which speaks to a moment in the history that precedes it—from colonial prejudice to Reformation polemics, and from African traditional religions to contemporary evangelical politics. Neglecting the way these various overlapping cultural influences shape the current position can lead to Christians and LGBT+ activists talking past one another, as they did in Liverpool.

In the final move, the attempt to see past these dividing lines has involved exposing spaces within the deliverance movement where queer fantasies and desires can be experimented with. Metaphors, when used in the liturgical context, are a flexible mode of religious expression in the way they undo meaning while at the same time fixing it. For Christians, talk about God must remain mysterious if it is to reflect the limitations of human knowing. Religious language, especially when it is metaphorical, symbolic, or even apophatic can hence be a productive medium for queering, just as it can also, at other times, contribute to the production of normativity. Keeping this in mind enables us to better imagine ways for even the most homophobic of Christian communities to see the inherent possibilities for queering that are contained within religious speech and religious experience. Recognising the ways that religion and, in this case, Christianity can undo normativity while staying true to itself not only offers us better political tools for navigating the kinds of controversies that I have discussed here. It helps us remind ourselves that being queer and being religious can, in the end, be harmonious ways of being, even if the forces of history have suggested otherwise.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Adriaan van Klinken, Daniel Pick, and Sarah Apetrei for their valuable comments and feedback. I would also like to thank the two anonymous reviewers for the *Journal of Religion in Africa* for their insights. All errors are my own.

This research was funded in whole by the Wellcome Trust [Grant number 1033344/Z/13/Z]. For the purpose of open access, the author has applied a CC BY public copyright licence to any Author Accepted Manuscript version arising from this submission.

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## Notes

- 1 The reporter, for example, calls deliverance a 'thinly-veiled way to describe what is more commonly known as conversion therapy' (Parry 2017c).
- 2 In 2015 I started doing ethnographic fieldwork in three of the church's locations in Nigeria, the UK, and the United States. The insights into the church presented here emerge from the data gathered since then, as well as from a number of print and online materials published by Daniel Olukoya, a prolific deliverance author.
- 3 I use the term 'flourishing' here to differentiate from 'prosperity' and draw attention to its holistic meaning.
- 4 Names have been changed to protect the identities of my informants, and locations kept intentionally vague.
- 5 This includes transgender identities, which Philip mentions, but is not a major focus of this article.
- 6 The treatment of Sodom is complex in Augustine. While he explicitly identifies the sin of the Sodomites with same-sex relations, this desire in and of itself is understood as an outcome of disordered desires and fallen passions more generally (Jordan 1997, 34–35). See, e.g., Augustine, *Confessiones* 3:8:15, *De Ciuitate Dei* 16:30, *De Mendacio* 7:10.
- 7 Note also how in the writings of influential Protestants like John Foxe and John Bale sodomy is understood as the result of the Catholic policy of clerical celibacy (Betteridge 2002).
- 8 I encountered this connection in Cocks's monograph (Cocks 2017, 244)
- 9 Interestingly, the popular openly gay Nigerian celebrity Denrele Edun recently confessed on his social media that he attends MFM, and that he has been mistaken for a woman by a preacher there.
- 10 It must be noted that such religious practices continue in Nigeria, although less so than in precolonial times.
- 11 Once again, note that the lesbian experience is largely excluded by this penetrator/penetrated model, likely because it does not easily conform to it in the way that male-on-male sexual penetration does.