

Crafting an Egyptian Evangelicalism: Revolution, Revival, and Reform

by

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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of Doctor
of Philosophy in the Department of
Cultural Anthropology in the Graduate School
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

This dissertation research explores the practices of and aspirations to national belonging among Evangelical Egyptians. A community birthed through the proselytizing efforts of European and American missionaries between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries, Evangelical Egyptians are practitioners of a distinctively Euro-American form of Protestant Christianity. Although Evangelical Egyptians have historically been known as politically quietist, in the wake of the January 25 Revolution, leading Evangelicals began to adjust their practices of public engagement with the revolution, civil society, and political activism. Through participant observation, in-depth person-centered interviews, and archival research, this dissertation argues that far from severing Evangelical Egyptian imaginations of, desires for, and practices of national belonging, conversion from the historic Coptic Orthodox church to a more internationally connected form of Christian community in fact provides Evangelicals with some of their most potent tools for articulating their historical and contemporary place in the nation-state of Egypt. This dissertation aims to bring timely debates about the relationship of politics and religion from the anthropology of Christianity to an exploration of post-revolutionary Cairo, global capitalism, and the futures of revivalist religion in the region and beyond. This dissertation argues that it is precisely the “will to the global,” understood as the future

imagined community of God's kingdom, that paradoxically roots Evangelical Egyptians in a robust nationalistic articulation of their faith.

Dedication

Inspired by and indebted to Gregory Scott Dowell, who fought the good fight,
finished the race, kept the faith.

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Anne Allison's strategies of generous reading and advising and ear for poetic cadence were key to my development as an ethnographer, and her willingness to join my committee late in the game was a great gift. David Morgan's steady curiosity, historical thinking, and passion for the embodied aspects of religious lives have helped me to develop as a scholar of media, Christianity, and embodiment. Martina Rieker has been a true academic mentor, whose commitment to the vocation has inspired this work and my own attempts to do justice to the material, political, and social struggles that define the stories told in this dissertation. Charlie Piot has been a vociferous advocate for my work and a creative problem-solver. Our conversations have deepened my understanding of the global struggles for justice, meaning, and joy in which Evangelical Egyptians participate through global evangelical and charismatic networks.

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Lastly, like all anthropological research, this wouldn't have been completed without the energy, enthusiasm, good humor, and boundless hope and hospitality of my interlocutors, whose stories I explore in these pages. I am enriched for having known them, and I hope that this work does justice to that precious gift.

Introduction: Crafting an Egyptian Evangelicalism

A Dream in Zeinab

The Evangelical Church of Zeinab is easy to miss, in the middle of a bustling downtown neighborhood of Cairo that has seen better days. Off the main thoroughfare one makes one's way past many workshops producing car parts, mechanical vapors, and never-ending din. I am lost as soon as I veer into a smaller side street, stopping every ten minutes to ask for directions to the "Evangelical church," in response to which neighbors direct me to a beautiful, imposing Coptic Orthodox Church, then to an equally imposing Catholic one, a small charismatic "Revival of the Saints" congregation with Sunday praise choruses resounding into the streets where children run helter-skelter, and finally to a plain brick facade with a black steel gate. A small metal plaque mortared between the bricks announces "The Evangelical Church of Zeinab." We will return to this site, but for now: the sanctuary is spacious and hot on this early morning in June, relying on seven mounted ceiling and wall fans to circulate the hot, humid air. The old wooden pews sit in rows facing a small raised stage, where a middle-aged man leads hymns and praise choruses while a teenager plunks the melody on a silver, plastic keyboard. Having heard of the historical pedigree of this important church, as well as the impressive tenure of its recently retired pastor, I was struck by the dwindling congregation, the general disrepair of the sanctuary, and the way that the entire property receded into the background of this lively neighborhood. Once a solidly

middle-class congregation, over the last 30 years older congregants have seen the neighborhood transform before their eyes like many other Cairenes have seen theirs. The streets are fuller, the amenities more dilapidated. This transforming urban landscape is not specific to the Zeinab neighborhood; indeed, the evacuation of the city center is both an old and a well-known story around Cairo, one which played an instrumental part in the demands of the revolutionary square in 2011, which is where this research began—not in a dwindling congregation in an old church building wedged between coffeeshops (s. *qahwa*) and pharmacies and koshary stalls, but in the glamorous, revolutionary, and newsworthy Tahrir Square in 2011.

Kasr al-Dobara Evangelical Church (KDEC) is the largest Protestant church in the Middle East, boasting over 7,000 members, multiple outreach properties and ministries, high profile pastors within the Arab Protestant world and, not incidently, a church building that borders Tahrir Square. During the revolutionary protests of 2011, the leaders of KDEC decided to affirm the protests, offer safe haven to protestors, send supplies into the square, hold all-night prayer vigils, and celebrate the courageous revolution (*thawra*) that had weakened the veneer of invincibility that 30-year strongman Hosni Mubarak held on power. The legend of prophetic foresight and revolutionary spirit of KDEC has lingered through the years, as the country has experienced waves of revolutionary protest and organizing, as well as crushing autocratic repression. In the face of the tumults of history, however, the story of KDEC's ability to see the future,

throw off the “sectarian” fears of the wider Christian community, and march into this unforeseen divine plan has defined their prestige in the country, the region, and, indeed, in global evangelicalism.

KDEC is certainly the most famous and recognizable Evangelical church in the Middle East, but it shares with Zeinab this sense of forward momentum, of restlessness in the face of a demanding call—a call not just of citizenship but of divine intervention, of self-sacrifice. After the first service that I attended there in the summer of 2013, I sat with Pastor Ramez and his wife, Hadir, sipping Pepsi and eating hazel-nut flavored mini-croissants that the *barwāb* had bought from a *kushk* across the narrow street. “There is a lot of broken families. A lot of poverty in this area,” Pastor Ramez intones with a sweeping hand gesture to the street just on the other side of the brick wall lined with his books. “The revolution opened the church to the street. We are trying to get the church into the street.”

Pastor Ramez seems a born preacher. His voice is deep, his enunciation clear, and his voice undulates from thunderous admonitions into gentle, whispering consolatory tones. I could hear a practiced familiarity in his next question: “You know Martin Luther King, Jr.? He had a dream? I have a dream from God. That this church would go into the street and serve the people. This is a dream I was given from God. I know that he will accomplish it.” At that point, all that Pastor Ramez had to show for this dream was the blueprints that he had himself drawn by hand of a full-service clinic,

a Montessori daycare, and a three-story expansion with a youth center, a new sanctuary, and an adjacent *nādi* (club) for the summer and evening sporting events for local youth. Like many Egyptians, Pastor Ramez was motivated by a sense of forward momentum and possibility that was unthinkable some years before. A dream standing on those blueprints, a dwindling congregation, and an aging church property.

Christians, Citizenship, and the Revolution

This dissertation, like Pastor Ramez's dream, was conceived in the long shadow of the 2011 uprisings in Egypt. Even as state-sponsored repression of popular Islamist political parties, the jailing of dissidents and youth activists, and a negotiated and precarious peace with the Coptic Orthodox community are defining features of a pre- and post-2011 political sphere in Egypt, the similarities belie the differences that this torrential moment has wrought for Egyptians of all varieties, including the small, curious group of Evangelical Egyptians whose stories grace these pages.

The well-marked story of the Egyptian revolution begins on January 25, 2011, when a small group of protestors took to the street on a holiday celebrating the police, ostensibly motivated by a popular Facebook page bearing news of the brutal murder of a young Alexandrian man, Khaled Said, at the hands of police (Naraghi 2013). This protest, in the lineage of the April 6 Youth Movement and the Kifaya Movement, which had been building grassroots momentum against government corruption, foreign incursions, and the one party rule of the National Democratic Party, burgeoned into

what had seemed unthinkable at its beginning: a protest movement powerful enough to unseat Hosni Mubarak, the thirty-year strongman. The protests were famously diverse, including young leftists and conservative Salafis, working-class and college-educated, Christians and Muslims.

In my exploration of KDEC, an Evangelical megachurch, during the 2011 revolutionary protests, I paid particular attention to the peculiar beginning of “the Revolution” that Evangelical Egyptians narrated: the awaiting of a “word from God” and the bloody answer:

I was told again and again the story of how KDEC fasted for 40 days at the end of 2010 awaiting a “word from God.” This process included individual fasting and prayer regimes as well as long meetings of corporate worship through singing and prayer. The leadership received the above verse from the Old Testament book of Exodus chapter 34 as the awaited “word” - a promise that God would produce a *rahīb* in the land of Egypt. Indeed, so the story goes, the first sign of God’s fulfillment of his promise occurred just 20 minutes after the end of the New Year’s Celebration at KDEC – the horrific Alexandria church bombing that left 21 dead and 70 injured. This tragic event became an iconic symbol of the promised *rahīb*, an unexpected and terrible answer to prayers for renewal. In the case of this event, one indication that this event was a manifestation of the divine *rahīb* was the outpouring of inter-religious solidarity, especially around the following Christmas celebrations. (Dowell 2013, 32)

While Evangelicals from KDEC responded to this horrific violence with a sense of God’s impending intervention into their country, other Christians responded by organizing protests throughout Egypt, decrying the state’s illusory commitment to security for its Christian population. These protests were, to many close watchers of the events of

January 25, an important presage to the popular anger that would explode throughout Egypt.

This spectacular act of anti-Christian violence certainly need not have presaged any kind of sympathies among Christians toward the 2011 protests. The long-standing relationship between the Christian denominational heads and the Egyptian government was premised on a twentieth-century bargain of protection from violent Islamist factions in exchange for ecclesiastical and denominational support for Egypt's ruling party. As the protests rocked the country, Pope Shenouda III, in accordance with this agreement, called on "the sons of Egypt" to stay in their homes. Many Christians were terrified of the power vacuum that would be produced by the fall of the Mubarak regime.

However, Christians did in fact descend to the streets to protest. Pastors from KDEC held a public prayer service in the middle of Cairo's famed Tahrir Square during the eighteen days of protests. Protected by a ring of Muslim men and amidst revolutionary chants and banners, they led praise choruses and prayers for Egypt. In the context of an Egyptian public sphere dominated by a Muslim majority and with a sizable, visible Coptic Orthodox minority, this event exemplified a larger shift underway in Evangelical Egyptian communities in the revolutionary and post-revolutionary periods, in which concerns for inclusion in Egyptian public life have been expressed through a proliferation of evangelical discourses and practices of citizenship (*muwāṭana*), which is, importantly, articulated through rather than against their distinctive religious

lives. At work is a hybrid project, at once national and religious, which evangelical communities frame as endeavors of “bringing the church into the street.” This dissertation research considers the lives and practices of these unlikely nationalists, converts to an historically Euro-American form of Christianity, as they attempt to make a place for themselves in Egypt through such practices as scriptural exegesis, regimes of individual and collective piety, and projects of service and outreach.

Due to their small demographic presence, presumed complicity with foreigners because of their transnational connections, and vulnerability to eruptions of sectarian violence, Evangelical Egyptians have historically been known as politically quietist. The shift of the 2011 uprisings, known popularly in Egypt as the January 25 Revolution, was, therefore, a striking one as leading Evangelicals began embracing new forms of public politics that articulated their commitments to the nation, such as protesting, joining political parties, and campaigning for candidates, bringing figures such as Sameh Maurice, Andrea Zaki, and Ehab al-Kharrat to national prominence. Other, more diffuse practices, however, began articulating such commitments in a distinctively evangelical and pietistic register: all-night prayer vigils for “national unity” (*al-wiḥda al-waṭaniyya*), sermons that employed biblical prophecies to situate Egypt in a divinely-ordered cartography, and local church-based clinics, daycares, and youth programs which endeavored to “bring the church into the street” and serve non-Evangelical neighbors.

Strikingly, these evangelical communal practices became imbued with the language and urgency of revolution, citizenship, and political activism.

With the overthrow of the democratically-elected Muslim Brotherhood President Muhammad Morsi in 2013 and the installation of the autocratic military regime of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, the practices of explicitly political action—like protests, robust political parties, and legitimate elections—have become increasingly constrained for the majority of the country’s population. Nonetheless, evangelical practices of Christian citizenship have continued to proliferate, drawing on the memory and energy of the “January 25 Revolution” even after many of its gains have been lost.

This project, then, is more invested in the hybrid religio-political forms in which Evangelicals blur the formal categories of “religion” and “politics” by seeing prayer, service, and witnessing as key practices in becoming ideal citizens of the nation-state, and so is sympathetic to the work of anthropologists working on Muslim communities in the Middle East (Mahmood 2005; Hirschkind 2006; Deeb 2006). Additionally, in borrowing the framework of “Christian citizenship” (O’Neill 2010) from the Latin American context, this project aims to bring the Middle East into conversations with anthropological scholarship about the profusion of evangelical and charismatic Christianity in the global south and its ability to re-form the political possibilities open to practitioners. In highlighting the similarities between the Egyptian case and Christian-

majority national contexts, this research explores the heightened stakes of making claims of inclusion on the nation in contexts in which Christians are a small minority.

A small minority within a minority, Evangelical Egyptians have been navigating their place in the wider Egyptian public sphere since their conversion to Protestant Christianity under British colonialism. Although a recent spate of excellent historical work has explored the Anglo-American mission enterprises in the Middle East that gave rise to these communities (Makdisi 2008; Sharkey 2008; Kieser 2010; Sedra 2011; Dogan & Sharkey 2011; Khater 2012; Baron 2014), little is known about the communities that adopted evangelical Protestantism and continue to practice it in the modern Middle East. The wider anthropological scholarship on Egypt is predominantly concerned with Muslim communities, and there continues to be a paucity of scholarship on the historical Christian communities of the region—a byproduct, in part, of the perceived isomorphism of Islam and the Middle East. In fact, contra prevailing wisdom that marks them as “foreigners,” Christian communities and institutions have thrived in the region for millennia. This project seeks to step outside of analytic frameworks dependent on the phenomena of sectarianism and political Islam by focusing on a small religious minority in Egypt, with ties to global evangelicalism of the last two centuries. In the process, by borrowing the framework of “Christian citizenship” from the Latin American context, this project aims to show the yield of including the Middle East in anthropological scholarship about the politics of religion in the global South.

This dissertation, based on 22 months of ethnographic fieldwork, follows these acts of Christian citizenship in the lives of young women living in a crowded district of Cairo, waiting for a chance to gain lives of financial and personal stability; itinerant pastors preaching in revivals throughout Egypt; and young, middle-class youth rocked by both the charismatic wave in the Egyptian church and the revolutionary fervor of 2011 and post-2011 Egypt. Strange revolutionaries, prophetic artists, wizened elders, and young musicians, the people whose labors and aspirations are followed in this dissertation provide a window into a largely neglected but important community both within Egypt and within global evangelicalism.

Literature Reviews

This exploration of new forms of Christian citizenship among Evangelical Egyptians is informed by three bodies of anthropological and interdisciplinary scholarship: on Egypt and its place in the wider Middle East, on global evangelicalism, and on emerging forms of politics.

Religion has long been a key concern for anthropologists working in the Middle East, including much recent work on revivalist forms of Islam in the wake of the so-called Islamic Revival. In Egypt this scholarship has been largely inspired by the work of Talal Asad (1993; 2003) and his injunction to treat Islam as a discursive tradition (1986). Prominent ethnographies have focused on the ethical formation of modern pious Muslim subjects through the lens of gender (Mahmood 2005; Hafez 2011), media and

listening (Hirschkind 2006), traditions of legal reasoning (Agrama 2012), and ideas of the body (Hamdy 2012). While this work has focused primarily on the formation of the Muslim subject qua modern subject, scholars have begun using similar theoretical tools to explore modern Coptic Orthodox subjectivities, attending to regimes of bodily discipline, aesthetics, and media (Heo 2012; 2013; Amstutz & Armanios 2013). The anthropology of the Middle East has become increasingly concerned with the city, replacing an earlier focus on the rural (Abu-Lughod 1989), with a predominance of work coming out of Egypt, especially Cairo (Deeb & Winegar 2012). Work on Egypt has focused on urban space (Ghannam 2002, 2013; Ismail 2006; Singerman 2009), cosmopolitanism (Singerman & Amar 2006; de Koning 2009; Peterson 2010), and cultural production and consumption (Armbrust 1996; Abu-Lughod 2005; Winegar 2006; Gilman 2014). Moving away from highly localized accounts of Muslim societies, social scientists of the wider Middle East have endeavored to show the region's enmeshment in global economic and political logics and forms (Vignal and Denis 2006; Denis 2006; Amar 2013) and its effects on urban geographies and livelihoods (Elyachar 2005; Sims 2010). A smaller body of literature has focused on the rural experience in Egypt (Morsy 1993; Abu-Lughod 2005; al-Aswad 2002; Schielke 2012). This shift to the urban and the global has often limited representations of the region to revivalist Muslim, middle-class, urban communities, flattening a picture of the many different communities comprising contemporary Egypt. My work contributes to the task of exploring a community rarely

registered in social studies of the region, who are struggling to make their place in Egypt and caught up in these broader trends of religious revival, transnational circuits, and creative responses to shifting urban and rural existence.

My project is also informed by the large body of interdisciplinary research on religious revivalism at the end of the twentieth century that has challenged the influential secularization thesis (Casanova 1994; Berger 1999; Habermas 2006), especially that concerning the global spread and character of Pentecostal and evangelical (P/e) Christianity (Poewe 1994; van der Veer 1996; Corten & Marshall-Fratani 2001; Coleman 2000; Robbins 2004a). P/e communities have been explored as resisters or promulgators of capitalist market logics (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991, 1997; van Dijk 2002; Wiegele 2005); carriers of distinctively modern notions of materiality, agency, and relationship (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991,1997; Keane 2007; Elisha 2011; Klassen 2011); highly textually-oriented groups centered on disciplined speech and reading practices (Harding 2000; Crapanzano 2000; Engelke & Tomlinson 2006; Bielo 2009); and powerful shapers of national public and political spheres in the global South (Meyer 2004a; 2004b; Meyer & Moors 2006; Marshall 2009; O'Neill 2010). Within the anthropology of Christianity more specifically, the dominant framework for understanding global evangelicalism and Pentecostalism has been that of rupture (Robbins 2003, 2007; Cannell 2005; Garriot & O'Neill 2008; Bialecki, Haynes, and Robbins 2008; Coleman & Hackett 2015), a paradigm employed to think both about religious conversion and the various social, cultural, and

epistemological ruptures that attend the adoption of evangelical faith. According to this paradigm, evangelicalism produces a Manichaean division of the world, separating religious converts radically from their pre-conversion lives and communities (Robbins 2004b; Marshall 2009). A different orientation to the pre-evangelical past seems to predominate in Egypt. Historical continuity instead of rupture takes precedence, organized around claims of native-ness and “indigenous” Christianity, perhaps due to the desire to belong in a nation where Evangelical Egyptians make up less than one percent of the national population and where proselytizing is difficult and dangerous work. This difference (from other global South P/e communities) raises interesting comparative questions while also suggesting that evangelical piety and politics in Egypt may inflect quite differently in a place where “born again” has a different valence.

Linking literature on Egypt and that on global evangelicalism are explorations of emerging forms of the political in an age of transnational religion, global capitalism, and mass-mediated lives. Influential studies of Egypt have focused on the way that ostensibly non-political practices of religious practitioners or urban subalterns produce certain political imaginaries, subjects, and publics that are not immediately intelligible to the democratic liberal imaginary but nonetheless produce powerful political effects (Mahmood 2005; Hirschkind 2006; Bayat 2010; McLarney 2015). In the wake of the 2011 uprisings, concerns for citizenship have been key in various Egyptian contexts including voluntarism (Atia 2013; Mittermaier 2014a, 2014b) and Islamic televangelism (Moll

2012). As in these cases, the impulse to service (*khidma*) is both part of a sacred economy and a means to engage— affectively and relationally— the national body. In a similar vein, scholars of global evangelicalism have shown the way that religious institutions assume positions of sovereignty, provision, and regulation alongside massive neoliberal adjustment (Freeman 2012; Piot 2010; Comaroff & Comaroff 2001). P/e Christians, however, often step into the public sphere with discourses and practices that are “eminently political” but “difficult to reconcile...with more classical forms of representation and action” (Marshall 2009, 2). Kevin O'Neill's (2010) notion of “Christian citizenship” likewise considers the ways that Guatemalan Pentecostal practices of worship, prayer, and spiritual warfare should be understood as political forms, as their practitioners insist. As shifting notions and practices of citizenship become increasingly fertile sites for anthropological thinking (Chua 2012; Trnka et al 2013; Diouf & Fredericks 2014), ethnographic attention to the way that categories of action, collectivity, and resistance are embedded in everyday communal practices becomes an urgent task for understanding the shape of emerging forms of collective action and emancipatory projects in a global context increasingly marked by public religions (de Vries 2006; Mendieta & VanAntwerpen 2011).

Conversion and the Evangelical Modern

It is an iron boat, called the “Ibis,” eighty-three feet long by twelve feet in the beam, with three masts, a large cabin, and four state-rooms, pantry, etc. in the centre, and a short deck at each end. We have paid for it \$1,500. (Lansing 1865, 16)

Gulian Lansing, an early American missionary to Egypt, wrote the first book focusing specifically on the American Presbyterian mission to Egypt, entitled *Egypt's Princes: A Narrative of Missionary Labor in the Valley of the Nile* (1865), in which he chronicles his first missionary journey in 1861 upon the *Ibis*. It had been purchased, unusually, without the express permission of the United Presbyterian Church of North America (UPCNA) mission directors in Pennsylvania, and so Lansing's account begins with an explanation for such an enormous purchase, the need for which was apparent only to missionaries on the ground who knew first-hand the mission's need, given their small numbers, for more efficient means of traversing the land in order to reach the entire Nile Valley region with their missionary message. Stationed in Cairo and Alexandria, the missionaries would take turns making the itinerant journey every summer, traveling to Aswan in the south and then taking the current north to the Delta where the *Ibis* was rented to the sailing company Messr. Corlett & Fleming in order to pay off the loan the mission had accrued from its purchase.

Egypt's Princes is an early missionary narrative—part memoir, part fundraising plea, part adventure novel, part devotional—in which the missionary energy of the nineteenth century exerts its representational force on the landscape and community of Egypt. These journeys produced a variety of enduring images for those who lived and toiled in a transformed and transforming Ottoman hinterland under the modernizing logics of Mohammad Ali's dynasty. As Heather Sharkey (2008) notes in her definitive

history of the American Mission to Egypt, long after the *Ibis* had stopped sailing, Upper Egyptian villagers and townspeople continued to remember these particular Protestants as “the American Riverboat Missionaries” (20). Lansing provides vivid reminders throughout his narrative of the temporal incarceration which produced “Egypt’s Princes” as the descendants of a pristine mummified and preserved past of glory.

The Middle East, as it stood in European literary and colonial discourse in the nineteenth century, was largely mediated by two major historical imaginations. The first was the “Holy Land” —a space inextricably linked to the biblical narrative and, therefore, an imaginative geography in which Protestants in their highly textually-oriented religious practices invested a great deal of emotional and intellectual energy. The second was the land of ancient Egypt, an important site for European narrations of the development of civilization with early advanced technology, proto-monotheistic religion, and sophisticated cultural production. Egypt, then, as a geographical site, was largely imagined as belonging to a particularly glorious past.

When Andrew Watson, an early and prominent American missionary who penned the first full history of the Presbyterian mission, opened *The American Mission in Egypt, 1854-1896* (1904) with the notion that the Coptic Orthodox Church was “a mummified body,” he was drawing on this particular intersection of nostalgia, disappointment, and notions of progress. The Coptic Orthodox Church, along with the Maronite Church and the Greek, Syrian, and Armenian Orthodox Churches, were read

as survivals of those golden ages of the Middle East and, as such, importantly imbued with both a latent potentiality and a sense of decay. The temporal incarceration of the non-Western racialized other is, of course, a banality of contemporary anthropology, but the particular way that this incarceration happens is unique to Egypt and, as I will argue, of analytic importance to understanding the historical strategies for inclusion, citizenship, and belonging that this dissertation traces.

Historian Ussama Makdisi (2008; 1997), building on the seminal work of Johannes Fabian (1983), argues that Protestant missionaries to the Levant in the early- to mid-nineteenth century lived and worked at the intersections of Fabian's noted "sacred" and "secular" time—that is, their journey was simultaneously to the peripheries of the civilized world, languishing in indolence, idolatry, and poverty, and to the birthplace and territorial center of their own tradition. As Makdisi notes, "[u]nlike in Africa and the New World, the natives were part of a history the missionaries claimed to share and, even more, to represent" (1997, 689). In Egypt, likewise, the task of Protestant missions became largely and increasingly the task of converting Christians. It is this ambivalent relationship to both secular and sacred time in which Protestant missionaries in the Holy Land are embroiled that Makdisi coins "evangelical modernity," a term through which he hopes to transcend schematic reductions of the question of nineteenth-century missionary programs as either colonial or anti-colonial (1997, 683). It was a "space-time" in Fabian's sense that American missionaries existed in through their peculiar

trajectories from New England to Mt. Lebanon and home again. In his own historical work, Makdisi marks the end of “evangelical modernity” in 1860 with the Mt. Lebanon civil war between Druze and Maronites, which scattered the remaining beleaguered missionaries (700).

This conventional beginning of the *Ibis* traveling up and down the Nile carrying books, bibles, and missionaries is a fiction, of course, in that the forms, flows, and networks being traced in this dissertation sometimes preceded this moment and sometimes lagged behind it. The institutional form of a native Protestant church lagged behind, while the imperative to “modernize” biblical readings, church order, and gender relationships certainly predated it. What these moments of genesis show us is a particular way of thinking about modernity informed by apocalypticism, divine teleology, and the affective imperative of individual believers to usher in this new horizon of history. The evangelical modern, then, shares with other notions of modernity a fundamental re-arrangement of social, political, and religious orders such that the prevalence of mass media, the supremacy of the text, and the inevitability of the nation-state are its necessary features. But in contradistinction to other “modernities,” the evangelical modern is decisively organized around the *evangel*, the “good news,” which its messengers are called to bring to the ends of the earth. That biblical injunction demands both a territorial framing—the globe—and a temporal one—the end of time.

It is for this reason that this exploration of a re-energized Evangelical world living in the shadow of the January 25 Revolution can provide a glimpse into the workings of this particular corner of the wider phenomenon called “global Christianity.” In reframing the conversation from global Christianity to the evangelical modern, then, I aim to highlight the aspirations and mobilities that animate the space-time that Evangelical Egyptians inhabit and produce.

The Evangelical Church of Egypt

This dissertation revolves around many of the questions raised by Makdisi’s prescient account of Protestantism’s first forays into the modern Middle East: the politics of conversion, the practices and representations of modernity, and the nature of temporal claims. Whereas Makdisi and other historians of the Protestant missionary enterprise in the Middle East (Baron 2014; Sedra 2011; Sharkey 2008) have focused on the experiences, aspirations, and writings of American missionaries, this dissertation explores the erstwhile heirs of this toil. Taking but adjusting Makdisi’s key term, throughout this dissertation I focus on the experience of what I call the evangelical modern, in which Evangelical Egyptians are thrust into a forward sense of momentum—both into a modern civilized future beyond Egypt’s belated atavism, as well as into the global community represented through practices of reading, activism, service, cultural production, and community building.

If Makdisi and other historians of the Protestant missions to the Middle East articulate that project as a failure, then the Evangelical Church of Egypt (Synod of the Nile), known in Arabic as *al-kanīsa al-‘ingīliyya al-mashyakhīyya*, is its modest success¹. Though the first American Presbyterian missionaries set foot in Egypt in 1854, they were preceded by centuries-long engagement of Catholic missionaries with the Coptic Orthodox establishment (Frazee 1966; Khater 2011), as well as the Church Missionary Society (CMS), a British Anglican missionary society. As with most studies of national churches established out of colonial missions, there is a wealth of information and writing from foreign missionaries, and scholars are forced to read against the grain to find articulations of emerging native converts. In 1863, the first step in its emergence was an Arabic-speaking congregation, followed by the establishment of a local Egyptian presbytery (the administrative unit of a Presbyterian district of churches), and by the turn of the century a Synod had formed, overseeing four presbyteries (Sharkey 2006, 171). Though in the first half of the twentieth century the majority of Evangelicals lived in the rural, agricultural areas of Upper Egypt, in southern Cairo they urbanized as the

¹ Throughout this dissertation I use the term “Evangelical Egyptian” to refer to these mostly Presbyterian interlocutors. The Presbyterian Synod of the Nile represents the largest and most influential of the Protestant denominations in Egypt, and since the beginning of the church’s establishment, its adherents have preferred the term *‘ingīlī* (Evangelical) to the more specific *mashyakhīyya* (Presbyterian), in part because of the similarity of the latter to the common Islamic role of *shaykh*. I capitalize “Evangelical” to denote its usage in Cairo as a denominational identifier. When I refer to the religious phenomena of evangelicalism as a sensibility or theological trend in form or practice, I use the lower-case “evangelical” (see also Sharkey 2008 for a similar approach). For a discussion of the relevance and history of the term “Evangelical” to describe Egyptian Protestants, see Dowell (2013).

rest of the country did, giving the Evangelical church a decidedly urban character by the late twentieth century (174).

Today the Evangelical community has three broad centers of cultural and religious power. The Synod of the Nile (the national governing body of the Presbyterian church) is located in the downtown neighborhood of Ezbekiyya; the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (CEOSS), an influential powerhouse social service institution, is located in the upper-class suburban neighborhood of Masr al-Gadida; and the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo (ETSC) is in the old quarters of Cairo, Abbassia, just a few blocks from St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral, the seat of the Coptic Orthodox Patriarch. These parachurch organizations, of course, are tied into complicated networks with the churches, small-group gatherings, mission organizations, youth groups, and bible studies that make up the spaces of Evangelical common life.

The other sites of Evangelical historical and contemporary power are in the Upper Egyptian cities of Asyut and al-Minya, two of the largest urban centers in the country. Asyut has eight established primary and secondary schools under the Synod's Salaam system, four large congregations, as well as a satellite campus of ETSC. Al-Minya hosts a range of large congregations, as well as many of the retreat and ministry centers associated with the various development and community service programs of CEOSS. The vast majority of Evangelical pastors who become ordained within

Evangelical Egyptian churches are from either al-Minya or Asyut, representing the centrality of the family and church networks there in reproducing Egyptian Evangelicalism, as well as Cairene Evangelicalism.

As scholars of religion in Egypt know, the politics of census data, demographics, and registration are fraught. Where the Egyptian state considers the Christian population to be 5 percent of the national population, the Coptic Orthodox Church insists it is closer to 15–20 percent. Generally, academic scholarship has converged on an estimate of 6–10 percent of the population (Heo 2018), over 90 percent of which is Coptic Orthodox. The remaining 10 percent is made up of Catholics, Presbyterians, and a smattering of other denominational groups, which appear in the biographies and practices of key interlocutors here. Evangelical Egyptians, then, constitute themselves as modern Egyptian citizens (*muwāṭinīn*) through their relationships to the more dominant, visible forms of Coptic Orthodox Christianity and Sunni Islam.

The Anthropology of Christianity and the Will to the Global

In framing this work as an elaboration of the evangelical modern, I aim to enter into a conversation in the anthropology of Christianity around what anthropologists should make of Christian conversion and belief. In rehearsing this history, I participate in the long history of anthropological ambivalence about missionary conversion, its importance and effects (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991, 1997; van der Veer 1996; Rafael 1993; Beidelman 1982). In this framing there is a moment of colonial encounter, violence,

and coercion in which these logics seep into the world of Egypt, a useful heuristic for moments of intense contact, a shift in power relations that brings these logics to the fore and into a more visible, forceful relationship to communities that operated under different logics. In this moment, the story goes, Coptic intellectuals and their Muslim counterparts capitulate to this new modernist framing of the family, the nation, gender, children, or labor. Building off Jean and John Comaroff's compelling framing of the "long conversation" of missionary evangelism, these capitulations are simply the marks of both Christianity and modernity. For instance, in the Comaroffs' telling, what Christian missionaries were communicating, what they converted their listeners to, were what scholars would see as technologies and techniques of modernity and therefore of Christianity. Here "Christianity" has no visible, sensible, approachable difference to "modernity." The missionaries succeeded in their long conversation (even as they failed in spectacular ways and were thwarted by the weapons of the weak) in translating the message of Christianity, inasmuch as their converts became modern subjects.

Cannell (2005) and others have noted the problem with an anthropological theory of Christianity in which Christianity becomes isomorphic with modernity. In a place like Egypt, this means that there is a sense in which it is not the Evangelical Egyptian who is the convert of Western imperial mission, it is everyone else. If to be modern is, in these studies, to become possessed of the ideological preoccupations of Christianity (the shell if not the spirit, in Weber's sense), then what of those who adopt

the spirit? What becomes of our notions of conversion? Perhaps more importantly, what becomes of an anthropology of Christianity? Cannell draws attention to this problematic:

As a significant minority of commentators have noted...anthropology sometimes seems exaggeratedly resistant to the possibility of taking seriously the religious experience of others. Religious phenomena in anthropology may be described in detail, but they must be explained on the basis that they have no foundation in reality, but are epiphenomena of 'real' underlying sociological, political, economic, or other material causes. It is not necessary to be a believer in any faith, or to abandon interest in sociological enquiry, to wonder why the discipline has needed to protest quite so much about such widely distributed aspects of human experience. (2005, 3)

Cannell's reference to sociological, political, and economic causes are, of course, references to the isomorphism of Christianity and modernity. Whatever Christian missionaries thought they were doing, they were, in fact, conveying either political or social values to their erstwhile converts.

Throughout this dissertation I ask what it means to think about Egyptian Evangelical practices as not reducible to these epiphenomena. What does it mean to yearn to be in the presence of God? What does it mean for a young college graduate to lay on the floor of his room in deep despair with a highlighter in his hand voraciously reading the entire Bible in three months? What does it mean to devote oneself to practices of meditation, prayer, self-sacrifice, and fasting in order to develop a "closer relationship with Jesus"? What does it mean to forego sushi in order to love him more? What does it mean to pray for revival? When Pastor Mourad told me that they teach a

course on Christian ethics to Muslims called “Business Ethics,” is he in on the joke? Is this a joke? The question here becomes whether Pastor Mourad has the same or different organization in his head between “Christianity” and “modernity” as Jean and John Comaroff.

A study of Evangelical Egyptians in post-revolutionary Egypt is such a fertile site for asking these questions because of the high stakes of conversion in Egypt and the wider Middle East. The thematic of failure is central to all histories of missionary conversion in the Middle East, as Makdisi alerts us. The abysmal track record of Christian missions in Muslim communities is a well-known and bemoaned problematic in missiology. I briefly return to a later work by Ussama Makdisi in which he takes aim at the shadow of this failure to convert. In his book *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East* (2008), Makdisi aims to inaugurate a new framework for exploring the relationship between the USA and the modern Middle East, through an understanding of historical missions in the region. He repudiates “clash of civilizations” framings through an emphasis on particularity, in particular a narrative of the conversion of one individual Maronite, As’ad Shidyaq, to Protestantism.

At one level the problem at the heart of Makdisi’s work is central to the foundation of this dissertation. If evangelical Protestantism is the language and system of cultural imperialists, then how do native Middle Easterners come to inhabit its

categories? This is at one level not a surprising fact, given both the resiliency and flexibility of cultural norms and forms (Coleman 2000; Corten & Marshall-Fratani 2001). Additionally, this moment of European colonial expansion provided plenty of material and ideological advantage to these “English” American missionaries. But As’ad’s story, which Makdisi tells with such nuance and sophistication, is not exclusively one of coercion but of “a Maronite of ancient stock who had been convinced, not corrupted, by the missionaries” (2007, 110). An interesting question that Makdisi uncovers but does not pursue is the politics of that persuasion, whose analysis must be rooted in class and geopolitical power. The fact that people did and do take up evangelical lifestyles, beliefs, and practices as their own speaks to the limitations of seeing this encounter as a clash between irreconcilable visions of the world. As Makdisi makes clear, As’ad was never interested in taking sides in a dualistic schema and he “never expressed his rejuvenated Christianity as a repudiation of the culture in which he was so thoroughly rooted” (114). What Makdisi takes as an exceptional historical episode of an idiosyncratic character, however, is the drama that is played out in the lives of Evangelical Egyptians (by far the largest Protestant community in the Middle East) throughout the twentieth century, and exploring the way that they make this seeming impossibility not just possible but urgent would be a continuation of Makdisi’s pioneering work as well as a contribution to the anthropology of Christianity.

Methodology: Making Ethnographic Choices

In this dissertation I follow the intuition and commitment that good ethnography involves long listening. My approach to an ethnography of the Middle East in these uncertain times is deeply indebted to Lila Abu-Lughod's work in the region, as well as her reflections on "writing against culture." When I began my journey into academic anthropology, one the most formational pieces that I encountered was Abu-Lughod's "Locating Ethnography" (2000), in which she details some of the commitments that structure her own attempts to "write against culture."

"I sought to fashion from my field notes and tapes a representation of another community that did not turn people in it into something object-like, coherent, whole and separate from ourselves: a culture. I argued that in our own socio-cultural worlds, whatever objectification takes place in forms of social-scientific representation is countered by what I called the discourses of familiarity - the way we talk about ourselves and our friends and family in everyday life. We know that everyone is different, that people are confused, that life is complicated, emotional and uncertain." (262-3)

While this dissertation explores lives lived and passions pursued in the midst of a large-scale social and political sea change in Egypt, the sites of exploration are often the interiors of churches, living rooms, meeting halls, and coffee shops. If the revolution is an outdoor spectacle, that emblem of modern social progress, this ethnography dwells in spaces less open, more constrained, bounded by carefully maintained walls both physical and social. This method and representational strategy is indebted to Abu-Lughod's compelling call for an "ethnography of the particular" in which over-

determined characters like “the Arab man,” the “evangelical Christian,” and the “pious wife” can be routed through the particularities of lived lives out of which they emerge.

Abu-Lughod’s argument was, of course, a part of what has been called the “reflexive turn” and the “literary turn” of the 1980s, symbolized and enshrined in the influential *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (1986). When Abu-Lughod argues for a program of writing against culture, she participates in a wider disciplinary skepticism about the objectification and ossification of social forms in which anthropology, along with its sister disciplines, had long traded. As Anand Pandian and Stuart McLean argue in the recent *Crumpled Paper Boat: Experiments in Ethnographic Writing* (2017), although a focus on the fundamental fact of the writing lives of anthropologists was the central node of these critiques, “with hindsight...[it] seemed marked most especially by a heightened suspicion of writing.” In particular, “that volume had surprisingly little to say about writerly powers and affects that could upturn the political and epistemic status quo” (15). As with *Writing Culture* in the 1980s, *Crumpled Paper Boat* is itself influenced by a larger interdisciplinary trend toward the “affective” as a register for critically examining the limitations of anthropological means of representation and critique. Or, as Danilyn Rutherford argues in her insightful “Affect Theory and the Empirical” (2016), as a way of laying bare the “premises that cultural anthropologists implicitly set forth when they make empirical claims” (286). These claims—that the worlds we encounter represent the foundational truism that this world

could be otherwise, that there is a “there” there, that our various entanglements presuppose ethical commitments—Rutherford argues, do not undermine empiricism but rather re-entrench a kind of empirical attentiveness, a certain orientation to the small details, the gritty realities, the incoherences and inchoate qualities of so many lives in this age of revolutionary quakes (469). In particular, to attend to the craft of ethnographic writing in the precarious world in which this dissertation was born and in which it has been crafted has required a vulnerability that I did not anticipate when I embarked on the project. That is, to practice the close listening to which I had been convicted in my early years in the discipline was to be thrown into the thorny questions of how the excessive, tumultuous, sometimes threatening and also threatened lives of Essam and Judy, Gergis and Ramez, could produce the kind of empirically verifiable social science I thought could do justice to these relationships.

My grappling with these questions is especially clear in Chapters 3 and 4, in which I explore discursive forms that are embedded in certain bodily regimes, feelings, sensed divine apparitions, and the inexpressible “truths” that Evangelicals use to live their lives in this uncertain times. As I began exploring these echoes, or hauntings, these “resonant feelings” (Lepselter 2016), I found the work of Susan Friend Harding (2000) prescient in her exploration of 1990s US fundamentalism. Her vivid and iconic account of being caught up in the power of “witnessing” anticipates a sense of the powers that underlie moments of collective and personal transformation and which can only be

haltingly articulated with the blunt instruments of anthropological jargon. Her pioneering work in anthropological attention to Protestant Christianity was premised on the imperative to “bend our concepts to the concepts of others” (Pandian & McLean 2017, 5). Her account of the visceral, overpowering process of witnessing guides my own exploration of the effects and powers of Evangelical practices that escape cultural or even theological normative structures. This emphasis on what Rutherford calls “kinky empiricism” (2012) guides the dialogic style of citation and engagement with the words of Evangelical interlocutors. There is no pretense here of producing an authoritative survey of Evangelicalism in Egypt (if such a thing was even possible for a non-Egyptian scholar under the current regime); there is the intention to listen to the constructions of authoritative speaking and living that Evangelicals are perhaps (in)famously known for producing.

This methodology, then, finds its most productive sites in quiet moments of reflection, raucous scenes of charismatic prayer, expressions of feelings of betrayal and fear and anxiety, stuttering attempts to convey to another the interior reshaping that happens in a dark room when one is at her wit’s end. Against the traditional story of public religions, this dissertation ruminates on these out-of-the-way places, these misplaced revolutionaries. This methodological choice was conditioned by pragmatic reasons no less than by academic ones, that is, by the conditions under which this fieldwork was undertaken. If my introduction to the “field” was the spectacular

celebration of the martyrs in a raucous Tahrir Square, the fieldwork for this dissertation happened in a different moment. Here is an excerpt from my field notes, which I wrote at a downtown street cafe on Qasr al-Aini after a KDEC service in early July 2015.

On each side of Sheikh Rihan Street there are giant banners announcing the KDEC Ramadan Iftar tables...The street itself is cut off from vehicular traffic and most days that I pass it has armed personnel carriers and what look like riot police. There are barbed wire barriers. Walking up to the building the sound of the *taranīm* flows muffled out of the church building as well-dressed families and young people make their way through the metal detector up to the courtyard that has been made in the last several years into additional seating space for the overflowing services.

Over a year later, in mid-September:

Today I attended half of KDEC Friday morning services. I missed the first worship segment and came in over halfway—it seemed—through the service. Like last summer, Sheikh Rihan Street is filled with police. Though instead of simply lining the streets they are actually set up more like checkpoints and, at least, during the services there are 3 police stationed at each one. No talking or checking of cards—just standing it seems. It's as always hard to know if this is read as a situation of censorship/surveillance or protection.

Like several other January 25 road-blocking sites in the downtown area, these checkpoints around the main entrance to KDEC solidified over the course of the years into permanent fixtures of the urban landscape, always bearing, however, an aesthetic of temporariness. The sandbags and barbed wire accumulated but were not fixed to the streets. The police proliferated but always alongside mobile blue police wagons. At a time when academic and journalistic work in the country was increasingly difficult, it was perhaps unsurprisingly the walled, cloistered nature of Christian communities that allowed this ethnographic work to unfold. Taking the church into the street was a

common discursive gloss for a range of social, political, religious, and spiritual strategies that emphasized the physicality of these maneuvers. This is to say that walls, and those that guard them, both defined and enabled the social relationships that flourish in Evangelical Egyptian communities, as well as fostered the kinds of social exclusions and distance that Evangelicals themselves are attempting to overcome. Intimacy and exclusion, protection and surveillance.

These social and infrastructural enclosures defined my fieldwork experience. For instance, I traveled to al-Minya each week in a white unmarked microbus with traveling pastors, teachers, and seminary students, even though foreigners were required to register their travel in the Upper Egyptian city with the local police and to have a police escort in any travel around the city. We emerged from the microbus in front of the seminary's branch location in front of an unassuming door nestled among similar entrances in a narrow street. I spent the day every week on the same third floor with students, teachers, and an administrative employee of the Synod. Conversations were boisterous, as among friends and colleagues, and then as we left the building, we drove the three hours back to Cairo in the gathering dark of the desert road.

The politics of public space and of private sacred space are the central topic of Chapter 1, where I explore church building codes, sacred landscapes, violence, and the possibilities of inter-religious bonding. Here, however, I aim to highlight the way that these representational choices and political conditions acquiesce to and depart from

standard accounts of Egypt and the revolution. In this way, my ethnography is governed by the centralizing of the voices of informants as they articulate their field of struggle, which emerges in these spaces of intimacy and interiority but reach in their own ways for a much larger field of struggle—the wider Egyptian public, certainly, but also a central place in a global story of conversion and revolution. This reaching I call “the will to the global,” a religio-political project of remaking the globe that is difficult to decipher in traditional social scientific terms. It is the dialectic between the pietistic, individualistic practices of intimate evangelical lives and this ever-present construction of and claim to a global community that, I argue, defines modern global evangelicalism.

In some ways, this strategy refuses compelling critiques of the governing conceits of ethnography as too invested in the notion that “all that you need to know to understand about the field is in some way *in the field*” (Willis 1997, 184). In an age of transnational connections and the mass mediation of all social connections and most relationships (Feldman 2011), why recover the slow, imminent unfolding of these intimate stories and spaces?

One answer to this question is as old as Abu-Lughod’s ethnography of the particular: the “field” of Middle East studies is beset with the impulse to objectify social relationships and abstract the powers of macro-forces such as religion, autocracy, and honor/shame. This imperative is perhaps even more pressing than it was for Abu-Lughod in a pre-2001 moment. The slow, intimate texturing of these Evangelical

Egyptians provides a much-needed revision of the objectifying, imperial gaze which so suffocatingly constrains attempts to understand what is happening in the Middle East. In attempting to construct these intimate “discourses of the familiar” in Abu-Lughod’s sense, however, I aim to preserve the strangeness and contingencies of an “Egyptian Evangelicalism,” as well as the discursive and pragmatic preoccupations that have arisen from its historical emergence.

Another answer is that by offering these full-bodied portraits of the lives and passions of Evangelical Egyptians, this work can theoretically engage a disciplinary conversation about the relationship between grand schemes and everyday life that has been foundational to the anthropology of Egypt (Schielke & Debevec 2012; Schielke 2015; Mahmood 2005). The moral vision of pious Evangelicalism is a privileged site for thinking about the relationship between homogenizing, normative, and integral grand schemes and the way that the characters in this ethnography navigate the demands of their faith and provide insights into these relationships, which foreground the compromises necessary to living a “good” life. In maintaining the confusions and uncertainties of their lives, however, I aim also to be faithful to the robust and enduring sense of coherence to which Evangelical Egyptians aspire and to foreground the reality and weight of their moral ambitions (Elisha 2011).

This dissertation is based on 22 months of ethnographic fieldwork in three Egyptian cities. In Cairo, I regularly attended four churches, ranging from the

charismatic, 7000-member KDEC on Tahrir Square to a historic church in a bustling working-class neighborhood with a dwindling congregation. All of these churches were in established, “formal” neighborhoods and were chosen for their prominence within Evangelical circuits of social and political activism. Participant observation included attending regular worship services, prayer conferences, and volunteering with one church’s youth program. A key component of this participant observation was to take account of the preaching that organized so much of this collective activity. The sermons of pastors and reflections of lay leaders during various segments of collective worship services were key sites for understanding both the dominant framings of events and practices and also the discourses against which dissenting opinions and re-readings were produced.

In addition to this participant observation, I recorded fifty person-centered interviews with a range of Evangelical Egyptians, including youth musicians, retired pastors, lay persons with active service programs, Cairo transplants from Asyut, working-class women, and cosmopolitan directors of Evangelical service and mission programs. These formal interviews provided me with the opportunity to follow the particular narratives of individuals through several moments of contact and were especially useful for pursuing the way that Evangelical narratives are produced through particular forms of narrative structuring that I take up in Chapters 4 and 5.

Aside from these 50 recorded formal interviews, I took the opportunity between services, in hallways waiting for events, in living rooms, and at public cafes to speak with a range of Evangelicals and some Coptic Orthodox Egyptians about this moment in Egyptian and world history and about the centrality of the Egyptian church to these processes. Their spontaneous character lends them only partial representation in my fieldnotes, but they were, as so many parts of ethnographic fieldwork, key to sparking new questions and casting old ones in new lights.

Since failure has already been noted as a key thematic of this work, I should note that much of my fieldwork, too, was haunted by it. I had built a network that would allow myself and my spouse to live and work in the city of Asyut, as part-time teachers of English at a Synod elementary school. This would have allowed us to live in Asyut without the need for a police presence shadowing us at every step. By the time that we moved to Egypt in 2016, however, the government's propaganda offensive against the Muslim Brotherhood had substantially changed the landscape in Egypt, both heightening fear among Evangelical networks about the possibility of violence, as well as increasing the vigilance among the security apparatus that shadows international Christian establishments, discouraging risky behaviors like having foreigners live in Upper Egypt without significant security. A range of personal health challenges made the relocation difficult, as well, and so the project became, as it began, a Cairo-centered ethnographic project. One effect of this adjustment, however, was the ability to follow

these mobile networks northward into Alexandria and its surrounding suburbs, which feature prominently in Chapters 1 and 2.

Chapters

Chapter 1 takes the language of Evangelical Egyptians to “take the church into the street” to explore the way that Evangelicals make their place within the Egyptian nation through practices of care. These are not the only place-making practices of belonging, but they are one of the key interventions through which Evangelical can regularly present themselves qua Evangelicals in the Egyptian public sphere. Taking on themes of care, class, mobility, and space, I aim to show how the “place” of Evangelical Egyptians is enabled through the mobilization of class privilege that constructs an imagined Egypt that allows Evangelical Egyptians to both feel enfolded into the social fabric of an imagined Egypt, and also allows them to see themselves as apart from the economic, social, and political challenges of Egypt. I argue that these liminal exchanges in inter-faith and inter-classed spaces are largely absent from literature on neoliberal Egypt, and that they go a long way toward showing how polarization is realized and reified in contemporary Egypt.

Chapter 2 explores the discursive shape of nationhood, beginning with this striking observation: Evangelical Egyptians—who have every reason and many tools to leave Egypt—have developed a discourse arguing for their primordial belonging in Egypt. Set against the idea that global Christianity should produce a frictionless flow

and uniformity of Christian practice, this chapter shows the many things, people, and ideas that “stick,” in Coleman’s (2000) terms. The chapter also aims to show the centrality of territorial nations to the practices of so-called “global Christianity” in terms of biblical narratives, apocalypticism, the discourses of Egyptian nationalism, and the commodification of “Egyptian culture” within transnational Evangelical conversations and encounters.

Chapter 3 considers the sacred sensorium of Evangelical Egyptians, looking at the key objects that mediate experiences of both the divine and the “body of Christ” for everyday Evangelicals: *tarānīm*, mass-produced pious images, and artwork. Building on considerations of the public nature of the church in the street, this chapter looks at those media which shape the affective, interiorizing registers of Evangelical piety. As a minority within a larger Christian minority in a Muslim-majority nation, the sacred mediascapes of Evangelicals are always in conversation with external religious ideologies, even as they also grapple with the technological changes to sacred music and worship practices that have attended the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first centuries. I argue that mediation within these Evangelical pious practices is not a process of conveying information but of encountering a person. Sensuality then becomes a language—a mediation itself—for describing this encounter with a transcendent, physically absent deity.

Chapter 4 builds on the previous chapters to consider a “structure of feeling” that provides Evangelical Egyptians with a way of navigating the opaque, conspiratorial, and elite machinations of post-revolutionary Egypt. Drawing on Susan Friend Harding’s (2000) notion of witnessing among American Fundamentalists, I argue that it is precisely the lacunae and sites of unknowing that provide Evangelicals with their most potent sites for ascertaining God’s activity. If Saba Mahmood’s work on Cairo has popularized the notion of the discursive subject, shaped by religious means of disciplined bodies, in this chapter I argue that the Evangelical “structure of feelings” prioritizes a system of bodily affect that prioritizes interpretative moves that find in-breakings of the divine in the unknown mundanity of everyday life in post-revolutionary Cairo.

Chapter 5 ends where this introduction began, with the question of revolution. Following unlikely revolutionaries, I trace the way the shared discursive shape within Evangelical Egyptian historical and contemporary debates about “revolution,” “revival,” and “reform” share key characteristics as modes of crisis narration. If Middle East studies after 2011 has been preoccupied with the question of revolution as rupturing event, with taxonomizing what has and has not been ruptured, what has or has not remained from a pre-revolutionary time, this chapter asks what it means to have this conversation alongside the “rupture narratives” of charismatic, revivalist Christians. In previous chapters, I explore the particular set of sensitivities, practices and semiotic

ideology that provide Evangelical Egyptians with a way of navigating a tumultuous, conspiracy-laden, and opaque post-revolutionary Egypt. In this final chapter, I ask alongside these Evangelical interlocutors what it means to interpret the signs of the time. What does historical change signify about agency, divine-human relations, and the nature of this shared social world?

A conclusion, “The Will to the Global,” situates this story of a neglected site of both Middle East studies and the anthropology of Christianity as fertile ground for thinking about the logics of global imaginations of belonging, as well the possibility of a politics of solidarity.

Crafting an Egyptian Evangelicalism

An underlying principle of this dissertation is that Evangelicalism in Egypt has been and continues to be a native category of religious identity and practice, such that conversion did not sever converts from the wider Egyptian population but rather provided believers with tools, both representational and practical, for entrenching themselves in the Egyptian social imagination. I seek to preserve the strangeness of this observation, even in the face of the virtual consensus on the “portability” of Evangelical forms of Christianity (Coleman 2000), by highlighting, as historian Ussama Makdisi (2008) has noted, the exceptionalism of Protestant missions to the “Holy Land.” By exploring the discursive and practical entanglements of Egyptians with nationhood, social outreach, shared visual and aural environments, and revolutionary ideals, this

dissertation seeks to show the centrality of the struggles of this small community that understands itself as simultaneously toiling in the shadow of the Muslim Middle East and positioned as a central actor in world-historical time.

As a community formed in the shadow of British colonialism in the heyday of a Protestant mission to remake the globe and tightly networked to the explosion of evangelical, Pentecostal, and charismatic Christianities, Evangelical Egyptians provide a window for reflecting on the shadow of the 2011 uprisings—its promises, its incoherences, and its possibilities for politics beyond the nation-state.

1. The Church in the Street

The Church in the Street

I sat in the office of a well-connected professional Evangelical writer, preacher, and teacher who had been raised in the Evangelical Church of Zeinab. She told me that it was in that neighborhood church, small but vibrant, that she had learned about service, the Bible, and the church as a moral community. She regretted, then, that she did not feel able to continue going there as her own children grew up. They had to stop going, she sighed, because of all the “dust” in the courtyard. “My kids would come back full of sand and dust,” she sighed. The pastor, she insisted, was above reproach and a gifted preacher but the projects undertaken shifted the emphasis away from the acts of caring for one’s neighbors to a draining of resources into large, ambitious building projects. “They value buildings over people” was her indictment of the project.

Indeed, between 2013 and 2016 the courtyard was filled with sand and rebar around which congregants with cars would park and around which after-church gatherings had to maneuver. The scale of the “dream” that Pastor Ramez and Hadir were given seemed so ill-suited to the size of the population and its financial resources that many in the church were unsure whether this “dust” might become part of the permanent interior of the church. According to Pastor Ramez, the kinds of anxieties that this preacher stated were not unheard of within the church itself.

My re-introduction to the Evangelical Church of Zeinab was in the early fall of 2016 as I embarked on two years of dissertation fieldwork. Having navigated the neighborhood of Zeinab over the course of two summers of pre-dissertation fieldwork, the path from the 'Urabi metro station to the church was straightforward. To my surprise, however, on this first visit on a Sunday morning, the cinderblock wall had been replaced with a black metal double-doored gate. A pedestrian entrance opened through its right panel. As I stepped through the gate entrance, the church courtyard which had been crowded with congregants' cars amid piles of rebar and sand in previous summers was now an immaculate open gathering space, ringed by tiled seating and with a newly built two-story building atop the old church canteen, office suite, and bathrooms around which after-meeting gatherings were generally organized. Around the old sanctuary, a new addition framed the ancient architecture on all sides.

Late to the meeting, I walked to the main sanctuary double-doors and found them locked before the *bawāb* directed me to the left of the sanctuary where a new set of narrow stairs led up two stories over the top of the old building and into new air-conditioned, tiled rooms with low ceilings, recessed lighting, and beautiful wooden paneling and trim. As I ascended, I could hear Pastor Ramez's booming voice through a microphone and followed these aural clues to the second floor and a large meeting room where services were now being held. Instead of the cavernous, vaulted ceiling of the old sanctuary, this new meeting room had a perhaps 9-foot ceiling. The Sunday morning

crowd was larger than I remembered, or perhaps it only seemed so in this smaller room. After the service had finished and the congregants had greeted Pastor Ramez and Hadir, I was offered a tour of the rooms in that building. Plaques adorned the walls of generous donors, as well as the lineage of pastors of this small neighborhood church that was becoming, if Pastor Ramez was to be believed, something more than a neighborhood church.

From the Church in the Street to the Church in the Square

My previous work has asked what it meant for the Evangelical community to claim solidarity with a coalition of protestors in the public space of the revolutionary square (Dowell 2013). As many scholars have noted, the revolutionary square was a space of liminality where social rules were lifted, unthinkable alliances broached, and a new solidarity and intimacy came into focus and into practice (Swanson 2014; Sabea 2013; Abaza 2016). In extending the dream of the church in the square into the church in the street, the very parameters of public-ness shift significantly to the navigation of the small indignities, challenges, and compromises which Evangelicals have historically engaged.

This chapter explores the wider discursive and material worlds in which Pastor Ramez's "dream" is both enmeshed and realized. This world is shaped both by a long history of evangelical care work and infrastructure building (Sharkey 2008; Baron 2014) as well as by the sense that 2011 ushered in a new era of church-society relations in

Egypt—one that substantially revises the way that Evangelicals imagine their relationship to their neighbors. In this chapter I follow the stories and activities of Evangelicals in Cairo, the Delta, and Upper Egypt to explore these articulations of what I am calling the “church in the street.” If KDEC became famous within Egypt for its visible encroachments into public space, marked not simply by its public-ness but also by its revolutionary and political activity, this chapter explores the work—both discursive and manual—that Evangelicals have found to do in the aftermath of this re-orientation of public space. Though a discursive formation, “the church in the street” is a deeply material invocation, shaped by the history of sectarian framings of sacred space in Egypt, as well as larger struggles in Egypt over the claiming of public-ness. I aim to take the spatial referents of “the street” seriously as I follow Evangelicals to the places—classed, gendered, ecological, infrastructural—in which they labor in this effort to bring the church to the street.

The metaphor of the “Arab street” has been extensively critiqued, largely for its overtones of irrationality and volatility and associations with a seething underclass ready to explode or acquiesce (Regier & Khalidi 2009). As Regier and Khalidi have explored within English-language news media, the use of the term “Arab street” spiked in the aftermath of the first Palestinian Intifada (1987–1993), in which a grassroots politics came into the view of observers primed only to see elite-level formal political machinations (2009, 20). Even as mainstream representations of the region were and are

indebted to this genealogy of the “Arab street,” other ways of theorizing this powerful, amorphous symbol of common life, struggle, and aspiration emerge from attention to the way that “street” (*shāri`*) in Arabic denotes authenticity, popularity, public, and a space for instantiating the imagined community of Egypt.

Evangelicals use the metaphor of the street in its broader Arabic sense to refer to both a volatile, unpredictable majority as well as in a sense of authenticity or popularity. As Pastor Ramez used it, however, it was both a mundane material space and a metaphor for a kind of public life common to all Egyptians. The street on the other side of the office wall, toward which he gestured, opened to the home of three of his youth group members who grew up just a stone’s throw from where we sat. The children that he envisions filling the Montessori classroom would be local children one sees on old colorful bikes on their way into the street. It was this specific public life that Pastor Ramez indicated and that Evangelicals envision in this call for the church to go outside its own walls (*barra al-surūr*). This sense of the street shares with other Arabic uses a notion of the common people, the non-elite, with needs to be met. It is a dense social object made up of denizens whose homes line it, of infrastructures, past, present, and future, in crumbling brick face, rebar jutting out from newly installed walls awaiting floors and roofs, and scrounging cats. The “street” in this sense is a space in which Evangelicals can reach out to an Egyptian public sphere to which they often feel strangers in their Christian-ness.

The “street” —its public-ness, its popularity, its classed connotations— is, of course, defined by the non-street. In the case of Egyptian Evangelicals, this non-street is dual. In the first case, the street is contrasted with the home in which the dust (*turāb*), never-ending din (*dawsha*), and crowding/traffic (*zaḥma*) are momentarily escaped. In the metropolis of Cairo, the street is, if nothing else, full. Many of my interlocutors were concerned with my own exposure, especially as a young woman, to such elements during my frequent transversals of the city. In the second case, the street is contrasted with the church, a refuge in what is often the harsh cityscape of Cairo. Here the church represents a space free of harassment (*taḥarrush*), discrimination (*tamayyuz*), and poor morals (*‘illat-al-‘adab*). Perhaps the phrase “the church without walls” is particularly salient for Egyptian Evangelicals because churches in Egypt are always walled. Zeinab’s steel double gate, like those that surround all urban churches, is equipped with heavy-duty locking gear and watched by a *baḡwāb* (as is typical for smaller churches; larger churches might have an official security detail). It is precisely these gates, walls, and security that are under scrutiny for not keeping out the violent extremist in cases of anti-Christian violence. This dual register of the street—the creeping poverty and dilapidation of Cairo’s urban landscape and the threat of violent extremism— guides the negotiations of Evangelicals as they attempt to establish a church that is in some sense free of these brick and mortar walls and steel gates.

Evangelicals are not the only ones attempting to claim and shape the spaces of contemporary Egypt. As a proliferation of literature on space/place and urbanism in the Middle East have illustrated, the battle over the “street” in cities like Cairo are often not as spectacular or noticeable as those of the 18 days, the Maspero massacre, the Ittihadeyya or Mohamed Mahmoud street protests. What Asef Bayat has called the “the encroachment of the ordinary” (2010, 14) are encroachments perhaps best exemplified by a much-discussed, pervasive kind of urban space: the *‘ashwā’iyyāt*. An informal city built outside of the formal governance of city planners, the *‘ashwā’iyya* represents many of the qualities of the “street.” It is crowded, lawless, prone to moral failures and, therefore, a supposed breeding ground for militancy, extremism, and “brokenness” that Pastor Ramez bemoaned in his own neighborhood. Even as this “informal” urban space is proliferating—and housing over half of the greater metropolitan area’s population (Denis & Bayat 2000)—another form of urban space is emerging in Cairo: the gated community, which is encroaching on desert lands outside of Cairo’s established city grids and which is also made possible through opportunistic flouting of strictly legal procurements of land (Singerman & Amar 2009). One genealogy of these transformations in urban space locates their genesis in Sadat’s *infitāḥ* of the 1970s, as well as the aggressive structural adjustment programs of the 1990s that have led to the abandonment of the city center, declining wages, and decreasing subsidies for the country’s poorest citizens.

Exacerbating the gap between the haves and have nots, these transformations have, on the one hand, led to the rapid emergence of opulent gated communities in the desert, tree-lined streets, massive malls, and administrative business centers catering to the elite classes (Peterson 2011; De Koning 2006; Amar & Singerman 2006, 2009). On the other hand, as costs of living increase and real wages crater, middle- and working-class Egyptian families finding it more and more difficult to afford appropriate housing in central Cairo are pushed to informal *'ashwā'īyyāt*. The lives of those either hanging on in Cairo's *sha'bi* neighborhoods or building new ones in these *'ashwā'īyyāt* have been explored as new forms of claim-making on the city (Ismail 2006; Elyachar 2005; Ghannam 2002). As these socio-economic changes are underway, the very shape of Cairo morphs into new forms, both in terms of its metropolitan boundaries as well as in the infrastructural forms that homes, businesses, streets, and public transportation are organized. The predominant story of these shifts has been of an increasingly polarized Egypt.

Anthropologists have largely focused their work on globalizing and polarizing Cairo, on what De Koning (2006) calls "cosmopolitan capital," that is, access to styles of dress, education, employment, language acquisition, and leisure behaviors that mark their owners as participants in an upwardly mobile and internationally-oriented form of global citizenship (Abu-Lughod 2005; De Koning 2006; Peterson 2011; Abaza 2006). This sense of a deeply polarizing effect of neoliberalization in the Egyptian context provides a

backdrop for the upwardly mobile aspirations of everyday Egyptians. In De Koning's (2006) ethnographic exploration of middle class urban cafes, she "demonstrates the centrality of gender in the elaboration of class in contemporary Cairo" by showing the lengths that middle class men and women will go to in order to prevent "respectable" women from being sullied by the gazes of lower class men (543). One interlocutor, for instance, articulated these taboos and desires in relationship to a cafe in Maadi:

The style of people was not that great, I did not feel comfortable. When I go out, I do not want to encounter some rancid girl, some *bii'a* [vulgar person] that disgusts me. The atmosphere was definitely not *classy*. This is an even bigger problem for girls. I can't take my fiancée to some of the places I visit with my male friends. The places I visit with her have to have people of a 'clean' level, where everyone minds their own business and nobody looks at you in a non-respectable way or laughs really loud. (543)

Spaces of cosmopolitan leisure are carefully policed, as this young man articulates. It is the mark of class to prevent the sullyng gaze of lower-class men (where "nobody looks at you") as well as the distressing sight of the lower-class woman ("to encounter some rancid girl"). The "street," then, sullies with its unwanted social encounters as much as with its dust.²

² When I taught in the Sociology-Anthropology unit at the American University in Cairo in 2012, I remember a particularly well-to-do student whose mother was a famous entertainment personality exclaiming with disbelief that a professor in her psychology course was organizing a field trip to Imbaba, a working class, popular (*sha'bi*) neighborhood in the northwest and that all the students would be required to attend. A trip to Imbaba felt both frivolous (what could they learn that they did not already know?) as well as dangerous. This same sentiment was expressed by many of my interlocutors during fieldwork, in the context of advice for how I - a young woman often traveling alone - should transverse the city to various sites, as well as where they themselves did and did not see themselves entering.

No Evangelical Egyptians that I follow in these pages are from the elite upper classes this interlocutor represented. All of them, however, participated in and articulated this sense of a social world framed by a sometimes dangerous, always needy outside articulated often as the street, the *'ashwā'īyyāt*, or the *sha 'bī* neighborhood. Choices of where to eat, how to travel, where to live, and how to comport oneself in public spaces were incredibly visible axes of deliberation and navigation. The need to dress, speak, and comport oneself respectably and in line with (or above) one's social class (Ghannam 2011) are topics that Evangelical Egyptians speak to with great eloquence and passion. Though scholars have explored the way that these classed desires and mobilities lead to polarization and aspiration for separation, there has been little attention paid to the liminal social spaces between worlds that produce the lived experiences by which Egyptians might construe senses of the street and the home, the middle-class self and the lower-class other, the un-marked Muslim and the marked Copt. In this chapter, I aim to show the strategies of place-making with which Evangelicals wrestle with their other-ness in a Muslim social world, as well as the way that their evangelicalism urged them to transverse the social, infrastructural, and physical walls that separate the church from the street. In this way, this chapter provides ethnographic texture to the struggles to produce Evangelical "place" in Egypt.

Evangelicals and Social Activism

As Pastor Ramez's invocation of the church going into the street and the ambitious building project indicate, these practices of the church entering the street are overwhelmingly representations of entering Egyptian public space through practices of social care. Though the example of KDEC in the days of the revolution was lauded and seen as an example of the breaking down of walls between the "street" and the "church," when pastors and laypeople spoke of these kinds of initiatives they were not of the variety that scholars call "contentious" (Singerman & Amar 2009; Bayat 2000). Indeed, even the practices that Evangelicals engaged in during the 18 days in Tahrir were largely of this care work orientation—the delivery of blankets, juice boxes, saline solution, masks. Most famously, they opened a well-regarded and well-run field clinic in the latter part of 2012 (Dowell 2013). If Evangelical practices of entering the street are not generally "contentious," neither do they really reflect the "encroachment of the ordinary" in which ordinary Cairenes take over public streets, transportation portals, and deserted land for assorted projects of getting by (Ismail 2006; Ghannam 2002). They are, instead, similar to those of other charitable organizations and NGOs which operate in the shadow of the Egyptian state's absence to provide education, medical care, childcare, and spaces for social engagement. Though Pastor Ramez indicates that this endeavor has been shaped by the passions and logics of the 2011 revolution, they are undoubtedly a part of a larger and longer story of Evangelical Egypt.

Histories of Evangelical Social Activism

The American Presbyterian mission (part of the United Presbyterian Church of North American [UPCNA]) in Egypt began in 1854, centuries after Catholics had been in rigorous contact with the Coptic Orthodox church, and some half a century after the British Church Mission Society (CMS) had established its missionary outpost there. Indeed, the Americans' emergence on the scene corresponded with the depletion of funds and staffing for the CMS, which officially closed down in 1865. Living in the Delta, which is overwhelmingly Muslim, the missionaries saw the site for their most productive evangelism in the south of the country, where sizable communities of Coptic Orthodox lived along the Nile.

As evangelical missionaries, the distribution and accessibility of the Bible was a key component of their work, which led to the rapid establishment of literacy programs and schoolhouses in Upper Egyptian towns like Luxor and Asyut even before the establishment of churches (Sharkey 2008, 27). Over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as the goal of converting Muslims became more and more unrealistic and relations between Coptic Orthodox and Catholic communities and the Protestants became more acrimonious, the fledgling native church was growing only slowly. By 1887, it claimed nearly 600 members and had been recognized as an official sect in the Ottoman *millet* system. The mission established a network of schools for boys and girls throughout the country, from Upper Egypt to the Delta.

With the British occupation of Egypt in 1882, the work of American Presbyterians gained the de facto cover of colonial officials, even as their entanglement with the colonial powers and their rancorous relationships with all other religious communities (with the exception perhaps of the miniscule Anglican communion) led to ever more aggressive proselytizing practices. The early twentieth century saw the emergence of modern anti-colonialist Egyptian nationalism and the rise of the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as a global evangelical backlash against the colonial roots of Protestant missions, represented most powerfully in the 1932 “Layman’s Report on Foreign Missions” (Sharkey 2008, 138). These various national and international forces shifted the practices of the Presbyterian mission to the establishment of schools, hospitals, agricultural development projects, and literacy programs. Not surprisingly, these programs were largely oriented toward children (Muslim and Christian), rural communities, and woman (141; see also Baron 2014).

In 1957 the Egyptian Evangelical Church became formally independent of the UPCNA, and in 1958, under Law 160, the American mission that remained in Egypt ceded all of its schools to the authority of the newly renamed Coptic Evangelical Church (Sharkey 2008, 206). One important recipient of this massive transfer of service infrastructure was the newly established Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Service (CEOSS), the brainchild of Dr. Samuel Habib, who graduated from Cairo Evangelical Seminary in 1952 and had developed a network of literacy programs.

Operating officially and continuously since 1960, CEOSS represents one of the most recognizable, respected, and powerful Evangelical institutions in Egypt. Though its director and board are Evangelical, their employees come from every Egyptian Christian denomination, and as a registered NGO in Egypt, their services are offered to all Egyptians regardless of religion.

AENM and the Arab World

Although CEOSS stands in the wider community as the symbol of Evangelical social engagement, Egypt is teeming with small initiatives and organizations that center social outreach and, unlike CEOSS, operate in the shadow of formal registration with the Egyptian state. One such organization is the relatively small-scale Arab Evangelical Network Missions (AENM), which operates out of the upper-class suburb of Heliopolis. AENM's president, Bashmuhandis Fadil, is closely related to a towering figure of the Evangelical Church, the late Menes Abdelnoor. Bashmuhandis Fadil grew up in the Evangelical church and was an early pioneer of the musical explosion of Evangelical sensibilities in the 1960s and 1970s. He wrestled as a young man with the call of God on his life, particularly whether he should seek ordination in the church or serve as a lay leader. It was through this struggle and the emerging popularity of traveling mission work in his youth that Fadil became convinced of the promise of para-church ministries. In pursuing projects that were not under the direct jurisdiction of pastors and denominational leaders, Fadil and his colleagues were able to pursue projects of social

uplift and evangelical outreach with more flexibility and, thereby, reach a wider group of those “outside the church.”

AENM has been through many iterations over the years, but it has emerged in the early twenty-first century as an established, highly networked association of Arabic-speaking pastors and lay leaders throughout the Middle East and partner churches in the US and Europe that serve as funding bodies for their outreach. Operating with eight full-time staff in 2018, this small group of Evangelicals from Orthodox, Pentecostal, Presbyterian, and Baptist denominational backgrounds oversees an internationally and regionally networked social service and evangelism organization.

The weekly staff meeting includes sharing updates about the various projects overseen within Egypt—a farm in the Delta, a children’s ministry in a growing suburb on the outskirts of Cairo, a women’s halfway house in a satellite city, the planning for a videography program for budding media producers. AENM sets itself apart from a sea of small church-affiliated ministries and parachurch ministries in two key ways. First, its governing board is entirely made up of Arabic-speaking Christians, both pastors and lay leaders. Fadil stresses this to me in our first meeting together. “The best people to minister to Arabic-speakers are other people who speak Arabic. We know their heart language. We know their culture.”

Fadil’s commitment to lay ministry is a guiding component of his work. In fact, Fadil bemoans the lack of attention that this instrumental lay ministries like the

powerhouse “Better Life” band and CEOSS, for example, have in the literature being produced about the Evangelical tradition in Egypt. This focus on churches, however, doesn’t simply exist in representational practices, but in the strategies used to build the Evangelical presence. “Many churches, pastors just preach. Before pastors used to meet with congregants. [Now they] build more buildings, air-conditioning, better nice churches. They give more attention to people in the west. Some had models and people got blinded by the fame of these pastors.”

As we will see later in this chapter, AENM does partner with foreign churches, but an emphasis on sending and financially supporting regional missionaries and servants throughout the Middle East remains central to AENM’s philosophy of mission. The second distinguishing feature of AENM’s work is that it both funds and operates social service programs like the videography program, farm, and schools, as well as evangelistic endeavors and church planting. This dual focus on the “spiritual” and “social” needs of their neighbors is impossible for larger organizations like CEOSS to accomplish. For this reason, AENM is an officially registered NGO in the US but not in Egypt, though one of their ministries is officially in Egypt as an independent NGO. It is this name that is engraved on the plaque outside of the Heliopolis office, not AENM and its signature logo.

Though these practices are not “contentious” in the traditional political sense that Bayat describes, they are not without their risks and tensions. Fadil asks me to

transfer the English editing and writing work that I undertake for AENM to him and his staff through USBs rather than by email, and my introductory meeting begins with a series of questions about the scope of my research, who chose my research topic, how will it be published, and in what language. These practices are fraught, as they were in the missionary period. I argue that the tensions that run through these practices—denominational (*tā'ifi*), classed, gendered, and political—are what provide Evangelicals with an imagination of an Egyptian community that travels, the journeys of which I will take up in the following chapters.

The City and the Periphery

Evangelicals—both foreign missionaries and native believers—have prioritized social activism among women and children from the inception of the mission and continue to do so now. In this way, of course, they are in step with the works of other charitable organizations and NGOs which are ever-present participants in the work of social care in the wake cut by the Egyptian state's failures. In this section I juxtapose two events put on by AENM in 2017—one in a relatively new suburban development of Cairo, the other in a satellite town 50 kilometers from Alexandria on the north coast. There is nothing particularly eventful about these moments, in the sense that they represent ordinary, regularized types of interactions and programs: the *nadwa* (seminar) in Alexandria followed a similar one that had been held a month before for Mother's

Day, and the children's gathering in Cairo was the second in a series of visits over a two-month period by this foreign volunteer organization.

The City.

I arrived at the center in the late morning, and Noura met me with an exuberant smile and warm hug. After taking me through the top floor of the NGO, with sparse off-white walls, a run-down kitchen, three classrooms with thread-bare furnishings and random, sparse educational decorations, the Arabic alphabet on one wall, the Arabic numerals on another, she led me downstairs to a cavernous basement with towering exposed cement walls and a series of cement columns. The acoustics were deafening for a room meant to accommodate gatherings of sometimes over one hundred children. Only fifteen or so children were there this morning, ranging in age from 5 to 13. A frazzled, serious-looking young woman in her late 20s was overseeing the painting happening at a couple of plastic folding tables, as Noura stepped effortlessly into teacher mode.

Noura and her colleague, Judy, were incredibly calm, warm, and attentive to the students. They reasoned, laid down rules, counted transgressions, and called in their colleague Jamal when those transgressions exceeded acceptable limits. They know all the children's names. I arrived as they are gathering up the paints and materials from this room to bring out to a spacious asphalt open-air courtyard.

It is all grey concrete—walls, floor, a ring of benches, random bricks. A large image of the globe floats on the back wall. The globe is reasonably drawn and in its traditional orientation, with Africa front and center. The wall's exposed bricks are painted white and the globe is in the center with a ring of black silhouetted boys and girls holding hands and encircling it. I thought it an interesting image, one that reminded me of an old dusty motor memory of cutting a piece of folded colored paper in half, drawing a half a figure and unfolding to produce the other mimetic half. A memory in the hands, not in the brain, as it has no context or specific memory attached to it. I wondered about this gesture to the global, to a wide world that oversees the activities of the children as they play in that courtyard. Children roam and Noura, Jamal, and Judy prepare the paints and materials.

The main event, however, starts a couple of hours later still with the arrival of the team of international volunteers who use English as their lingua franca. They have been in Cairo for over a month and have been to the center several times already, though, only the women appear to have developed personal familiarity with the children and, then, only with the young girls, it appears. The children are ushered into the basement hall and arranged into a noisy, shape-shifting horseshoe. The international volunteers try to raise their voices above the deafening sounds of laughing, teasing, prodding, chatting; their interpreter tries to increase the volume. Neither works. What follows is 45 minutes of true chaos, as the volunteers attempt to lead songs, dances, and

deliver a message and as the children crane their necks to hear instructions, whisper or yell at their friends, run from this chair to that one, attempt to mimic the gestures to various camp songs modeled by the volunteers.

A second event of the day involved turning concrete bricks into planters for a bunch of potted plants. Mark, a staff member of AENM who is there for the day to oversee this lesson much more effectively captures the children's attention helped by the fact that some of the young girls have left to fulfill their daily duties, the activities have moved outside instead of the deafening basement, and his voice is louder and more authoritative than either the volunteer or the interpreter could produce. He asks a series of questions of how plants grow, what they need, how to care for them. The children answer enthusiastically with tales of their own gardening adventures and exploits. They spend the next two hours painting cinder blocks with primary colored paints and sponges to house their small potted plants.

As the children were painting their brick planters (and their friends), the volunteers began painting around the globe on the wall. I learned that they had painted the mural just a couple of weeks prior and were now completing the image with large black letters: "You are the light of the world." The globe that had struck me as so ironic in the context of these children's lives came into social view. I asked one of the older girls where Egypt was on the map—she waved her hand over the Atlantic Ocean with a sweeping gesture. When I showed her, she protested, "I told you." The globe is not a

particularly ubiquitous symbol in the Egyptian symbolic landscape, in the way that it is in the US context. It is an indelibly important one in the wider Evangelical network, as my nostalgic response indexes—in the sanctuary of Zeinab, in the promotional materials of KDEC, on the jewelry that the staff wear, in brochures of NGOs.

The Periphery.

AENM's part-time photographer, David, and I arrived at the train station in Alexandria at 9:30 and met the rest of our travelers outside the station in a white van ten minutes later. David greeted "Uncle" through the front door as he opened the back passenger door for me. I greeted a middle age couple in the front seat as I slid into the second row. They spoke together and I watched out the back window as we exited the city and headed into a satellite city in the peripheral desert. The buildings became sparse, the sandy-colored exterior and industrial infrastructure signaling the social shift we were about to encounter.

We arrived at the *mu'assasa* at 11:00, in time for some packaged biscuits and juice boxes in the office where I was finally introduced to "Uncle" Hani, an employee of this international organization, tasked with organizing this particular trip. Merna was a local woman from an Alexandrian church with close ties to AENM who was asked to deliver the lesson at the *nadwa* that afternoon. She had recently given the address at the Mother's Day celebration and had developed a nice rapport with the women who would be attending. Her husband Magdy was along for the afternoon, to support his wife and

spend time with the various employees that we would meet throughout the day. It was the *nadwa* that had drawn David, on assignment from his home in Port Said, to produce some photography to be transformed into fundraising and newsletter material by the cinematography team. We met there a vivacious, gregarious employee of AENM, Adel, who supervises the two centers that we would visit this day. After drinking our complimentary teas, Adel takes us into the main building with a large open reception area separated by a long wall from two identical classrooms against the back wall. The classrooms have rows of wooden desks, white boards, and are adorned with stickers of colorful Disney characters.

Across this long reception are large double doors that open to the main meeting hall, which is filled with plastic desk chairs and over 50 women who are chatting, visiting, reprimanding children running among them, and fanning themselves vigorously. The *nadwa* would be held in this mercilessly hot, stale room, where Merna had already entered and was greeting the women she had met several weeks earlier. Her presentation today is about disciplining children, a topic that elicits enormous conversation and sustains a low dull buzz throughout the 40-minute presentation and question and answer session.

One animated woman stands up and explains at length the behavior of her daughter, who is wasting away in front of their television. She will not do her schoolwork, help with the housework, or listen to the instructions of her mother. More

to the point, her father is rarely home and cannot help to enforce this mother's authority. She is at her wit's end trying to manage her daughter's defiance. Merna offers several solutions, such as communicating her authority calmly and directly, enlisting the help of her father, and withholding privileges, all tried without success by this frustrated mother. Finally, Merna asks how old the daughter is, to which the mother replies she is in her first year of college. Stunned, Merna throws up her hands and replies: "College. Then it's done; she's already taken her rights!" (*Gāmi 'a? Khalāṣ, wākhda hu'ū'ha*). Several women respond to this revelation—some agreeing with Merna's fatalism, some commiserating with this mother's dilemma—before Merna is able to wrest control of the room again.

A key theme of Merna's address involves where children should be corporally punished—only the thighs and the back of the shoulder, never the face or hands—and with what—always with the parent's own hand, never with belts or shoes. Merna asks for a show of hands for how many of these mothers had themselves been punished with belts or shoes in their childhood, to which nearly every hand is raised (I suspect the few un-raised are from lack of attention, not lack of experience). Few women ask questions about this unorthodox suggestion about where and how to punish children corporally, or seem to register any surprise, defiance, or interest in Merna's new instructions for bodily constraints. Those that do ask questions are most interested in the question not of how and where to discipline their children, but rather who can do so. Their questions

largely revolved around the figure of the older brother, uncle, or father and whether it is right to delegate responsibility for disciplining children to these family members. Merna cedes no ground to these questions and answers them with the same theme:

On the day of judgment (*yawm al-qiyāma*) our Lord will ask of you—not of your uncle, your eldest son, or even your husband—about your children. It will be demanded of you, not anyone else.

The persistence of these questions suggest that the audience remained unconvinced of the feasibility of this program. They could not be home all of the time, they could not enforce the rules as strongly (*qawi*) as their male family members. Merna insists, however, that this is the responsibility of motherhood. It cannot be delegated. The dull roar in the hall spoke to both the contestation of this advice, as well as the interest in the dynamics and solutions raised.

On the car ride to the second center, a medical one in a neighboring town, I asked Adel about the teachers. They hail from the surrounding city, are Muslim and Christian, and have some training in early childhood education. But even these trained (and Christian, he says provocatively) teachers still have to break old habits in order to work within the *mu'assasa*. No hitting the children is allowed, yelling is discouraged, and gentle words and hugs are encouraged. Adel proudly proclaims that children there do not simply learn academically, they are being educated in a wider sense (*tarbiyya*).

When I asked him to clarify he simply reiterated:

I mean, it's not simply academic education, it is also a holistic education (*Ya 'nī mish mugarrad ta 'līm 'akādīmī bass kamān ta 'līm tarbiyya.*)

Like all the women at the *nadwa*, the women at the clinic that we visited were all veiled. They brought with them children of various ages, carrying or pulling with their hands, gazes, and words through the crowds. This day the clinic is absolutely overwhelmed, and the local staff have no time to even visit with us between their various duties. I was asked to sit behind the large wooden desk in the crowded office where many potential patients are waiting to be seen by the visiting doctors. Their main labor appeared to be crowd control, cajoling newly arriving patients to leave the office and wait outside. However, after 30 minutes I am asked to vacate the desk so that Adel can administer blood sugar tests, for which he comes with hands filled with cotton balls and rubbing alcohol. The adornments of the walls are eclectic: three Egyptian flags, one framed image of an idyllic European pastureland, two Chinese pagoda wall hangings, and holiday detritus fluttering in the breeze that the long ceiling fan produced. We end up drinking Nescafe while David takes pictures of various medical proceedings before politely making our exit and freeing four spaces of precious seating.

As David and I wait for the return train back to Cairo in the early evening, I ask him what he makes of this work as he has only been with AENM for a couple of months. He enjoys it because he gets to be involved with the “people” and not just within the bounds of the church. He describes his ambivalent relationship to the church as an institution:

I have a problem with pastors. They don't know how to treat people, especially youth. (*'andī mushkila ma l-'usūs, humma mish 'ārifīn al-ta'ammul ma'l-nāss wa khāṣatan al-shabāb.*)

He grew up in Port Said Evangelical Church, but when he got to high school he stopped going because his pastor was a septuagenarian who didn't know how to reach the youth. There were no other pastors and so he felt disconnected. By the time he got to college, however, the church got a new younger pastor who was better able to understand youth and David returned. He repeated the idea that I had heard many times, that the problem with the church was that it was so insular, always seeking to serve those inside the church and afraid to engage those outside. It is independent organizations like AENM and the larger, higher-profile CEOSS that do the work of extending the love of God to Muslim and Coptic Orthodox neighbors.

This sketch reveals a great many dynamics of the work of Evangelical Egyptians as they endeavor to bring the church into the street. Merna is a middle-class, well-to-do housewife with no formal training in childhood education but two respectable sons that she has raised. They are members in good standing at a small but important church in Alexandria, and she is a gifted orator. In this situation, however, it is her ability to both connect with women who share little in common with her, as well as instill forcefully the lessons of cosmopolitan parenting. Her sensibilities are oriented to a different kind of world than that of the women at the *mu'assasa*. In particular, the demands of labor expected of mothers are so different as to be virtually unintelligible.

These series of scenes, however, show how Evangelicals map social worlds onto these projects—the translations that attend both the words that they use (*yawm al-qiyaama*) as well as the immense shared religious sensibility that undergirds these interactions. The incredible, stunning needs that emerge from these out-of-the-way places that are both on the outskirts of Cairo’s densest center—in imagination and social service—surprise Evangelical servants, both veterans and newcomers alike. These are also deeply ambitious projects, in scope and in imagination. Right across the dirt street from the center is an imposing, recently finished public school. The walls are orange and yellow and not yet burnt to the dust color of its surroundings under the desert sun. This placement reminded me of the apocryphal story of the establishment of KDEC on Tahrir Square, which is obscured from view by the Mugamma government offices. This small, modest one-story building sits defiantly beside what they (and, to their understanding, the surrounding families) see as the empty promises of a state that does not invest in the requisite infrastructure to educate their children, opting for grandiose building projects without committing to quality curriculum, teaching staff, and programming. Adel’s statement illustrates the commitment to the idea of an education which socializes children into a social world that is foreign to the teaching staff, the students, and their parents. These projects are bodily as well as intellectual, as evidenced by Merna’s focus on the appropriate bodily sites and tools for corporal punishment.

The labors of Adel, Merna, and Hani illuminate this dynamic of shared social worlds and interactions and also highlight the kinds of moral ambitions that Evangelicals exhibit. This insistence on the individual valorization of mothering, was met with attendant pushbacks from women who know and experience a social world in which such constricted family circles are ineffective for the tasks of raising, educating, and caring for children. It is also a glimpse of one of the few sites in which Evangelicals were actively engaged with a Muslim community. All the women at the clinic and the school were Muslim, and all were veiled. These relationships, Adel told us, were hard won. They had to overcome skepticism among their Muslim neighbors about the insistence that Evangelicals were strange and had designs to corrupt their children. More difficult, though, was hearing through the grapevine that the local Orthodox Church leaders had been warning Muslim religious leaders that the Evangelicals only had designs on converting their children. Adel pointed to the crowd of women and children in the *nadwa* to show the goodwill and trust that they had built with the children who were at their school, as well as their parents.

Disciplines of Care

The sites of these events share a great many similarities though they are physically, geographically, and socially worlds apart. The sites—the large meeting room for the *nadwa* and the indoor and outdoor spaces for children’s meetings—are unfinished, sparsely furnished, and decorated with eclectic images indicating both a

cosmopolitan, even Western sensibility and not a conspicuously Christian one. The spaces are themselves, disciplinary. The classrooms in both include student chair desks in rows and facing whiteboards, with alphabets, numbers, and children's cartoon characters on the walls. As the deafening din of the women debating philosophies and practices of discipline, as well as that of the children refusing to be disciplined into pliable subjects of the presentation of song and dance by the foreign volunteers, indicates, the social reality of these events exceeds and overwhelms the intentions of Evangelical Egyptians who engage in them as acts of order and instruction. This is to say that in attempting to get the church into the street and share the love of God, spaces must be cultivated, carefully arranged, and maintained for these interactions. These liminal spaces are still behind the walls, if not of the church, then of its parachurch organizations, and they are constrained by the infrastructural demands of these spaces. They are also always subject to failure, and that failure itself is instructive in indexing the needs here to be met.

More important, however, than the physical constraints of these spaces that are created for these practices of care are the ways in which the needy "other" comes to inhabit those spaces. The unruly quality of those who are in need of this care is everywhere confronted by Evangelical Egyptian servants who corral children, fight for control of the group discussion in the face of mounting disagreement, and attempt to produce an orderly line for medical care. Clearly what is at stake in these interactions is

not simply the transference of a commodity or service, but the very work of disciplining the non-Evangelical other into a subject who can access these goods and services for which they have need. Adel insists that this education, which happens in this small, unfinished building in the shadow of a large, recently finished government school, is not simply academic but rather formational. The word *tarbiyya* means to educate in the way that a mother educates a child, raising and forming. This formation, of course, is not simply for children (which the word *tarbiyya* suggests); it is for their mothers and their teachers as well. Running through these moments, and other like them, are the impulse to care through discipline, to make the *bawāb*'s children, the rural housewife, the illiterate farmer into modern subjects. It is no coincidence, then, that the body comes into view as a key battleground for disciplining the modern Egyptian subject.

It is through these experiences of the urban and rural poor that middle-class Evangelicals come to construct an image of the "Egyptian street" that needs the care and labor of the Evangelical church. The presence of David on this journey is instructive in this regard. My opportunity to travel to these sites as an observer was paired with David and his camera. A gifted videographer, David was tasked with documenting the various ministries that were undertaken at these ministries for the purpose of producing high-quality videos that would be distributed to partner churches and organizations outside of Egypt. Those videos that I was shown were largely in-depth interviews with the

participants in these programs, and they highlighted the way that these programs provided personal transformation in the lives of participants.

Whereas the urban cafe dwellers of De Koning's fieldwork are formed through spatial practices of exclusion, Evangelical care work proceeds through these liminal techniques of confrontation, reaching out, and interface. These confrontations can lead to experiences of ambivalence, distress, and moral formation that are themselves the materials for entrenching these identities further. As Merna articulated to me, these confrontations are difficult to navigate as a self-aware, pious, modern woman:

The poor people that we used to meet when they were in the medical outreaches, sometimes it was hard for me because I am not a doctor, not a psychologist, I'm an ordinary person who has been raised in a certain way in a certain mindset and to me like such a mindset is very frustrating to hear, although I understand it because they are in poor areas and those people are illiterate. You can't expect everyone to have the knowledge that you [have]. That's actually arrogant to think like that.

It is not coincidental here that Merna sees the problem as not just illiteracy but also their en-placement in "poor areas" — the English phrase that she used here, though when speaking in Arabic she glosses these places as either *'ashwā'īyyāt* or *manāṭi' sha'biyya*. Other interlocutors spent a great deal of time describing to me the living conditions of the people that they served (*khidma*) — the flimsy style of their architecture, the state of their streets, the crowded conditions of their homes. These Evangelicals, both professionals and volunteers, spend incredible amounts of time producing these spatial logics of classrooms, clubs, health clinics, and childcare centers that can allow the

Egyptian public to escape the general dilapidation of their lives. The time that I spent during my fieldwork touring these spaces, hearing of the architectural decisions involved, the quality of materials highlighted the importance of attempts of articulating the cleanliness (*nazāfa*) of a space with its high-class-ness.

In the case of AENM, this work is done outside of the church, and a great deal of work is done to ensure that these spaces are not markedly Christian. In fact, Noura told me proudly that for months after the start of the children's ministry at her center, the children did not know if she and her colleagues were Christians or not. Upper-class Muslim women often wear their hair unveiled and with its natural curls, as Noura and Judy do; upper-class Muslims also often serve in such organizations (Mittermaier 2014). When a child suspiciously asked her whether she was a Christian, she responded by holding up her wrist to the child, revealing that she did not have a small cross tattoo that most Coptic Orthodox have. "They see that I am like them," she said with a grin. The Coptic cross tattooed on the wrist is one of the few bodily markers that indicate Christian other-ness, and it is very closely associated with Coptic Orthodoxy, being much more infrequently practiced within Evangelical (especially urban Evangelical) communities. Noura left the story there, without an answer to the curious child except the naked wrist.

Amira Mittermaier (2014b) has explored the social and theoretical salience of care work in Egypt, arguing that Islamic modes of volunteerism challenge Western notions of

care, charity, and compassion, all of which, Mittermaier alleges, have distinctively Christian histories and assumptions about reciprocity, relationships of the divine, and otherness. She argues that while Western notions of compassion are rooted in the centrality of the “suffering” subject, thereby organizing itself alongside a dyad of giving self and suffering other (520), Islamic notions of *tatawwu* ‘ that her interlocutors at the popular and expansive Resala organization articulate offer a “a sense of duty and mode of reciprocity that exceeds the social” that is “largely obscured in sentimental appeals to compassion” (525). That is, while “compassion,” with its Christian roots and implication in Western apparatuses of development and humanitarianism, is largely oriented both discursively and practically along a horizontal social axis, Islamic practices of care like those of Resala provide an impetus to care that is not centered on the suffering other but rather the divine call, what Resala volunteers and Evangelical Egyptians would articulate as *da’wa*. Evangelical Egyptians would be loath to describe these practices as in any sense transactional, as Mittermaier’s informants do. They are callings to which they are bound, certainly. They do it for God, but they are paltry gifts in a divine relationship that is founded on unmerited favor (*na’ma*) rather than good works (*‘a’ma’l khayr*). Interestingly, of course, these Evangelical Egyptians are quintessential Christians in their care work and in that they are also anchored to a philosophy of care that “exceeds” the social, as Mittermaier argues the work of organizations like Resala does. What is important to these projects for Evangelicals is something more complicated than

the duality of the giver–receiver dyad, which is built into Christian conceptions of charity. As Omri Elisha (2011) compellingly argues in his influential ethnography of evangelical megachurch service programs, a simplistic reading of the “Christian moral crusader” who stands in a position of superiority to those who are in need of care lacks sufficient attention to the complicated interplay of what he calls “the moral injuries of class.” For Omri’s interlocutors this means the moral dangers and complacencies of middle-class lifestyles that threaten to dull the urgency of the Christian calls to humility, self-sacrifice, and self-control. This sense that, in fact, social care is not simply a reaching out to a needy other out of the largesse of one’s nobility is central to the kind of service programs that Melanie McAlistier (2019) explores in her exhaustive survey of the global shape of American Evangelicalism. In fact, in her opening vignette featuring a traveling American pastor, the pastor’s desire to “luxuriate...in the vibrant, healing worship of Africa” suggests that in the wider world of evangelical care practice, there is a form of transactionalism embedded in these practices that eludes Mittermaier’s simplistic reading of “sentimental appeals to compassion.”

Mona Atia’s work on “pious neoliberalism” (2012) offers a useful critique of the deeply entrenched anthropological tendency to see Islam as a “counter” or “alternative” to hegemonic modern historical processes (Hirschkind 2006; Mahmood 2005). Focusing on the work of faith-based development organizations (FBDO) in Egypt, Atia argues that far from providing an alternative to the demands of a neoliberalizing economy,

FBDOs in Egypt are “indicative of a particular combination of religion and economic rationality...in the contemporary moment” (2012, 811). In Atia’s case studies, FBDOs are fundamentally committed to values of productivity and efficiency, as well as developing managerial skills (816). The proliferation of the social form of *da’wa* in which traditional practices of Quranic recitation and teaching in the mosque are broadened to volunteer activity focused on “public morality and sociability” (815) parallels the ever-expanding array of activities that Evangelicals organize under the discursive framing of taking the church into the street.

Toiling away in Egypt’s second largest city, the pastor of a large, historic congregation in Alexandria took me and some AENM staffers on a tour of the offices of a non-profit service organization that he has established through the Synod of the Nile. Pastor Mourad is a jovial, large, energetic pastor in his late 50s who regales me with stories of his international travels and foibles, as well as his deep love for Egypt and desire to further the development wing of the Synod of the Nile.

Pastor Mourad tells me about the church planting efforts underway in this church, though he is most excited about a new initiative that he established in 2008. “Hearts and Mind” is an expansive project including micro-loans, children’s Sunday School curricula, counseling, community classes, and other social service initiatives. He took our small party through the headquarters of the organization in a separate building a stone’s throw from the historic church. It is a newly renovated complex, freshly

painted, with recessed lighting and ornamental plants. On one long hallway wall is a map of the world, a colorful patchwork of nations with Egypt in the middle. Most of the rooms, however, have sparse wall hangings but are covered with printed photos of events and participants in a variety of “Hearts and Mind” programs. In the hallway before we are set to leave, Pastor Mourad is coming to the end of an impressive litany of their programs and successes when he looks at me and says mischievously, “We even have a course on Christian ethics for Muslims.” There is a small pause as I look at him and the other servants incredulously. “It’s called ‘Business Ethics,’” he smiles. I laugh as if it is a joke, but though he has said it with a smile, he doesn’t return my laugh. It is not, it appears, a punchline but a fact: good business is good Christianity, and vice versa.

What recedes from view in the kind of scene that Pastor Mourad leads me through in Alexandria, and in the ethnographic views of Atia (2012) and Mittermaier (2014b), is the social contact, the liminal spaces in which “pious neoliberalism” is produced. To return to the two AENM events visited above, there may have been aspirations for teaching efficiency, self-control, managerial skills, and accountability in the *nadwa*, but the more pressing demands were for social engagement, translations of key terms and experiences, and the ever-present management of bodies and voices, affect and relationship—these were the key social activities of these Evangelical spaces. What is apparent in the making of these Evangelical practices and spaces of care is the contradiction, the struggle, and the many ways that the aspirations for either Islamic

da'wa or neoliberal responsibility or Christian service are complicated by the liminality of these spaces—both the incongruity between the space and its activities, as well as the difficulty that Evangelical middle-class volunteers and the children of working poor parents have in accommodating the aspirations, needs, and sociality of the “other.”

A Church for Every Egyptian

These spaces were extraordinary in my research in that they were both events for and with a Muslim community and in that they were not in churches. These spaces are curated for the needs of non-Evangelical, indeed non-Christian, others. Additional kinds of dynamics attend to “bringing the church into the street” when that project involves not moving beyond the borders of the church property but bringing the non-Evangelical other within the walls of the church compound itself. Pastor Ramez’s vision for the Evangelical Church of Zeinab’s clinic complex is one such experiment.

In early November 2018 I received a call from Hadir, telling me that they had returned from their vacation in Marsa Allam and that the clinic would be having its grand opening ceremony that weekend. There would be a delegation of congregants from their partner church in the US Midwest as well as local government officials, and we should be sure to attend. We arrived late, having chosen the air-conditioned comfort of an Uber rather than the more straightforward but crowded metro. When we arrived, members of the church youth group—the men dressed in pressed black slacks and white collared dressed shirts, the women in black formal dresses—were ushering guests to

their seats. The entire meeting hall was filled, the first time in over a year of fieldwork that I had seen the room at capacity. There was a translation section set up in the sitting section to the left and parallel to the stage, and on the opposite side of the stage Dr. Makram was sitting at the *org* in his usual collared, button-down shirt playing the staccato chords to an opening hymn.

The Evangelical brass in attendance filed in from the main entrance shortly after our arrival and sat in a row of gilded, red velvet-covered chairs behind the pulpit. In attendance were several high-ranking Muslims, including local government officials. One official who spoke at the ceremony was dressed in a boldly patterned powder-blue suit, hair slicked tightly back and significantly longer than any Evangelical pastor might attempt. He sat in the front row, his suit visually striking in the midst of all the black and blue formal attire of the Evangelicals. Another guest of honor was an administrator at al-Azhar, I was told.

The speeches and prayers were more or less prosaic and filled with pleasantries; surprisingly little said about the clinic itself. The theme was, rather, that of “the church without walls” (*al-kanīsa bidūn surūr*). A seminary professor offered several models of community engagement found in the scriptures—exile, diaspora, and Jesus. We should choose the way of Jesus, he said, which, in contrast to exile and diaspora, keeps one rooted in the homeland. The Azhari administrator spoke last in what appeared to be an impromptu address. She exclaimed passionately and with little elaboration that she

considered this church her own. “It belongs to no one outside of Egypt in the way that it belongs to every Egyptian.” She said this forcefully with her hand raised. I was struck in this moment by the relatively muted response of the congregation. There was some polite clapping, but nothing like the fervor that followed the nationalist ballads and sermons focusing on God’s divine plan for Egypt. I was struck by the ambiguity of the sentiment: was it a sympathetic one of solidarity with the beleaguered state of Evangelical Egyptians, or was it one of an aggressive, colonizing presence? Especially striking was the lack of inversion of this logic, that every mosque belongs to every Egyptian Christian.

This moment—the local officials attending an event in an illegally renovated church, the exclamation of the national character of this project in the presence of a small contingent of Presbyterians from the American Midwest, the overflowing sanctuary of a small dwindling congregation—highlights many of the vulnerabilities and ambiguities of the church in the street and the church without walls. Pastor Ramez was very proud of the presence of Muslim political and religious leaders at the event and highlighted their participation and their blessing of the work when we spoke about the clinic. The struggles, however, attendant to receiving building licenses for these new additions (which the church had not received as of the writing of this dissertation), as well as the suspicion that the Orthodox and Muslim leaders in the community spread among interested families, frustrated and hurt Pastor Ramez as he attempted to follow God’s

vision for this “church in the street.” In fact, throughout the fieldwork, a fine and jail time loomed over Pastor Ramez’s head, even as he plowed ahead with these extensive renovations, maintaining key relationships, retaining a lawyer, and raising the requisite funds. The necessary illicitness of many of these programs—operating as an NGO without a license, building unapproved extensions to church properties, sponsoring foreign partners on tourist visas for long-term employment/service within Evangelical establishments—came in and out of focus throughout my fieldwork.

Walls are symbolic. They are also material. Their presence in post-revolutionary Egypt represents state violence, anti-Christian violence, and attempts to protect obscene wealth from the sullyng gaze of the street. As this chapter has shown, while Evangelicals are engaged in practices that are similar to those explored by scholars of pious neoliberalism in Egypt, the walls that they are attempting to traverse are also those that paradoxically are their most potent (and contested) sites for claiming belonging in the larger imagined community of Egypt.

On November 2, 2018, gunmen forcibly stopped a convoy of vehicles traveling from Sohag to al-Minya on a visit to the Monastery of Saint Samuel, opening fire and killing seven and injuring over a dozen other Coptic travelers (Alaa El-Din 2018). This horrific attack eerily mirrored one a year and a half earlier in which over two dozen Coptic travelers were killed (*9news* 2017). The images of the attack, as well as of the funerals, were on every television around Cairo, and the church’s congregants were

shaken by the audacity of this attack and the lack of protection by state security for exposed Christians on these desert roads. It was in the context of this mourning and heightened sense of precarity and vulnerability that the clinic's opening proceeded and in which this honored Muslim guest claimed ownership of every church in Egypt. It was in the aftermath of this scene of the vulnerability of Christians to bodily violence in the "street" —here transformed from the crowded, bustling downtown of Cairo to the arid, windy thoroughfares that connect Upper Egypt's urban centers—that the celebration of the "church going into the street" was met with muted applause.

As Anthony Shenoda (2011) poignantly noted in the aftermath of the bombing of the Two Saints Church in Alexandria on the eve of 2011, "the blood of those Alexandria victims was not only spilled on the church where they were praying, but it also crossed the street and landed on the mosque opposite the church."

Global Care Cartographies and the Suffering Slot

I once asked Noura about the challenges of connecting with the children at the *mu'assasa* who came from such different worlds than her own. How did she build the trust that her relationships with these children so clearly exhibited? She answered by way of a story about a day when she was leading a painting activity with the children. One young boy excitedly came up to Noura and embraced her in greeting, accidentally wiping paint on her jeans. They were new and fashionable, and, in Noura's telling, the boy looked up at her sheepishly as he realized what he had done. She said that she could

see as she smiled at him that he knew the jeans did not matter to her as much as he did, and the fear that she saw in his eyes went away just as quickly as he sped away to rejoin his friends. This was Noura's answer to my question, and I am still trying to figure out what it means.

What are Evangelical Egyptians after in these endeavors? Where does the imperative to reach out beyond the walls of the church—walls that are built to last, that are guarded by police, that are maintained with care, that offer a sense of respite from the challenges of contemporary urban Cairo, as well as the particular challenges of the Egyptian Christian community—find its impetus? “Pious neoliberalism” provides a compelling answer to this question, enfolding Evangelical practices of care work and social provision into a larger phenomenon of neoliberal subjectivity and precarity. As Pastor Mourad's “Business Ethics” course illustrates, the desire to make service efficient, effective, and sustainable is clearly an important part of these processes. However, there is a sense in which the outward-facing sensibility of the Evangelical community is part of a longer history, embedded in the kinds of institutions that were produced out of the evangelical modern that I introduced in the framing of this dissertation. Like pious neoliberalism, the evangelical modern is a conceptual framework for understanding the way that the demands of the modern are read through the robust networks, technologies, and techniques of evangelical subject-making. In this chapter, those techniques have been those of service and community engagement.

Joel Robbins (2013) has argued persuasively that Trouillot's "savage slot," with its fundamental commitment to the alterity of the anthropological subject, has given way to the "suffering slot" as a criterion for the admissible anthropological subject. Building on the work of Didier Fassin and Richard Rechtman's (2009), Robbins sees the pushback against radical alterity as finding refuge in the universal quality of human suffering and its ability to "become the very embodiment of our common humanity" (Fassin & Rechtman 2009, 23). Although Robbins intends this intervention to re-orient the anthropological project again around a concept with comparative rather than universal leverage, in my excursions with Evangelical servants I found myself returning to the centrality not of market rationality and efficiency or of the emotive and unequal production of "empathy" and "compassion," but rather to the personalistic and, thereby, universalizing potential of interior pain.

Noura and Judy were both, at the time of my fieldwork, pursuing graduate degrees in psychology, and their work with the children at the *mu'assasa* was the context in which they explored the questions of trauma, with its visible and invisible marks. Two of the most famous and sought-after teachers within the Evangelical community are trained psychologists: Dr. Awsam Wasfy and Dr. Maher Samuel. In fact, in addition to the clinic's many programs aimed at reaching out to the suffering neighbors of the Zeinab neighborhood, Hadir herself was building a burgeoning clientele of counselees. She meets with individuals not in the clinic but in Pastor Ramez's office. The office has

floor to ceiling bookshelves crammed full of books and two deep-brown leather couches facing a glass coffee table. It looks to my eye like a quintessential counselor's suite.

Hadir, however, prefers to meet with her clients in metal chairs set against the bare wall on the other side of the office. It focuses her and her client, she says, on the conversation between them, allowing for the building of intimacy and trust.

Whereas earlier generations of Evangelical activism—such as CEOSS and AENM—have focused on something that might be called the “social gospel,” in which the material needs of the poor were front and center for Christian infrastructures of charity to engage, in the current moment there is an efflorescence in the work of counseling. Evangelicals of this persuasion see the fundamental material drivers of the difficulties of life in Egypt—metro tickets are expensive, medical costs prohibitive to the poor, food prices rising for everyone, and appropriate housing increasingly difficult to procure—but insist nonetheless that if you want to understand where suffering resides within the struggling Egyptian classes, you must look not at their material conditions but at the conditions of their souls. As Hadir belabored to me repeatedly, this was not about biblical counseling that is didactic or tells people how the Bible says this or that. It is about telling universal human truths about how all of us struggle because we are all human (*kullina beni 'ādimīn*).

This suffering is at once universal and also particularly burdensome to the poor classes who suffer these psychic injuries in a more pressing way than the upper or

middle classes. Here Elisha's (2011) "moral injuries of class" in suburban America become once again rooted in the poor, indeed lodged in their very souls. There is, of course, a sense among Evangelical Egyptians that something is terribly wrong with the economic, political, and social futures of Egyptians. Along with many Egyptians, my interlocutors saw the material conditions of their lives deteriorating and were more sensitive than many of their Muslim neighbors (and their Orthodox neighbors) to the insecurities brought about by the Sinai offensives against *'Ansār Bayt al-Maqdas* and media coverage of *Dā'esh*, as well as Egyptian media's vilification of the Muslim Brotherhood. That is to say, Evangelical Egyptians experience the same struggles that are plaguing Egypt's beleaguered middle and working classes but recognize the locus of this suffering as lacerating not, most importantly, the social fabric but rather the individual psyches of the poor and marginalized. Unlike the politics of solidarity that emerged from "the church in the square," the church in the street is shot through with complicated negotiations of gender, class, and religion which produce for the Evangelical servant both an experience of solidarity and difference, as well as the materials for the representation of a distinctively Egyptian cultural world, within which their emergence as Evangelical Egyptians is made possible.

This will be the theme of the next chapter, but for this moment I want to return to the image of the globe that floats on that brick wall and the ring of cut-out children holding hands and encircling it as the backdrop of children playing in the open-air

courtyard of the *mu'assasa*. As I reflected on the foreign-ness of that symbol, and how my curiosity had been relieved to learn that it was the foreign volunteers who had painted it, I saw its pervasiveness in other sites: in the hallway of the “Hearts and Minds” office in which Egypt is central, stuck full of pins representing active ministries; in the lone material artifact that was transferred from the old sanctuary of Zeinab to its new meeting hall—an image of the globe with only the African continent and two hands reaching toward it. What Evangelical servants labor to bring into the street, at the risk of bodily injury and despite the nuisances of crowding, traffic, and dust, is informed by this symbol of an outside of the Egyptian street, indeed an outside to the Egyptian public which it is meant to represent. The relationship between this “will to the global” which we catch glimpses of here and the conjuring of the imagined nation of Egypt is the subject of the following chapter.

2. The Nation in an Evangelical Register

“All that was asked of me was not to flee”

In Asyut, Egypt, at the end of July 2015. Friends had warned us of the danger of summer heat in Upper Egypt. These warnings did not do justice to the sweltering, heavy heat of that summer. As we sat down in Brother Medhat’s office, we were grateful for the aggressive air-conditioning which insured that our mandatory hot tea would not be such an uncomfortable prospect. Brother Medhat is a diminutive man with a kind, if tired, face. Directly above his head and behind the bookshelves that house a range of Arabic and English systematic theologies, devotional classics, Christian fiction, and apologetics texts hung a replica of the smiling face of President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi looking off into the distance. Although we were in Asyut to visit with pastors at local Presbyterian churches, Brother Medhat requested that we spend several evenings with him in his office to learn about the Lillian Trasher Orphanage (LTO), a massive compound with a mythical presence among the Evangelical and wider Protestant communities in Egypt. Originally from Jacksonville, Florida, Trasher moved to Egypt to join an already established American, British, and Swedish missionary community. “Mama Lillian,” as she is called throughout Asyut, is a larger-than-life figure, in part because of the larger-than-life busts, paintings, photographs, and statues of her likeness scattered around the orphanage grounds. She is very much a part of the institutional

memory of LTO, one of the oldest and most respected Protestant establishments in the country.

Medhat was an expert at taking foreigners through this story of “Mama Lillian” and her life in Egypt, but he also told us something of his own journey to becoming the director of the orphanage. He had grown up at the orphanage, moving there when he was three years old. A bright and successful student, Medhat attained the respectable position of English teacher at a public high school. His life was comfortable; the pay wasn’t good, but the hours weren’t demanding either and he had time to teach on Fridays at the local seminary of the *Rasūliyya* denomination to which he belonged.

When the iconic director of the seminary passed away in the summer of 2011, the orphanage went through a period of transitional leadership which left the administration in chaos and disarray. Given his administrative, pedagogical, and life experience at LTO, Medhat had been asked to take this demanding position. Knowing its demands, he repeatedly declined. He recounted his desire to run away, to hide from his brothers and sisters who requested so much from him. In the end, after a serious deliberation with a trusted friend, Brother Medhat decided not to run away from the responsibility but to embrace the opportunity.

Immediately, he pivoted to an apocryphal story about a gathering of the fifty most influential people in the Christian life at some point in the mid-twentieth century. As he recounted it, a man came up to Mama Lillian and exclaimed to her, ‘You are such

a good person!’ To which Mama Lillian responded in classic Protestant self-effacement, “I am not a good person. All that has been required of me is not to flee.” Medhat smiled at us, drawing out the punchline. These practices of social responsibility and service are taxing, laborious projects but they are embedded in this imperative: do not flee. Like Mama Lillian, who had the prospect of a comfortable, married, middle-class lifestyle but insisted on living out her life as a single, isolated missionary worker among poor and marginalized children in Upper Egypt, Brother Medhat was asked to invest in a social project that asked for all his time, energy, and devotion. On top of that, all that it required was not to flee.

In the previous chapter I explored the care work that Evangelicals perform to construct a space for themselves in Egypt. In this chapter I turn to a larger suite of strategies, like the one that Brother Medhat employs here, that Evangelical Egyptians use both to construct the nation of Egypt and to come to understand their place within that nation—as citizens, as soldiers, as native sons and daughters. Further, I argue that the global evangelicalism which they embrace and practice, far from severing them from the larger imagined community of Egypt, provides them with the very tools for constructing an imagined national community. The global imagination of evangelicalism, then, is built on the necessity of the territorial nation-state and the concomitant demands that it makes on devout believers. These ideological and theological demands, however, are navigated in a world of anxiety, precarity, and

violence for Egypt's Evangelical community. This chapter, then, also explores the fraught decisions Evangelicals make to leave and to stay in Egypt, against the backdrop of Evangelical discourses of loyal nationalism and anti-Christian violence. It explores the various mechanisms through which Evangelicals attempt to make sense of their various (im)mobilities in the face of crisis and violence, as well as the way that Evangelical media and imaginative practices construct a dense and compelling relationship between their small beleaguered community and the land of Egypt. That is, I explore the way that attending to the construction of the imagined nation of Egypt in the lives of Egyptian Evangelicals provides a window into the centrality of nation-hood in the construction of global Christianity.

Exodus, Diaspora, and Homeland

The place of the Coptic Orthodox communities in modernizing Egypt has been explored as a transition from their place of prominence within the Ottoman *millet* system, which governed intercommunal relations, to their incorporation as a national "minority" within a largely homogeneous nation-state after Gamal Abdel-Nasser's ascendancy in the mid-twentieth century (Armanios 2011; Guirguis 2008; Swanson 2010). This shift included not just a new set of institutions mediating intercommunal relationships but also a shift in the power relationships of the church, from a transfer of the power of representation and mediation from land-owning Coptic elites largely in

Upper Egypt to the middle-class urbanized clergy of the Coptic Orthodox Church (Ibrahim 2011; Sedra 2009).

The prominence of Coptic elites mirrored that of other Christian sects within the Ottoman Empire, though their compact distribution made them less central to the commercial networks being formed around the Mediterranean in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, consolidating them within the bureaucratic echelons of Ottoman governance (Armanios 2011). Though the millet system, Christians and Jews were protected as *dhimmi*, that is “protected peoples” with the tax (*jizya*), responsibilities, and spheres of autonomy that attended this status (Masters 2001). The literature on the transformation from millet to minority provides a rich ground for writing against Coptic exceptionalism, clash of civilizations frameworks, and short-sighted historiographies of the modernizing “great men” of the colonial period (Stamatopoulos 2006; Sharkey 2008).

A key moment in this history of modern Egypt and the Copts was the 1919 Revolution, led by Sa’ad Zaghlul, an anti-colonial opposition leader who had held high-ranking positions as Minister of Education (1906-1910) and Minister of Justice (1910-1913). This period saw the establishment of the Wafd party and the prominence of several eminent Copts including Makram Obeid and Qomus Serguis. Though the particular negotiations of Coptic involvement in these revolutionary projects were fraught and far from monolithic, their representation in western and Egyptian history is remarkably straightforward (Ibrahim 2011, 59–92; see also Fahmy 2011, 105–8). Historian

Milad Hanna famously summarized the effect thus: “March 1919 instilled feelings that are prevalent in the conscience of every Egyptian until today and these are that ‘religion is for God, and the nation is for all’ [as well as] the slogan ‘long live the crescent [entwined] with the cross’” (Hanna, qtd. in Ibrahim 2011, 60).

This slogan of “the religion for God and the nation for all” rings throughout Egypt, particularly in times of anti-Christian and sectarian violence (Ibrahim 2011, 2). The strategic decision to ally with Muslim Egyptians, instead of playing into the “divide and rule” strategy of British colonialism produced a watershed event and set of symbols—both discursive and visual—for grounding the Coptic Orthodox in the evolving Egyptian nationalism of the twentieth century (Gershoni & Jankowski 1987; Coury 1982). Christians also figure prominently in the history of Arab nationalism, as key proponents of anti-colonial struggle and pan-Arab solidarities (Haiduc-Dale 2013). These histories are remembered, remarked upon often, and also challenged in a variety of ways, especially with the rise of so-called “political Islam” and the place of Coptic Orthodox communal autonomy and within an increasingly pious and religiously coded public space in the wake of the Islamic Awakening (*al-ṣaḥwa al-‘islāmiyya*). The durability of these historical memories of “the nation for all” (or its contemporary counterpart: “Christians and Muslims are one hand!”) as well as the intertwined images of cross and crescent are on display in moments of anti-Christian violence, as well as Coptic-organized protests and, importantly, the January 25 Revolution.

This taken-for-granted aspirational model is under siege from two different directions. On the one hand, voices from the growing diaspora of Egyptian Christians, both Orthodox and Evangelical, living abroad—and so shielded from direct retaliation from the government—are increasingly vocal about sectarian violence. On the other hand, the model is under pressure through the increasing polarization of Egyptian society in the aftermath of the Muslim Brotherhood's rise to power and the al-Sisi regime's aggressive campaign to destroy the organization. The sense that Christians might occupy a more problematic position vis-à-vis Egyptian nationalism has been expressed in their centrality to Muslim Brotherhood–government skirmishes.

It is in the context of this shifting signification and communal relationships that Evangelicals like Brother Medhat take up the imperative not to flee. The reasons for such fleeing are material, visceral, and of daily consideration for many of my interlocutors. In addition to the material hardships of increasing prices for everyday goods, political crises and mass protests, Christians have felt the brunt of the anti-Christian violence that has followed the al-Sisi regime's scapegoating offensive against the Muslim Brotherhood. Spectacular acts of violence against Coptic Orthodox churches, businesses, and homes were constantly invoked as an indication of deteriorating sectarian relationships. It is in the context of the felt precarity of these times that Evangelicals like Medhat find themselves articulating and coming to live out these strivings to stay and to leave.

This imagined community of the nation of Egypt is a powerful discursive feature in the Evangelical imagination and especially so in times of heightened threats of violence and precarity. Indeed, the common invocation of Egypt and its divine call on the lives and energies of Evangelicals is not coincidentally tied to moments of sectarian tension, anti-Christian violence, and threats to the state. The need to conjure again through biblical texts and sacred imagination an affective and effective connection to the nation-state of Egypt is clearly a priority for Evangelical Egyptian pastors. This need is borne of two interconnected causes. On the one hand, the Christian exodus from the Middle East and Egypt is concerning to church leadership. On the other hand, the international connections of Evangelicals through short-term mission teams, foreign sponsoring churches, and the need to study abroad for advanced theological degrees mean that their avenues for immigration are numerous, if uncertain, in a way that many Egyptians' are not.

Strivings to Stay and to Leave

Pastor Emile is a broad-faced, energetic, gentle man whose eyes are always smiling. A full-time minister without a home church, Pastor Emile preaches weekly at various Church of God congregations all over Egypt, and internationally. Like many Egyptian pastors, Pastor Emile spends a great deal of time listening to and reading English-language devotional texts to improve his language skills. He loves the works of the famous Neo-Calvinist Baptist preacher John Piper, as well as those of John

McArthur, and wants to be able to read the enormous breadth of Christian writing like theirs that is only accessible if one has strong English reading skills. He also wants to be able to interact comfortably with his family in California, when he is able to visit them. His family's tourist visa requests have been denied repeatedly and so they have not yet been able to make the trip across the Atlantic. The US Embassy never explains the decision of denial, but Pastor Emile suggests that this is because their relatives put their name on a potential list of relatives that they will ask to sponsor to get a green card and emigrate to the US. The irony, Pastor Emile and his wife, Bassant, tell me, is that they are not interested in moving to an English-speaking country—certainly not to the US. They are concerned about their two young sons and the influence of a corrosive, irreligious American culture on their moral upbringing. There is no end, Bassant told me as we sat in their cozy apartment in Shubra, to the dangers to children in America, her relatives have told her. Yes, perhaps her sons will have the ability to pursue a better-quality education without the laborious and expensive private tutoring—in the middle of our lunch together, three classmates come to meet their teenage son, followed shortly afterwards by a private tutor—but the moral toll on their children outweighs this concern.

Besides, Pastor Emile reminds me, God has called him to a ministry among Arabs—certainly in Egypt, where Bassant is often solo-parenting while Pastor Emile is traveling to Upper Egypt and the Delta for weeks on end. Recently, however, his

ministry has taken him to Europe, where he preaches and teaches apologetics with international faith organizations that target Arabic-speaking immigrants and refugees. It is difficult to imagine making this impact in the US, where costs of living are higher and the itinerant preaching lifestyle would be much more difficult to maintain, as would the demands on Bassant to hold down the kind of middle-class lifestyle that she enjoys in Cairo. Their boys are able to spend lots of time with their maternal relatives, who live in the same building, which also allows Emile and Bassant to have more flexibility for ministry.

Emile and Bassant live in a middle-class, though crowded, neighborhood. Their home is well-appointed, and they take us through the various renovations they have done to the two-bedroom apartment. A fireplace facade is the centerpiece of the living room in which we sit on gilded couches. The ceilings are high and the windows large, indicating that the building was built in an earlier era before subsequent population explosions had led to smaller and smaller apartments.

Miles south, Hanan and her two roommates live in one such apartment in a popular neighborhood extending out from the well-to-do suburb of Maadi, where I lived during my research. A sweltering heaviness is in the air, even though they have all three of the apartment's portable fans pointed at the worn couch where we sit eating *makarūna bishāmīl*, baked chicken, salad, baba ghanouj, and rice with vermicelli noodles. It's a feast that cannot fit on their folding dining room table and spills onto the coffee

table in front of the couch. Hanan and her roommates have been living in this three-bedroom apartment for three years. It has been a great bargain until the end of 2018, as the austerity measures have extended their vice-like grip on the finances of all Egyptians but especially the working classes that populate this neighborhood. Their landlord told them that he would be increasing the rent by 1,000 Egyptian pounds per month; they could pay or leave. Indignant, Hanan had searched far and wide for an apartment that they could afford. Coming up empty after months of searching and coming dangerously close to the deadline, they decided to extend the contract and pay the extra.

The apartment's walls are off-white and largely unadorned except by a wall-clock with a picture of *Baba Yasū* ' staring piercingly out from behind the clock hands, pictures of friends and families, and some biblical verses taped to the walls, but the center-piece of this living room is a TV stand with a small television screen, set to the al-Karama channel, which plays *tarānīm* from ten years ago all throughout dinner. Hanan and her roommates are in their mid-30s, unmarried and working long hours in various childcare institutions around the greater Maadi area. They all hail from Upper Egypt and have come to Cairo in search of stable employment and marriages, though as women who were raised in an evangelical orphanage, their opportunities for marriage are slim. Their days are long, their jobs often undignified and poorly paid, and their apartment is stiflingly hot in the long Egyptian summer. Worse, however, is the deteriorating relationship that they have with their neighbors, who the girls see as

unnecessarily hostile and intimidating. For instance, Hanan tells me that in an attempt to find relief from the sweltering heat of the apartment she opened the street-facing window in her bedroom only to find that the balcony across the narrow street belonged to a middle-aged man who would sit in his chair and stare unabashedly into her room, making eye contact whenever Hanan looked out her window. Hanan saw this behavior as only one of many ways in which her neighbors treat her and her unmarried Christian housemates as interlopers and unprincipled, loose women.

“The girls,” as they call themselves and the network of young women their age who have migrated from the cloistered, enclosed orphanage in Asyut to Cairo, all wish for lives outside of these particular crowded, polluted streets. Most pressingly, they hope for reasonable marriage prospects which will provide them with respectable positions as married women and mothers, as well as a second income to have one’s own flat and not have to rent from unprincipled landlords. The most extravagant dream, however, is to move to the US. Indeed, two of their friends from the orphanage had already married US citizens and were on their way to US citizenship themselves. Over the course of my fieldwork and extravagant dinners, the girls had asked me about dress codes, gender roles, and legal procedures in the US, trying to gauge what it would mean to escape the lives that seem difficult and futureless (with dwindling hope for marriages, children, and upward mobility). Hanan herself narrowly missed escaping to the US with her long-term boyfriend when her tourist visa was denied years before. She and her

boyfriend (whose family did not approve of her as a potential marriage partner) were intending to overstay their visas and get married there. Nermine told us sheepishly that she was in conversations with an older Egyptian man who had gotten US citizenship many years ago but was looking for an Egyptian woman in Cairo to marry. She was cautiously optimistic, though needed to ensure first that his relationship with Jesus was his first priority (*law rabbina raqam wāhid fi hayātuh*).

Of course, these dreams of the easy life in the US were not entirely untempered by the stories of friends and relatives who had successfully made these journeys. Their close friend who had married a recipient of the diversity visa lottery in 2013 and had finally joined her husband in Texas told them in regular Viber and WhatsApp conversations about how lonely and isolating life was in the US—with an absent husband working over 60 hours a week simply to afford their modest rental apartment and navigating the extensive bureaucratic systems for childcare, healthcare, taxes, and a host of other institutions that required long phone calls, excellent English skills, and, where she lived, reliable private transportation. Her tearful conversations, however, did not do much to temper the expectations of those left behind laboring in precarious and demanding jobs, in a sweltering apartment among neighbors they regarded with suspicion and fear.

It was these stubborn dreams that a well-connected faith-based organization's president derided when I met him in his office in the old-moned neighborhood of

Heliopolis. As a descendent of three generations of Evangelical Egyptians and a highly-visible leader of an international publishing coalition, with an American wife, fluent English, and extensive international connections, Gergis is well-versed in the practice of what one might call the “curation of culture.” In speaking with me, Gergis highlights again and again the cultural difference at play in understanding the dilemmas and promises of Arab Christians. For instance, Gergis is insistent that it is Christians in the so-called developed world who are really struggling because they are immersed in a liberal, godless, “politically correct,” and post-churched world. Egyptians Christians, by contrast, grow up in the rich soil of a God-fearing society.

Building off of this insight, Gergis tells me that one of the confounding qualities of Christian Egyptian immigration to the West is the fact that Egyptian Christians inevitably have it worse “there” than they do “here.” His nieces in the US, for instance, spend their evenings in the suburbs cut off from friends and family caring for their children, while his daughter who lives in Egypt leaves her young children with her husband a couple of nights a week and goes out for sushi with her girlfriends.

The conversations, concerns, and strivings narrated here illuminate the many dilemmas (religious, financial, gendered, nationalist, and more) that underlie these dreams of staying and dreams of going. These class considerations, however, were for Gergis a secondary (or perhaps corollary) consideration. The primary rationale for reconsidering leaving Egypt is that Egypt is the home of Egyptian Evangelicals, though

not in an exclusive sense, as Christians of all varieties and, indeed, Muslims in Egypt share a common “cultural” mindset.

"Rights," insists Gergis, "are not a native concept here. It is a foreign implant. People speak about rights, but they are hypocritical. For instance, if a Christian family had a daughter that tried to convert to Islam, that family would do everything in their power to prevent it. They want to prevent her from going to hell." This was evidenced most strongly for Gergis by his friend who has a convert daughter whom he has not spoken to in thirty years. In order to understand why Christians do this, Gergis re-iterates that one must understand ‘the Muslim mindset’ in which a daughter that tries to convert to Christianity must be stopped by all means necessary because it imperils the state of her soul. Though this makes Westerners uncomfortable with their ideas of freedom of religion, Gergis sees these commonalities as the threads which bind Egyptian Christians (and Evangelicals, with their emphasis on conversion) to this land, this people, and this context. Whereas Hanan and Nermine see the US as a land in which they will not stand out either as Christians or as unmarried 30-something working women, Gergis sees them as forever apart in the West.

They are living as aliens in the US, with no commitment. Ninety to ninety-five percent of them feel like aliens. This is their home. It isn't really immigration.

It isn't really immigration. The idea is that to have moved one's body, one's finances, the mother-tongue of one's children to another land is not to immigrate if one's

heart still belongs to the land that one left. But as one can read between the lines of Gergis's sentiments, there is a class location to those that can find Egypt both their home and a place for respectable employment, leisure time, and expendable income. Hanan and Nermine, certainly, would not be trading sushi dinners with their girlfriends for isolation in an American suburbia, though their friend who had escaped to a Dallas suburb certainly felt the sting of this new form of isolation. The conversation with Gergis, however, highlights so many of the tensions and compromises represented by this century-and-a-half experiment with an Evangelical Egyptian identity. The deep resonances of homeland, with an Egyptian-ness that is articulated and felt as a component of one's deepest self; the ambivalences, now identifying, now contrasting, with that other major identity of Islam.

The stories of Emile, Gergis, Hanan, Nermine, and "the girls" illuminate the complicated question of how and why Evangelicals would attempt to leave that homeland. Perhaps most striking in these stories is the importance of social density that attends Evangelical lives in Egypt—Emile and Bassant's desire for their sons to live in such close proximity to their extended family; the girls' dependence on each other, both to survive in the big city through rent-sharing but also to share these sumptuous evenings of hospitality organized around their most extravagant cooked meals; Gergis's daughter's sushi dinners with girlfriends. The density of these social relationships is unsurprising given the high premium on hospitality, reciprocity, and family that

characterizes Egyptian social lives. These connections, however, are no longer simply in Egypt—they span continents, and to be present with one’s family in Egypt means to be absent from one’s friends and family abroad, as Emile and Bassant’s troubles with the tourist visa illuminate.

What does it mean to Gergis, to Emile, or to Bassant to find their home in Egypt? On the most superficial level, it means that they resonate with the messages, affect, and logic of Egyptian nationalism. Indeed, one need only spend a cursory amount of time with Egyptian Evangelicals to be sure of the hold that the contemporary nation-state holds on their imaginations of piety, service, and identity. As Pastor Sameh Maurice intoned from his pulpit on a Sunday in November 2011, with fears of Islamist take-overs and Christian precocity on the rise within his congregation and denomination, “This is our country. We drink from this river.” It is not uncommon for nationalist imagery—a child with a face painted in the colors of the Egyptian flag, the cross and the crescent juxtaposed over a map of the nation, as well as various popular slogans—to adorn personal social media profiles, phone backgrounds, and church PowerPoint presentations and bulletins. The idea that Evangelicals were loyal citizens devoted to the good of the nation was an unremarked upon fact for most of my interlocutors. In fact, in an introductory meeting with an administrator of a large Evangelical social service organization, I was explaining my research when he quipped, “Of course Evangelicals

are good citizens. What else would we be?” This is a good question. What else would Evangelicals be than good Egyptian citizens?

In his work on Palestinian Christians, Loren Lybarger (2007) suggests that the pietistic orientation of her young Christian interlocutors represent a “disenchantment” with the promises and perils of the nation, which animate the political lives of less pious Christians. He suggests that the universalizing qualities of religious piety make religious subjects detach from the rooted, grounded notions of territoriality built into nationalism such that one becomes a territorially free-floating subject of “the worldwide Orthodox communion” (802). In turn the concerns, travails, and logistics of the nation become the irrelevant background of a life lived in a globalized immaterial space, and within the physical confines of Christian-marked spaces. This sense that piety is personalistic, internalized, and apolitical is a well-trod scholarly path, even as critics have shown the political work that anti-political discourses do in arranging the terrain of political possibilities (Ferguson 1994).

As the struggles of Pastor Ramez and Brother Medhat illuminate, however, the nation continues to be a powerful imagined category of community, in Anderson’s sense, and of moods and motivations, in Geertz’s (1973) sense. The piety of Egyptian Evangelicals in the twenty-first century is deeply infused with an orientation to Egypt—its past, its present, and its future. The corollary “spiritual territory” that Lybarger shows that pietistic Palestinian Christians retreat to becomes in the Egyptian Evangelical

case the landscape of the nation of Egypt. The present locations, struggles, fears, and dangers are understood to be part and parcel of a territorialized imagined community which exists in scriptures read in churches, ruins visited in deserts, and crowds filling Cairo's streets.

The Fleeing Prophet

One moment in the construction of this imagined community in precarious times was underway in July 2015. We were sitting in the Sunday morning service in the spacious old sanctuary of Zeinab, sweating in the hot breeze circulated by the mounted ceiling fans. Right outside the large ornate wooden doors of the sanctuary were piles of rebar, sand, and bricks piled and scattered throughout the large open courtyard between the long, narrowed, two-story building that faces the street and the tall imposing sanctuary on the backside of the property. Pastor Ramez began the sermon reflecting on the Sinai military offensive that had overwhelmed Egyptian media coverage and filled the country's Coptic community with fear and anxiety, stoked by the national campaign against the Muslim Brotherhood.

In his always crisp jacket and tie, Pastor Ramez reflected between *tarānīm* on the number of people who have sought his counsel and encouragement in the face of this specter of violence and an uncertain future. The call, Pastor Ramez boomed from the stage, is to remember that their enemies are only humans, but Christians have help from heaven. The church must remember the story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego

from the Old Testament prophet, Daniel. The human body must burn in the fire, but divine intervention can prevent these only too-human vulnerabilities from taking their inevitable course. The furnace need not burn the church if it will only express its trust in the God that rewards their faithfulness. The *tarānīm* bookended this short reflection, usually given by the worship leader but here offered by Pastor Ramez himself.

The sermon was about another Old Testament prophet, Jonah, the “fleeing prophet” (*al-mursil al-hārib*), a parable in Pastor Ramez’s telling of the unique gifts given to each of God’s people to serve the word: “We are all prophets and God has special uses for each one of us” (*kullina mursilīn w-Allāh ‘anduh istikhdāmāt khāṣa li-kull wāḥid minnena*). It can be difficult to follow through on God’s call for us, but it is truly inspiring when we see such bravery. For instance, the President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, donning his military dress and visiting the Sinai in the midst of such danger in order to inspire the troops.” He left the sermon with a pondering: “Imagine what would have happened if the soldiers in Sinai had done what Jonah did at first. Cairo would be now have become the capital of *Dā’esh*.”

Egypt is preserved through these national heroes, Pastor Ramez insists, not for the prestige or because of their superiority to Iraq, Syria, or Libya, who had fallen in one way or another to the forces of religious corruption. He will preserve Egypt in order to bless the region. The sermon ends with the Lord’s prayer, and the ten gathered worshipers mingle, greet, and reflect on this divine, nationalist, biblical calling. Pastor

Ramez's opening reflection actively sutures God's people in the Old Testament to God's people in Egypt - the Israelites and Coptic Christians, respectively. Importantly, and strikingly, as his sermon winds to its end, the people of Egypt—Muslim and Christian—become the stand-ins for God's people. The prophet is mobilized as a model for the Egyptian conscript. This slippage is subtle, intertextual, and powerful for the way that it refracts Egyptian Evangelical notions of Egypt as a divinely ordained community, with an ambivalent but historically determined path to "be a blessing to all nations." The language is a reference to that Ur-text of the monotheistic faiths: God's call to Abraham in which the old prophet is told that he is to move away from his family home and travel to a new land that will be given to his descendants from generation to generation—the promised land. As debates rage in the Middle East and beyond about the "Holy Land" as the site of Israeli occupation and Palestinian displacement, Egyptian Christians have taken up this "promise" as one spoken uniquely to the Egyptian church in the contemporary moment.

This sermon is unremarkable in the course of a year of sermons at the Evangelical Church of Zeinab, but its themes do illuminate some of the key discursive framings, anxieties, and hopes for Evangelical Egyptians. It was given in the context of a high-profile Sinai military offensive, with the highest death toll the Egyptian army had sustained since its campaign on the peninsula three decades before. Fear had gripped much of Egypt, hysteria much of its state-run media, and Christians were particularly

vulnerable to these tales of valiant soldiers, evil Islamist militants, and military figureheads. As we will see, Pastor Ramez employs a strategy not unlike that employed by many Evangelical pastors in encouraging his congregation to stand firm in the face of violence, to trust God, to trust the government and show loyalty to the nation. He even obliquely taps into the powerful framework of martyrdom as an essential catalyst for the Egyptian church in his reading of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. What is striking here, is the juxtaposition of this “stand and watch God fight for you” —a ubiquitous biblical injunction among Egyptian Christians in times of anti-Christian violence, exemplified by this biblical narrative of the three prophets being saved from the ravages of the flames through divine intervention—and the prophet and anti-hero Jonah, who does not stand and watch God fight for him. He flees. *Imagine what would have happened if the soldiers in Sinai had done what Jonah did at first. Cairo would by now have become the capital of Dā`esh.* This imaginative exercise is immediately referring to the soldiers and the president, but in the larger theme of the sermon it is Egypt—not the church, but the nation—that will bless the whole world. There are any number of metaphors for the activity of God’s chosen people and their activities that enact that blessing.

The Nation in an Evangelical Register

What does the nation look like in an evangelical register? How is it conjured and named? What is its history? How is it imagined? One incredibly important part site for its elaboration in the Evangelical community is in the shared discursive space of

worship services, like the one overseen by Pastor Ramez above. Encompassing sermons, music, and prayer, Evangelical worship services are complicated discursive events— involving speech directed to the people gathered, to God, to the church globally, to the individual believer. The following ethnographic section is made up of three moments of polysemic elaborations of the nation in an evangelical register of official sermon discourse.

A Friday Morning Sermon in Tahrir Square.

Pastor Sameh Maurice was preaching a sermon at KDEC about holy callings (*al-da'wa al-muqaddasa*), an expansive notion not limited to jobs, service, or relationships. In fact, Pastor Sameh warns the congregation, even service in the church can get in the way of one's divine calling. In elaborating the notion, Pastor Sameh recounts a dear friend who had a near-death experience. A pain in his finger spread over the course of days through his body, destroying it before the doctors could know what ailed him. He was so far gone that he lost consciousness in this life and found himself in the presence of God, who asked him if he was ready, if he had done what God had required of him. The man's answer was no, and God mercifully healed and restored him to this world to complete his task.

This story illustrated the dramatic stakes of discerning this calling, as well as the personal, specific quality that it takes. The friend was not asked if he had fulfilled the universal ethical demands of the Christian faith—loving one's neighbor, being generous

to the poor, being honest—but rather if he had fulfilled the unique calling that God had put on his life. Then, however, Pastor Sameh makes an interesting pivot.

The church of Egypt has a clear and distinguished calling not just to Egypt, and not just to the region but to the whole world. Many people from around the world say to the Egyptian church that they have a unique global calling to influence the whole world...It is not just Christians that will know the Lord, it is all Egyptians. In the end, Egypt will bless the entire world. Your land will be a blessing to the whole world, to all people.

The events of the last days are heavy on Egyptians - not just on Christians. Of course, Christians are part of the Egyptians but everyone in Egypt is struggling, especially on account of the gas crisis. We want to feel that all this sadness means something. Let's pray for the police, the army, and then the economy last.

As Pastor Sameh ends his sermon and the worship music team takes the stage, he drives home this staggeringly strange point—that it is not only the individual who must discern and follow her divine calling, but the nation. Even more strikingly, it is not the Christians of the nation who must do so. It is the people of Egypt:

Don't say the people in Egypt, say the people of Egypt (*ma-t'ulsh sha 'b fi maṣr; 'ul sha 'b maṣr*). Protect the whole country, every border. Even Egyptians living abroad. Protect them! Protect our country.

The worship music begins as Pastor Sameh is finishing, and as the melody of “Blessed Be Egypt, My People” fills the sanctuary the congregants rise to their feet.

A Sunday Evening Service in Zeinab.

At the end of May 2017 Pastor Ramez is offering his opening prayer before his Sunday evening service. His booming voice quiets as he implores the Lord: “Our hearts are wounded these days. Give us courage. (*Qulūbna garūḥa fil-'ayām dūl. Shagg 'ana*)”

Wounded because of the trauma just over a month before of twin bombings of churches in Tanta and Alexandria, which had killed 45 and injured over 100:

It's not been 45 days since the Tanta, Alexandria bombings. Don't refuse to show your feelings to God. He knows that we are weak. I had a whole series of sermons ready. But God put the book of James on my heart.

Pastor Ramez takes great pride in his sermons, which he meticulously prepares and delivers, sometimes to a small group of assembled congregants. This evening, however, he suggests that just as God interrupted his preparations with another sermon text, so he would not be preaching in his usual way. He would simply ask with his brothers and sisters how one was meant to "rejoice in the midst of suffering" as James demanded. How does one not simply survive but rejoice in the midst of pain, suffering, persecution? Here, Pastor Ramez offers a Protestant re-reading of the common Orthodox refrain to "stand still and see God's deliverance."

Patience isn't just to wait for something to happen but to understand how to transform hard situations and pain into situations that show God's glory. There are 15 million converts in the Middle East, coming to Jesus. God is doing a great thing in the Middle East. How? Through the Egyptian church.

The implication is clear, though Pastor Ramez does not make the link directly. There is a relationship between the promises to and duties of the Egyptian church that necessitates their standing strong in the face of persecution, insecurity, and violence. But this is not merely accidental.

A Saturday afternoon in the Delta.

Thousands of youth were sweltering in the desert heat under the domed amphitheater listening to a celebrated preacher. Among them were the small group of women in their thirties, with whom I was sitting. These young women hailed from small villages around Upper Egypt and had in common a childhood in a large well-known orphanage operated by the largest of the charismatic/Pentecostal denomination. We rode the bus into the sprawling retreat center together and attended conferences together, though individuals sometimes splintered off to see other friends. I sat by Zeinab, a four-and-a-half-foot 37-year-old woman of deep piety and fiery tongue. The preacher, Maher Samuel, is a favorite of Zeinab's due to his beautiful use of formal Arabic in his messages.

Maher Samuel's sermon strikes a decidedly cosmopolitan tone, beginning with a discussion of the imprint of Jesus on Western history (*'athār Yasū 'ala tārīkh gharbī*). So great was the influence that "everything of value left in Europe is due to the influence of the ethics of Jesus." In this way the sermon feels like a usual evangelical sermon geared toward a student-aged demographic. He weaves through a discussion of the Latin idea of *veritas* and the Greek terms *logos* and *ekklesia*, reminding the audience of C.S. Lewis's famous dictum that Jesus is either liar, lunatic, or lord. However, it is toward the end of his sermon that he returns to this Christian foundation of western civilization: "Yes, the

period of Christianity has set in the West, but it is dawning in the East. It is returning to its place" (*huwwa rāgi 'ila makānuh*).

Later that evening, Pastor Sameh Maurice intones from the neon-lit stage as he paces in front of the crowds of Christian youth, telling story after story of ordinary Christians in Egypt praying for and receiving the power to effect physical and emotional miracles in the lives of their friends, colleagues, and neighbors:

What is happening in our land, what is happening in our country, what is happening among the people whom we serve, is not normal. It is not normal... This is something that is manifesting in a way that is not normal. This is the most amazing miracle that a person can ask for, or even imagine. They are manifestations of divine miracles... And what he is doing in our country, has not been done anywhere else in the world. That's what they said a long time ago, "What I am doing—or what I am going to do—has never happened before." And that is what we are seeing.

Imagining Communities: That Which Sticks and that Which Flows

In Benedict Anderson's seminal *Imagined Communities* (1983), the historian of nationalism finds the conditions for the powerful political valence of the nation as dependent on the decreasingly persuasive claims of universalist religions—like Christianity—such that nationalism can be viewed as a form of ersatz religion. Ersatz, presumably, in providing powerful 'moods and motivations' in the Geertzian sense but in lacking robust, veritable roots of community, vision, and history. Anderson's enduringly powerful take on the rise of nationalism owes a great deal to his insistence on taking an anthropological approach to its origins and shape, "treating it as if it belonged with 'kinship' and 'religion', rather than with 'liberalism' and 'fascism'" (5).

This emphasis on the shared structure of feelings which is produced through certain infrastructural changes, primarily for Anderson the printing press, has allowed generations of scholars of nationalism to think of the way that commonality, boundaries, and others are felt and constituted underneath normative political machinery and ideologies.

Anthropologist Jon Bialecki (2017) takes up the central question that Anderson's approach to nationalism has produced for scholars of religion: whether what we call religion and nationalism are, in fact, the same operation, structurally equivalent in (for Bialecki) centering on a materially absent power that must be instantiated in material rituals, objects, and spatializing strategies. He articulates the core difference as follows:

Nationalism differs from widely dispersed and institutionally robust forms of 'world' religion in that these wide-ranging forms are often marked by 'universals,' such as sacred texts, privileged languages like Latin and Pali, and overarching plans of something like 'salvation.' This wide scope, which often exceeds the nation, is indifferent to or corrosive of the kind of localization of the horizons of belonging that nationalism is dependent upon. (46)

An effect of this approach has been an evolutionary vision of the transition from "primitive" religion to a "modern" nationalism in as much as these terms stand for various ways of describing the ties that bind and the duties those ties entail. If, for Anderson, religion represented a passé form of institutional and social binding, scholars have for decades been adjusting this assumption of secularization to meet the undeniable flourishing of all kinds of religious networks, among the fastest growing of which is a family of Pentecostal/charismatic expressions of evangelical Christianity

(Jenkins 2002) of which my interlocutors have important theological, practical, and institutional identifications. This proliferation of new religious forms suited to a neoliberal globalized order of capital (see Robbins 2009; Meyers 2010; Comaroff & Comaroff 2010; Marshall 2009) give rise to new spatializing practices which exceed the borders of the nation-state and give rise to the moniker of “global Christianity.” As many scholars have noted, however, this formulation begs the question of what the global in such discussions is made of? Smooth continuous flows of good, people, ideas? Or, as the stories of these Egyptian Evangelicals suggest, a variegated, uneven, and contested terrain of flowing and stalling?

One way of thinking about the spatializing dimensions of religious practices is through “portability” — that is, the ability of specific semiotic forms, in Webb Keane’s sense, to move across borders, cultural formations, and linguistic contexts. Many scholars of “global” Christianity have this portability in mind, such that Christianities’ varied sacred assemblages show up in Nigeria as they do in Sweden, Hillsong choruses fill movie theater churches in California as they do KDEC’s youth worship services (Coleman 2000; Csordas 2009; Howell 2003). These portable practices, media, and sensibilities form a sort of un-aculturated semiotic form (Keane 2007).

One such portable form is the shape of what Kevin O’Neill calls “international theologies of Christian citizenship” (2010, 187), which look a great deal like these invocations of God’s unique plans for Egypt. As O’Neill wryly notes in his ethnographic

exploration of Neo-Pentecostalism in Guatemala, the scripts, images, and language of modern Neo-Pentecostalism travel seemingly effortlessly through transnational material and discursive networks. In fact, “the enduring scholarly paradox of global Christianity seems to be the religion’s ability to maintain a level of narrative continuity in places as diverse as India and the United States, but also to become a part of a community’s particular culture” (189; also Meyer & Geschiere 1999). So much is granted in the vast literature on Pentecostal/charismatic Christianity.

In Benedict Anderson’s (1990) famous framing, the relationship that mattered most effectively to the national was an imagined horizontal relationship. That is, it is a shared imagined community which existed by virtue of shared values, history, likeness, etc. But for Egyptian Evangelical preacher in these moments, which are quite indicative of larger evangelical framings of the nation, it is not the relationships that pertain between nationals that matter—these connections and sympathies—are not particularly remarked upon. The nation of Egypt is principally produced through a divine ordaining of land and people.

But what we do not really understand is the prestige zones and what it means that the Holy Land is so central to articulations of global evangelicalism. What does it matter that the nation to which one has a deep personal connection of blood, water, and history is the same nation written into the biblical text?

I asked this question of a young professor of the Old Testament at ETSC. Professor Medhat is a soft-spoken, gentle man with an abiding love of the Old Testament—he teaches the Old Testament survey at the Evangelical Seminary and is working toward an MTS in Norway. His thesis explores the relationship between Egyptians and the Old Testament, one that he sees as deeply fraught with complicated identification and repulsion. While the Christian churches of the Levant have largely and silently excised the public reading of the Old Testament from their public worship, Egyptian churches use the Old Testament regularly. In the summer of 2015, I regularly attended four churches in which the Old Testament was the primary sermon in well over half of the services.

Medhat insists that the Egyptian church loves the Old Testament but tells me that this love is tempered by a dual problem, which he explores in his classes. There is the “negative image” (*ṣūra salbiyya*) of Egypt in the Old Testament, as well as the gift of “promised land” to the Israelites. This serves to undermine Egyptians’ confidence in themselves, as well as to read dangerously as supporting contemporary Zionism. I attended several of Professor Medhat’s classes in which students were incredibly engaged, offering lots of questions, correctives, challenges, and confusions. These questions were those you might expect in an Old Testament survey class—about historical backgrounds, translations, and authorship. None were about these two deep

tensions that Professor Medhat saw as cutting through the Egyptian reading of the Old Testament.

This likely surprised me more than Professor Medhat, who insisted that the difficulties that Egyptians have with the Old Testament are “unconscious,” by which I understood him to mean something more akin to subconscious, that is, under the surface, too close to speak and perhaps too shameful to acknowledge. Whatever the reason, in my experience Egyptian Evangelicals express little ambivalence about the text in their everyday religiosity and find in it a great deal of comfort, instruction, and significance. In fact, even as Professor Medhat’s course was an academic requirement for the MDiv and MA students at the seminary, he opened his class with this call: “This is not a class for learning information. It is for shaping your life, your family, your house, your church. Let the Old Testament answer your questions; let yourselves have a conversation with it.”

This highly interactional, anthropomorphizing approach to sacred text is unsurprising among evangelical Christians (Bialecki 2009), as is the motivation to utilize the lessons found in the sacred text as a moral authority for guiding one’s life. As we will see, it is not just through the application of the moral lessons of the text that the Egyptian church is ‘shaped’ but through an imagined landscape that sutures the words on the pages of the pew Bible to the roads, monuments, institutions, state, and society of the contemporary world that Egyptians make their lives in.

Conclusion: Nations and Global Religions

Kevin O'Neill (2010) argues that the internationalism of Neo-Pentecostals in Guatemala shows the misnomer that “global” Christianity creates in the minds of scholars. Instead of a “sleek and slippery orb on which people and faith flow in a frictionless way,” Guatemalan Neo-Pentecostals describe and inhabit an imagination of the world that O'Neill likens to a quilted mosaic:

Through an international Christian imagination, Neo-Pentecostals have come to imagine the world as nations sewn together. As the world's basic building blocks, these nations are patched together, their borders serving as important but nevertheless awkward efforts at stitching...Every nation has its place, and every person has his or her nation. (176)

The nation as an irreducible agent, subject, and object of divine intention is clearly at play in these stories of Evangelical Egypt. This is precisely the picture that Pastor Sameh articulates in his sermon—that Egypt itself has a role. Two important differences, however, arise from the picture that O'Neill paints. First, the quilt metaphor does not provide analytic leverage for thinking about the way that power organizes these imagined cartographies. The maps that control Evangelical notions of the “kingdom of God” are not flat, though they are all-encompassing. As Pastor Ramez clarifies, Egypt has a unique calling to “the whole world” (*al- 'ālam kulluh*). This is an exceptionalism with a universalizing telos. All the world—every tribe, tongue, and nation—is the object of God's powerful intention, but not all nations are equally

“blessed,” as the nationalist praise ballad that ended KDEC’s service proclaims:

“Blessed, blessed, blessed be my people, Egypt” (*mubāarak, mubāarak, mubāarak sha ‘bī Maṣr*).

This exceptionalism, as these stories illustrate, is drawn from a variety of evangelical tools for territorializing religious meaning, from Professor Medhat’s reading and teaching of the Old Testament and his students struggling with the meaning that the biblical antagonist, Egypt, might hold for contemporary citizens of The Arab Republic of Egypt, to Pastors Ramez’s, Sameh’s, and Samuel’s explorations of the unique calling on Egypt to transform the world by overseeing a massive wave of conversion or witnessing miracles that have “not been done anywhere else in the world.”

O’Neill’s analysis does not really give us a sense of why nations should be important to the process of producing Christian citizenship of the type that Guatemalans have developed. Why do they appear so prominently in Evangelical imaginations of how God works? Why does a universalizing religion like Christianity, and especially a truly portable version (Coleman 2000) such as the charismatic El Shaddai church, not eschew dependence on such specific identity markers as “Guatemalan” or “Egyptian”? One obvious answer is, of course, that the nation-state is taken for granted. If “nation-ness,” as Anderson argues, “is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time” (1983, 3), then one would expect Christian pieties to have incorporated it into their practices and sensibilities, as they have the logics of capitalist accumulation, modern rationalities, and human rights, for instance.

As these stories from Evangelical Egypt make clear, however, Evangelicals do not appear to be taking “Egypt” for granted as a kind of transparent overlay on their practices. They are foregrounding the demands of “Egypt” on their theologies, their sense- and history-making. God makes demands, for instance, on Egypt that predate the lives of these interlocutors. As Pastor Ramez once challenged his congregation after returning from an international conference on evangelism in Seoul, Korea, “The Egyptian church has been around for 2000 years. What do we have to show for it?” There is, however, a stubborn slipperiness to the interchange between “Egypt” and the Egyptian church—where the Egyptian military defending against *Dā'esh* in the Sinai becomes read intertextually as the new stand-in for the people of God.

We come some way toward understanding this exceptionalism if we return to that room where O'Neill opens his chapter on internationalism in Neo-Pentecostal Christianity in which a young worshipper lies prostrate and prayerful in front of three maps, the first of which is of the world, the second of Guatemala. “The third is a map of Israel, marking Neo-Pentecostalism’s steadfast commitment to the Holy Land—to the idea that the restoration of Israel is proof of Jesus Christ’s second coming” (2010, 171). This bilateral relationship between Guatemala and Israel is not simply orchestrated in prayer rooms but also at the United Nations as the deciding vote for establishing Israel’s nation-state status was cast by Guatemala (8). Here one might see a glimpse of the historical and textual terrain of nation-ness. Guatemala has a role to play in a global

mission to turn the world to God, but it is not the decisive, historically dense, and non-negotiable role that Israel will play in the apocalyptic eschatology of Neo-Pentecostal Christianity.

Unlike Guatemalans (O'Neill 2010) or Koreans (Wells 1990), who can and have read themselves as the new Israel—a favored nation, the new people of God—Egyptians find themselves, as Professor Medhat astutely noted, in an ambivalent position vis-à-vis these popular evangelical reading strategies. They are both the “people of God” (*sha b Allāh*) and in some important, enduring way the Egypt of the Exodus story.

Borders—of nation, class, and gender—organize these stories of Evangelical imagined landscapes of belonging. Those borders, however, as in O'Neill's metaphor, are not impervious walls but rather methods of making meaning. They provide Evangelical Egyptians with a sense of that “divine” calling which constitutes a controlling narrative for assuaging and situating fear, hope, and love. While recognizing the fundamental importance of modern technologies for producing the nation (Fahmy 2011; Anderson 1983), this chapter has argued for the salience of particular histories of Evangelical textual practices and discourses, as well as particular technologies and networks of global Evangelicalism (international conferences, “global missions,” and scholarship) through which the nation is robustly inserted into not just secular space and time but into divine teleologies of conversion, apocalypticism, and revivalism.

3. Evangelical Mediascapes

A Picture of Jesus

In the winter of 2017, I was sitting in an office in downtown al-Minya, Egypt, speaking with representatives of a small church-based social service organization. I noted a framed picture of blue-eyed Jesus sitting propped on the desk, leaning against the wall. I inquired about its origin and was told that the framed picture was the gift of a Muslim man whose family had been cared for through this small organization of Evangelical volunteers. He showed up, proudly, to an event with the framed image in hand exhibiting his respect for the Evangelicals who had proven themselves pious but not over-bearing, interested in the welfare of the people and not just their conversion. Due to the difficulty of researching in Upper Egypt, as the Egyptian security apparatus took an even tighter hold on freedom of expression, research, and political activity, I was not able to return to this organization. I did, however, ask to take a picture of this gift displayed so prominently on the desk: light brown hair in loose curls piled on the shoulders, blue eyes, a short beard, head cocked slightly to his right shoulder, in a white flowing tunic (I can't see past his chest; I must be filling in the tunic) with gold embroidery around his collar.

These images—the one of Jesus and the one that I captured on my phone of one of the volunteers smiling at the desk beside him—became a central locus around which questions of media, mediation, piety, and purity have coalesced in this research. The gift

was prominently displayed, though the volunteers laughed a bit when I drew attention to it. The man who had given it had not done so in jest, and the gesture was taken very seriously as a sign of having gained the community's trust through their service work. Still, though, the image occupied an uneasy space. In that uneasiness there was much that was unspoken. Unspoken was the relative dearth of such images within Evangelical communities when compared with Coptic Orthodox ones; not remarked upon was the prohibition on pious images, icons of God or his prophets within Islam; the strikingly white complexion of Jesus in this picture, apparent in the blurry image that I took of the volunteer, laughing in a striped t-shirt beside the somber Jesus, eyes lifted to the corner of the frame.

This chapter focuses on several forms of cultural production but especially on the work of visual objects of piety and their imbrication in the wider economy of piety that Evangelicals shape and are shaped by. The dangers and promises of the visual in Christian history have animated a long, well-documented conversation rooted in anxieties about iconoclasm that animated early Protestant battles with Roman Catholicism. The mind as a "forge of idols," in Calvin's now infamous articulation, has been taken as a kind of Protestant cultural value—subterranean, pervasive, and powerful. As scholars have noted, however, this anxiety about images is rooted in a felt sense of their inherent power. Protestants have used images to great evocative effect in ways deeply intertwined with their religious lives and have struggled mightily to

articulate the appropriate use of images. The justifications, debates, and structures through which Protestants have wrestled with images have impacted not just modern notions of sensuality, agency, and epistemology but have also shaped the way that images have been produced and reproduced in an age of mass media and mediation. The way that modernity itself has been carved through by what Keane (2007) has called “the ideology of purity” of Protestantism has made the image, the icon, and the fetish key concepts for understanding not just the modern, but also its opposite.

This chapter follows these anxieties through the historical clashes between Protestant missionaries and their unruly would-be converts in Coptic Orthodox and Muslim Egypt, moving from the iconoclastic scandal of 1869 through contemporary debates about the proper place of images and music, to think through the logics of seduction and conversion. Conversion has been largely explored as a cognitive or social experience; one need not downplay the social, structural, and intellectual motivations for conversion to pick up on the language and concerns of sensual seduction that frame much anxiety about conversion in Egypt, as well as much of the way that Evangelicals themselves frame the power of images and music. These forms of cultural production index a great many things, including class position and conspicuous consumption, which is one reason for the framing of “consuming” images and music. The literature on the commodification culture and art in the Middle East is, of course, central to understanding the way that these objects circulate, gain meaning, and do work in the

lives of people. In this chapter, however, I take seriously the notion that people are not the sole agents in consuming, gazing at, worshipping, or evaluating images, but that they are also acted upon by those images. That is, memes, *tarānīm*, devotional images, and prophetic art are central to Evangelical work in Egypt in part because of the power that they exercise in the lives of devotees.

Media, Mediation, and Religion

The struggle over images—their power, their relationship to piety and morality, and their centrality to human imaginative processes—has been a well-documented part of the self-constitution of Protestantism, especially as it struggled to define itself against the representational economy (Keane 2003) of the medieval Catholic Church. The reverberations of this history have placed vision as central to both the world of Protestant piety, as well as its effects on modern sense-making and suasion. This “visual construction of the social field” (Mitchell 2005) shapes not just ideas about piety and visuality but also, as broad interdisciplinary research has shown, foundational notions of personhood, materiality, and agency. Within the anthropology of Christianity, Webb Keane’s notion of a representational economy, held together by a semiotic ideology, relates objects, subjects, signs, personhood, and materiality together through underlying assumptions about where these relationships inhere and how to appropriately approach them.

There are two poles of this image-anxiety. On the one hand, images are “dead” objects within the Protestant purity ideology. As Webb Keane (2007) notes, within the writings of Dutch Reformed missionaries in Indonesia, the fetish, as a material object presumed to be imbued with divine agency, was in need of un-masking by missionaries. The material world was not full of the power that the Sumba thought it was. The danger here was not being bewitched by malign spirits, but rather misunderstanding the mechanistic reality of God’s creation. Orderliness, predictability, and coherence were obscured by a misapprehension of the true locus of agency. As Sahlins (1996) and Asad (1993) have argued, Western, supposedly secular, forms of institutional knowledge still draw from these subterranean currents of Protestant theology, the prescriptive claims of which have snuck into scholarly works that prioritize something else.

Art and the Interior Subject

Judy strikes me as reserved when I first meet her, hands covered in acrylic paint, surrounded by jittery children. I have come to the small organization where she spends several days a week along with a couple of other full-time employees, organizing crafts, games, and lessons for nearly 50 neighborhood children. As the organization is in a relatively affluent neighborhood, the children who participate in these classes are the sons and daughters of doormen in the surrounding buildings. A ubiquitous presence in Cairo buildings, the *bawāb* and his family are responsible for basic security, screening guests, and assorted errands and cleaning tasks. Judy found this position through her

friend that she met through the Evangelical church's young adult ministry, *Rabṭa*, a particularly charismatic wing of the Evangelical church.

Judy does not come from such a background. Her mother, who comes from an evangelical family, owns and operates a pharmacy, while her father worked as a mechanic in the outlying Cairene suburb of Helwan. Her father's family is Orthodox, though not particularly devout. Her early home life was filled with immense financial pressure, mental illness, and physical abuse directed especially at herself and her sister. The only glimmer of spirituality in her life came from her maternal uncle who was a life-long member of KDEC. When her family moved into the crowded, bustling neighborhood of Zeitoun in the center of Cairo in her early teens, Judy began attending KDEC with her uncle, inspired by the piety that was newly emerging in her sister's life. Her sister, however, was not attending KDEC regularly but was instead attended services in Shubra and Zeitoun led by the famous and charismatic Abuna Daniel, a former monk who exorcises demons, speaks about the movement of the Holy Spirit, and preaches about the spiritual life as a lively, mysterious part of the Christian church.

Her first experience with the "the forge of images" was in very early childhood when she was beset by frightening dreams that left her incapacitated; sometimes she would cry for days on end. She attributes the intensity of these nightmares to the violence of her father and the emotional negligence of her mother, as well as distinct memories of her father watching horror movies (*'aflām mur'iba*) while she was in the

room. These nightmarish visions followed her all her childhood, in her sleeping and waking hours. Through her connection with KDEC, however, Judy became increasingly involved in the charismatic youth movement of the late 2010s. Through youth meetings, prayer and worship vigils, and friendships she cultivated with other Evangelical youth and leaders, Judy was offered a language for understanding these visions, their moral lessons, and their implication in a wider visual field.

Judy produces what she calls “prophetic art.” She learned this style of artistic expression through a small workshop organized by a group of artists from KDEC and a group of American artists who visited Cairo in 2010 to popularize this hybrid style of aesthetic piety. There are three types of prophetic art, Judy told me, or perhaps more accurately, three sources of prophetic art. One draws its inspiration from biblical verses and reflects on the imagery, thematics, and discourses of the scripture. Another is an attempt to capture the visions that come to the believing artist through divine inspiration. The last grows out of practices of intercessory prayer in which the artist visually explores the promises of God, the realities of sins and burdens, and the larger cosmic context of another believer’s struggles and hardships.

We sat together on evening in the open courtyard of a church in a very upscale district of Heliopolis. Unlike most of my interviews, Judy and I met neither in her neighborhood nor in mine. She was a prolific artist and had spent the day before (and would spend the day after) sending me pieces of art that she had created. Full of color,

textures, and words, these pieces of prophetic art were sometimes commissioned by friends, sometimes inspired by conferences or sermons, and most often simply responses to the images that visited Judy in her sleep, in her prayers, in moments of Holy Spirit inspiration. They tacked between these three levels of prophetic art, and though she had laboriously detailed a tripartite distinction in a previous meeting, when faced with these images, their taxonomy was rarely remarked upon.

What struck me in her images were the centrality of the body, affective resonances, and the reliability of the body and sensation to mediate divine truths. The body was surface, of course, but it was connected in an integral way to an interior subject that could be instructed through the reading of these sensations. Her works were often inspired by periods of depression, sickness, or loss. I was particularly struck by this story that she told about a piece of art that she did not bring along to our meeting:

One time there was a picture of a heart and I was praying for breast cancer. The healing comes from the heart and from cleaning the blood, because the heart is the organ that pumps the blood everywhere, to the whole body. It was inside of me (*kāna gowayya*) that God touches the heart. It's not our blood anymore, it's his blood and he can reach to any part of the body. And actually I had a dream for healing breast cancer and also because my friend's mom had breast cancer. And I was praying for them to the time of this dream. This dream was for them. In the dream I was in a room and there was a breast in a bra [laughs] sitting on the table in front of a window looking over a big field, really, really big. After this, I saw in the field farmers, every farmer with his son standing and looking at the field. After this it was like something like an earthquake happened. I began to feel that the farmers were disturbed, they kept looking around them, 'what is it, what is it?' I saw the breast on the table; I found a blue part, a bruise. I felt that there was a sickness there and it was spreading. After this I found everyone was running for cover, there was confusion everywhere. I returned and saw that the breast was totally blue everywhere. After that I saw a big wave—like with Noah, a

flood. It was coming all over the field. I looked at the breast and it was like dead fish, all ruined. I decided to take it and throw it [out the window]. I went then to close the window because the water was coming, and I saw some sea animals—like an octopus, or something, which are scary sort of. I didn't understand. But I sat for a while in prayer. I saw that the body is like an army. When he created us, it was like an army, like a system. And the immune system was like the farmers with his son in his place, taking care of the place under his control. When the bad news was announced and there was bad news the immune system did not know how to fight. When it is not taking its place the fight came. The enemy came and this is at the same time, I was understanding, how the sickness happened. It was as if, when I surrender to the idea that the sickness is going to win then my immune system loses its power; when I know that, 'no, it is my field,' it's like giving orders for my body to fight and everything in its place. Cancer is about self out of control. So my fight began to be to put everything under control of the movement of God in me.

When Judy tells me of this dream she seems almost out of breath, like she is trying to keep up herself with the flow of visual images coming at her from elsewhere. This dream that she narrated with such precision had happened years before this telling, but the details could have been engraved in her mind, so ready were they to be recalled at her command. The density of the details and the manner of her retelling left questions that lingered long after that interview. Why, if the metaphor appropriate to the bodily regime of sickness, providence, and prayer is that of the orderly military, does the dream employ *fellāhīn*, who in urbane conversation are more likely to stand for sloth and backwardness than order and regimentation? What is it about the flood, which Judy connects, at least for clarification, to the purifying waters of God's wrath, that helps us to understand the event of the dream?

The unflinching physicality of this scene struck me and Judy, given her nervous laughter. She told the story largely in Arabic, though used the English word “breast” to indicate the key object of the dream—a way of speaking of indecent things in a more guarded way. Judy toggles here between strikingly material objects and logics—according to which, for instance, the blood is not hers but becomes God’s blood, or the way that the physical breast is in the dream not symbolized as an object or personified as a woman but is simply itself—and highly metaphorical language, as when the *fellāhīn* are made to stand for an army, which stands in turn for an immune system.

In unpacking the dream for me, Judy reflects on the lesson that this vision taught her.

It’s about feeling the importance of every part in your body, and how every part is controlled under the power of life. If I understand well that I am under the power of life, then I can move the life under every part that has disturbance. It’s like “the peace of God will guard your hearts and souls.” If I understand the power of peace coming from above and if I am having many fears, it’s about controlling your body to be under higher power. It’s not about trusting God, because some of it depends on me, how I lead my body.

Even I can believe this, even for praying for healing. There is something happening in my leg. The youth came and began to pray for my leg, and I was *feeling* the power. I believe that there is something you can feel in your spirit. It’s about how you are entering this part totally. You are in a room, really, there is a room *free throne*. How you push your body being in that place. So, that is why many crazy stories and testimonies about healing.

The resonances between Judy’s dream about the power of God to bring under his control the mysterious, material forces of illness and bodies and the rhetorical shape of her telling are striking. The dream begins with images that are not obvious—an

earthquake, a breast becoming blue, a field with farmers, sea creatures—"there was confusion everywhere." It is through this chaotic jumble of images that Judy comes to see the "message" that is built out of them. The pastiche quality of this visual assemblage is perhaps only interpretable for someone like Judy, whose knowledge of the biblical text is encyclopedic and whose familiarity with charismatic healing's hybrid vocabulary of immune systems, cancer cells, the peace of God, and the throne room allows her to bridge the uncompromising physical brutality and reality of illness with the supernatural touch of God.

Zeinab's Dreams

Zeinab grew up in a large Protestant orphanage in Upper Egypt. Her father, who passed away during my fieldwork, was a general handyman in a village near Asyut. Married to Zeinab's mother, he was a gifted *ḥarafi* (worker), skilled at painting and erecting buildings, though rumor had it that he was abusive to her mother, an abuse that, if her maternal relatives were to be believed, resulted in her mother "dying of sadness" before Zeinab had turned two. The youngest of three daughters, Zeinab does not remember her mother. Not understanding the gravity of his situation, Zeinab's father attempted to raise the girls himself, bringing them with him to work sites where they would get into various mischief, including one scandalous moment in which Zeinab's older sister, Hanan was found praying with the Muslims. "Her hands folded like them!" Zeinab laughed and folded her arms under and across her chest. Finally

persuaded to provide his daughters with stability, he placed them in a large Protestant orphanage in the urban center of Asyut, a 45-minute ride from their village. It was here that Zeinab spent all her remembered childhood—the small baby with the big dark eyes. The orphanage was established by a famed single female missionary, Lillian Trasher, and operates under the auspices of the *Rasūliyya* denomination, the largest charismatic denominational body in Egypt.

The *malga'* (“refuge” in Arabic, used more commonly to refer to the Lillian Trasher Orphanage than *dār*, which is used much more of the orphanages that dotted Cairo and the Delta), as Zeinab and her close-knit community of women friends tell me, is a veritable village unto itself. Many of the food products that the children consume are produced inside the high-walled compound; it boasts since the mid-2000s a swimming pool, several sports courts and fields, gardens, classrooms, dormitories, a chapel, libraries, and well-manicured gardens. Here Zeinab grew up with a particularly acute spiritual sense. Her father and mother had had her and her sisters baptized by both Catholic and Orthodox *abunas*—her father being very close to one particular Catholic priest in the area. Though not particularly religious, Zeinab’s father loved religious men, developing relationships with priests and pastors across the denominational communities represented in the small village.

Zeinab's third baptism happened at 10 years old when she, along with all her fifth-grade classmates, was baptized at a special Easter service at the *malga'*. Zeinab recalls that special day and the spiritual fervor she cultivated at such a young age:

I remember this day. I was standing by the window and praying. I loved Jesus when I was little. I wish right now that I was that close to him. I remember in the churches I would sit and before fifth grade when I got baptized, I would sit and tears were just coming when we were singing and we heard the ceremony.

Zeinab was one of the first Evangelical Egyptians I met in Cairo, and her devotion and passion for prayer, worship, church, and charity was constant through the years. She was a stalwart companion of mine to church services, revival meetings, and prayer groups. Zeinab is always trying to listen for God's voice, through signs both small and large. Perhaps her most recognized skill in this regard is her close attention to dreams as instruments of divine revelation of both the mundane and the supernatural. She was often frightened by night visions, as when a financial scandal came to light at the *malga'* and she saw confusing images of perpetrators haunting her door and trying to chase her down as she ran and prayed. Sometimes, however, these images were more mundane—a young foreign man in a blue track suit, who she knew would become her husband some day, a vision of a friend in distress that portended an illness or relational problem. Zeinab's sister told me that when Zeinab called, one should always be prepared to have a word from God relayed through Zeinab's dream life.

Zeinab and Judy are both devout participants in the world of charismatic Evangelicalism in contemporary Cairo, and while their biographies, ages, class

positions, and life circumstances are very different, they both exhibit a particular form of imag(in)ing that is central to the emergence of charismatic styles of worship and interpretation. Although they are deeply pious women, their ties to formal religious establishments are relatively tenuous, and they float in and out of church and para-church institutions as they feel the “calling” (*da’wa*) of God. What is most striking about their religious practices, however, is the stunning visuality of their experiences of the divine. Scholars of the Pentecostal/charismatic movement have been attuned to the bricolage quality of Pentecostal/charismatic practices (Corten & Marshall-Fratani 2001). Although this ambivalence is often read at the level of flexible theology and discourses, Zeinab’s and Judy’s religious imaging provides another way of materializing the difference that Pentecostal/charismatic trends make to the practice of everyday Christianity in contemporary Egypt. These visual(izing) practices recall W.J.T. Mitchell’s (2005) reminders that the term “image” is polysemous and also that one of images’ recalcitrant qualities is that they have often have the force of “taking on lives of their own.” The agentic quality of images, especially of the religious variety, has been amply considered in studies of material religious culture (Morgan 1998, 1999, 2005, 2015; Meyer & Moors 2006; Meyer 2009, 2010).

These images—in both their immaterial and material forms—are experienced by Judy and Zeinab as agents which meet and challenge them with terrifying, enlightening, and confusing intentions and meanings. It is not, I think, surprising that the images of

Judy's dreamworld are so unflinchingly physical, or that they are immediately apprehended as incomprehensible. For Judy and Zeinab, their incomprehensibility functions as the guarantee of their coming from without, that is, their divine or spiritual source. However, it is precisely their unruly qualities that have led the leaders of the Evangelical Church of Egypt to attempt to assert their monopoly on the interpretation of the signs of the time or on speaking for God. As Akram Khater explored in his beautiful *Embracing the Divine: Passion and Politics in the Christian Middle East* (2011), these forms of intense, sensual visual practices of divine dreams and visions are potent sites for challenges to centralized church authority in part due to their lingering on the body as an authoritative medium for discerning the divine. As Khater notes, the story of Hindiyya al-Ujaimi reflects the contestations over what the definitions of modernity and religion in the Arabic-speaking communities of the Levant. Like Judy and Zeinab, Hindiyya's bodily intimacy with Jesus through vivid, terrifying, and immersive visions provided images that take on not a life of their own but the life of the crucified Christ. These unruly images resonate with an earlier contestation over what modernity and conversion should mean for the believer's relationship with the "forge of idols."

Historical Interlude: Iconoclasm, Protestantism, Purity

William Pietz (1985) traces the historical emergence of the fetish in Western literature on the west African coast in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as a concept "whose function was to translate and transvalue objects between radically

different social systems" (6). In the larger field of religious material culture studies, the "purity" narratives of Protestant Christianity give way to investigations of "clashes of incommensurable differences" (13) that shape the way that materiality and agency are embedded in social worlds (Keane 2007). The fetish, in this reading, provides a terrain for articulating the battles over what it is to be modern, what it is to be free.

At a meeting of Egyptian Evangelical converts on March 12, 1869, during a period of relative growth for the native Protestant church, as well as a time of intense inter-denominational tension,

a few members of the Protestant church and a number of Enlightened Copts met in the house of Mr. Hanna Buktor, and, as the custom was, they were reading the Bible and came upon the story of Gideon's throwing down the altar of Baal and cutting down the grove that was by it. Someone brought up the subject of pictures, and how to get them out of the Coptic church, and the conversation ended in an agreement to go that night to the church and destroy them. They prayed together three times before going to the seat of action. They thought that nothing but good would result from this act. Mr. Hanna Buktor tore off the pictures as the others brought them out, and they made a fire and consumed the shreds, and threw the frame work into a little room. (Watson 1904, 268–9).

Buktor and his accomplices presented themselves to the governor after being urged by John Hogg, the American missionary stationed in Asyut, to confess. The moral ambiguity in this passage is clear, situating this act that Watson himself calls "an injudicious act of a few" who suffered "just reproach" (268) within Protestant practices of devout listening including the reading of the biblical text and corporate prayer. The affair is noted with disapproval in the missionary literature (Alexander 1930; Elder 1958; Wissa 2000), though as historian Heather Sharkey notes more mutedly as the tensions

between the new Evangelical community and the Coptic Orthodox establishment grew (2007, 40). Even in its earliest reconstruction in Watson's (1904) history, the Copts, "naturally furious as well as jubilant" that the Protestants should be brought into disrepute, are set beside the "chief Muslims, who at heart approved of the breaking of the pictures" and "used every effort to effect a conciliation" (269). Perhaps most strikingly, in Watson's retelling of this crisis, punishment for the "iconoclasts" was averted through mysterious intervention from the viceroy in Cairo, reluctantly and resignedly approved by the Coptic church. Although this "crisis" was narrated as a threat to the blossoming of the mission and the ranks of Evangelical converts, Watson highlights the counter-intuitive effect of this clash of incommensurable differences: a re-engagement of Muslims in Asyut with missionary literature and gatherings:

The open doors widened, and doors which before were locked and barred were opened. The open doors widened, and doors which were locked and barred were opened. Many copies of the Scripture were sold to Muslims, when they learned through the actions of the Protestants that they condemned picture worship, as they had always through before that Christians were idolators. (271)

Not noted in Watson's account were the larger contestations underway in the Coptic Orthodox church in the 1850s and 1860s around the topics of icons, images, and idols under the modern reformer Pope Cyril IV. During his tenure, Cyril IV oversaw key institutional reforms of the Coptic Orthodox church including the launch of the Coptic Patriarchal College, an early Arabic-language printing press, and the rebuilding of the Patriarchal Cathedral in Ezbekiyya, Cairo (Meinardus 2002, 70). This, at the height of

missionary and Coptic Orthodox tensions, illustrates the centrality of images, piety, and sectarian relationships (Sharkey 2007, 40).

This expression of iconoclastic sensibility in the hinterlands of a small and struggling Protestant mission outpost in the midst of the 19th century global mission to Christianize the world is both unsurprising and not particularly influential. It does, however, provide a window into the larger contestations over materiality, piety, and modernity that are easily obscured.

How are images let back in? We have seen the immaterial practices through which Pentecostal/charismatic young people are reached out to by forces behind the image. However, as Birgit Meyer (2008) notes, a key anthropological commitment to understanding religious aesthetics is to attend to the “concrete forms” that instantiate ostensibly invisible agents (86), in keeping with the tradition of scholarship that plumbs the depths of Protestant Christian visual practice against the grain of theological invocations of the dangers of the “forge of idols” (Keane 2007; Chidester 2000; Morgan 1998). To do this, I turn to the following questions: Through what technologies and practices are images implicated in the religious aesthetic of Evangelical Egyptians? What are the material forms that they take? What is the larger sensorial complex through which they come to affect the social worlds in which Evangelicals are implicated?

Music and Images: A Night at Zeinab

A Sunday evening in October 2016. Amir, a middle-aged deacon with a receding hairline and faded gray striped shirt, is tasked with choosing the songs for the meeting, leading the congregation in singing, and providing short reflections between *tarānīm*. Amir asks the 45 assembled worshippers in a soft voice, “I want to ask you, and to ask myself: Do you know Jesus? Personally (*bi-ma ‘rifa shakhṣiyya*)?” This question introduces the song “Jesus, the Richest Friend,” an Arabic hymn set to the music of and loosely translating the popular contemporary hymn “What a Friend We Have in Jesus.” The words flash on two television screens to the left and the right of the stage, superimposed on a series of colorful images. With each verse, and with each repetition of the refrain, a different image emerges. The logics of the images are sometimes mimetic: in a verse about God’s arm upholding the universe, a black background with two outstretched white hands reaching, palm upwards, to the center of the screen, cradling the planet earth; in a chorus about God’s power to free us from sin, a white background, an open set of handcuffs strewn in the foreground. Sometimes the images are generic: Jesus (the iconic Brian Deacon) in a variety of scenes and backgrounds looking off into the middle distance, never at the congregation; a waterfall, rainbow, or idyllic pasture scene.

On this evening the images flash from a set of opened leg bracelets, a close-up of a hand being pierced with nails, a dove caught in the moment of flight from an upturned hand, the silhouette of the heads of four boys sitting against a red sun

background, Jesus sitting in an expansive flower field. Lastly, a rare photographic image of Egyptian worshippers at a large church, hands lifted up, eyes closed.

Another Sunday evening, the songs are all easily identified as “oriental,” including ornamentation of the voice, with recognizable lilt to the melodies. An African American gospel choir, a little boy reaching through a door to Jesus’s hand, while standing in a cloudy (or perhaps snowy) desert expanse. Jesus (Brian Deacon again) feeding the thousands on a hillside, followed by the same calming the seas. Another evening the images that catch my eye and end up in my fieldnotes are:

- An image of a paved desert road with a picture of a crucified Christ on top of it slightly off-kilter.
- One of an older, white-haired man playing the violin by a rushing, white foaming river.
- One of a solid black background with two hands together with palms upward and outward with a sunset inside.

These worship scenes begin every service at Zeinab church where a lay person, minister, or (rarely) elder leads this hour-long introduction to the service. Hadir, Pastor Ramez’s wife, is a gifted singer and is often the de facto lead singer from her seat in the front right pew. Even a weak singer, however, will sing with abandon. This is the common form of corporate singing at most Evangelical churches in Cairo, and certainly in more rural churches. At the larger, flagship congregations like KDEC, however, the music is largely handled by professional or semi-professional musicians. There are auditions, set worship teams, practices, and evaluations. These musical performances are broadcast across the world and give spiritual sustenance to Arabic-speaking

believers who find themselves in its far-flung corners. Regardless of the form that these songs take, it is impossible to escape the sense that the Egyptian Evangelical church is deeply invested in performative, corporate music. The Egyptian Evangelical church, then, is, among other things, a church that spends an enormous amount of time in highly mediated song.

The youth of the church, most of whom come from Orthodox backgrounds and attend Orthodox congregations with their families, usually construct these PowerPoints. They are filled with images—colorful, busy, palimpsestic. Images, however, are not always present in this form. The Sunday morning services at Zeinab are sparsely attended by elders and deacons; sometimes a neighborhood woman dressed in a black abaya and head-covering will be present, or a resident of the retirement home on the church property. These services also involve considerable singing, though all of the songs are chosen from the Presbyterian Hymnal, a brown tome filled with sheet music. Pastor Ramez leads these hymns for the congregation and often asks for input from those attending to choose favorites. In most Protestant churches that I attended, however, *tarānīm* lyrics projected on screens were accompanied by single-colored slides or an abstract pattern, perhaps with flickering lights reminiscent of lightning bugs or an outline that gave the impression of yellowed parchment. These practices were especially prominent at the large flagship churches in upper-middle class establishments, and

purposefully so. As one of my youth interlocutors told me, these images were thought of as too Orthodox.

Like the images in Judy's dream, these images are pastiche and connect to visual metaphors and repertoires that are not linked in ways that are immediately obvious.

What is the relationship between the virtuoso violinist and the white-water rapids behind him? Why is a postcard of Jesus on the cross overlaid on a long road moving into the distance of a desert landscape?

This uneven disbursement of these songs and images suggests a logic of "passional attributes" and "sensory epistemologies" (Hirschkind & Larkin 2008, 4) that underlie divisions of class, age, and denomination. The navigation of such tensions, and the very transformations of religious practice alongside technological changes, illuminates some of the core questions of this dissertation about Evangelical belonging in Egypt. The way that images and music shape capacities for moral action, as well as evoke and seduce unruly human passions, has been a concern not just for scholars of social life but also for those who wish to shape it, religious leaders not least of all. At the core of much of the American mission project in Egypt was a contestation over the power to adjudicate the disbursement of images and music and to organize religious (and non-religious) lives in such a way that these would conform to particular capacities for the good. These contestations illuminate the stakes (political and intellectual) in rightly evaluating, approaching, and interacting with material media. In the following

sections, I aim to explore the intersections of music and images to untangle some of the key fields of contestation for forming the Evangelical Egyptian subject.

At the Evangelical Church of Zeinab, the first hour of the service is spent singing and reflecting on songs called *tarānīm* (or *tarātīl*), to be distinguished from all other songs not made for worship (*‘aghānī*). This terminology mimics entirely the secular/sacred divide and is quintessentially Protestant in historical formation. The hymnal, corporate melodic singing, and coordinated instrumental accompaniment are all technologies tied to the Protestant style of worship, which is, in many ways, centered around corporate singing. However, as noted above, there is a great deal of variety to how this singing operates in practice, and a great deal of contestation over its appropriate organization.

This chapter attempts to “read” these technologies of mediation through an emphasis on the way that the aural and the visual become now intertwined, now distanced. In important ways, the scene that opens this chapter is a historical process in which images re-emerge in Protestant worship spaces after a long battle of attrition with Protestant gate-keepers intent upon enforcing the Protestant “ideology of purity” against the threatening “forge of idols.” The key fractures along the lines of age, denomination, and class become leverage points through which the representational economy of Egyptian Evangelicalism changes with the advent of new media, the emergence of the Islamic Revival, and the tensions of post-revolutionary Egypt. This

section explores these contestations through interviews with two young musicians and worship leaders in Cairo.

“If you want to know what the people like...”

Magdy is a frail-framed young man in his mid-20s. He is impeccably dressed, with his hair cut short. He envelopes Merna in a warm embrace and asks how she has been. Merna looks over at me and tells me that Magdy is like a brother to her, having grown up in the same building from their youth and graduating from the same language school. He’s a musician, composer, and pianist, and he works in a variety of jobs within Evangelical organizations, as well as outside of them. His father’s family were all Orthodox, except his father who attended a Baptist church; his mother’s family were mostly from the Brethren churches—an ultra-conservative brand of Protestantism in Egypt. His childhood was spent within the Baptist church community, but when he was 10 or 11 he began attending Coptic Mass with his grandfather. When asked what he remembered about the Orthodox Church, he said that he remembered being asked not to return when he refused to confess to the priest: “They wanted me to confess to the priest there, and I told them that he’s a sinner just like me. So obviously that was a great insult, but I didn’t know it. It was very innocent because I was just a child and he was a man like me, but to them it was a big deal, so they told me not to come again.” This was fine by Magdy, as he had already found the children’s instruction frightening. He remembers gory videos teaching about the lives of the martyrs: “[There was] a lot of

violence and blood and they fry them in oil and stuff like that, for the kids just to know about these great people. But I think that it was not proper at that age.”

Though Magdy was raised primarily in the Baptist church that his father attended, he did spend time in the Brethren churches with his maternal relatives. “I loved it because they had a lot of activities. They were very good at the Bible stories. I loved how they told the stories not in a fictional way but like, you know, it was very, very biblical and serious. I liked this but didn’t know why. It was very interesting to hear the stories like real stories.” This was contrasted to the way that “stories” were told at the Baptist church: “In the Baptist church they were trying to make the stories very nice and, you know, interesting for the children, but as I grew up I discovered that many of the facts that I had learned when I was a kid were not true. They added it to make the story sound nice and exciting.” The Brethren churches, however, did not have musical accompaniment when Magdy attended as a child. The congregation sang a cappella songs from the Psalter. His musical training largely came from his father, the pianist at his own Baptist congregation, who had aimed for his son to learn the piano from a young age. Magdy had rebelled against his father’s wishes, resenting his heavy-handed attempts to make a young musician of his son. It was not until the same age that he was introduced to, and exiled from, the Coptic Orthodox Church that his father gave him a cassette tape with some Chopin on it, and Magdy realized the beauty of music. It was

the complicated, many-part works of Chopin that introduced Magdy to Western classical music, which he was studying at the graduate level when I met him.

Magdy's formal training is in Western classical music, though he had recently embarked on a journey of trying to integrate Arabic music—with its monotonic, modal qualities—with the polytonic scales of Western music. He performs with one of many traveling worship bands, which play in churches, at revivals and conferences, and at concerts organized around the major holidays. His band's music is very different from both that of el-Karouz, the ministry of musician Maher Fayez, whose *'ūd*-playing, lyrics, and melodic formations are distinctively oriental, as well as from the traditional hymns of the Presbyterian hymnal. Their music is influenced by jazz, latin, and funk styles, and certainly exists within the larger world of Arabic-language worship music informed by the kind of contemporary Christian music popularized by the long-standing Better Life band, as well as more contemporary powerhouses within Christian music such as the International House of Prayer and Hillsong. For Magdy, as well as for many young people that I spoke with, an aesthetic appreciation for this Western-influenced music was a marker of class status as well as a generational influence.

Magdy's story illustrates well the complicated story of denomination and image—not simply as a material objects but also as practices of imagination. Likely Magdy was referencing a new form of media proliferating within the Coptic Orthodox Church, which Febe Armanios and Andrew Amstutz (2013) have called “hagiopics”

following Pamela Grace's usage of the term to describe films that "represent the life, or part of the life, of a recognized religious hero" (2009, 1). Magdy, having been raised by a devout Protestant father, indicates his own already formed sense of the use of images. These videos were inappropriately theatrical, bloody, and reveled in the evocation of crass emotions like fear, disgust, and (as one might glean from Armanios and Amstutz) lust. The particular morbid detail of frying in oil highlights the bawdy, unsophisticated visual register of the Coptic other. While this Coptic Orthodox other embraces an age-inappropriate grasp of visual pedagogy, the two Evangelical denominations that Magdy grew up in also represent two different styles of image production. If the Coptic Orthodox transgressed visual propriety, the Baptist church participated in a similar embellishment of orally transmitted stories. Here the story is not told in a "very nice," "fictional," or "exciting" way. This language mimics, in an aural register, the visual excesses of the Orthodox. There is a lack of realism in the telling, realism here standing in for correspondence with the biblical text.

Though his training is in classical music, and not Oriental music, Magdy has embarked on the task of incorporating Oriental and Western styles together and pointed me to examples of successful fusion. For Magdy, however, these styles were largely aesthetic. He preferred the music that his band (*farīq*) played, but his first love is choral music. Among his many part-time jobs, Magdy participates in the Cairo Festival Choir, the most prominent choral group in the country. Magdy estimates that some 80 percent

of the choir is Christian, though of that group only 20 percent are Evangelical. Even if his Evangelical upbringing would have ill-prepared him for the soundscape of the Orthodox Mass, Magdy began to attend mass again when he was older. Surprised, I ask him why:

I think sometimes that every Christian has to go there like once a month at least even if they aren't Orthodox because you see a unique side of God that unfortunately you don't see in the Protestant church, and I think it's important to be reminded [giggles] every now and then. Because when you attend the masses there you feel like in the presence of a king and it's not as easy as you are used to. You have to stand and be quiet.

Magdy, here, inverts the classic movement of Protestantism. If the Evangelical aesthetic, as Judy relates in her dreams and Amir invokes in his devotional reflection at Zeinab is about intimacy—at both the cellular and the relational levels—then the Orthodox sensorium produces a sense of distance, of hierarchy and awe. Even as he reads the images of his childhood encounters with Coptic Orthodoxy as too earthy and too gory, the aural atmosphere of the Mass represents to Magdy a significantly different and salubrious departure from the Evangelical style. It is not “easy,” Magdy suggests, in that it does not perform to the lowest common denominator but rather to a distanced sensorium that has to be trained to hear in the right way the words and movements of the Mass.

Another young musician, Simon, told me how to find that which Magdy may have called “easy”: “If you want to know what the people really like in music, listen to what they play at their weddings,” Simon told me while talking about music in the

church. Having been a part of a large, influential music team (*farīq*) connected to the larger-than-life persona of Maher Fayez, Simon knew something of the competing musical styles that characterize the Evangelical Egyptian church. At churches like Zeinab, music in the morning services comes out of the denomination's official hymnal called *Hymns of the Evangelical Church in Egypt* (*tarānīm al-kanīsa al-ingīliyya bi-Miṣr*). The most recent printing by the Synod of the Nile is a brown hardcover with an image of a trumpet horn blurred out to look perhaps like it is enmeshed in sonic waves. Above the title and central cover image is a logo of the Synod of the Nile, a silhouette of a church building with a tall steeple housing inside a Bible (distinguished by small print across its cover reading *al-kitāb al-muqaddas*) and a series of papers of books laying on their side holding the Bible standing upright). On the cover of the hymnal, however, a clipart image of a violin rests as if against the right side of the building. The inside of the hymnal includes sheet music, which reads from left to right as Western music is annotated. One set of verses sits under the music and the other verses are printed in blocks below the musical notations.

When I asked what kind of music Simon listened to when he was growing up, he laughed. "My father was a pastor; he didn't listen to anything at all!" before adding that he enjoyed *nizām al-mazāmīr*, the Psalter put to music. These collections followed traditions of evangelical musical practice outside of Egypt and predated the Egyptian Evangelical church. The notations are Western, the scales and instrumentation (like the

violin and the trumpet, which I never heard in an Evangelical worship service) and even many of the tunes were adapted from English-language hymns. This musical experience was so very Protestant and generational that the youth of Zeinab who grew up in the Orthodox Church and attended the Evangelical youth program were not familiar with either these melodies or the practice of reading from these hymnals. This was the tradition of music that Simon himself grew up in as the son of an Evangelical minister: “No beat, no drum, no guitar. Just the piano, and [it] should be a very old man or woman playing on the piano.” Expressed tongue and cheek, this description fit pretty aptly the musical situation at Zeinab on Sunday mornings, when Dr. Makram would read the music from the hymnal, as the elderly congregation belted with gusto these old hymns.

It was not, however, this style of music that Simon had in mind when he was contrasting what Egyptians play at weddings and what they play in churches. He had in mind a new style of music that had been growing in popularity and importance, especially among youth, in recent years: the praise and worship choruses either directly produced by or in imitation of the style of two titans of American worship music, Hillsong and the International House of Prayer. If the *Hymns of the Evangelical Church in Egypt* represents an old guard of musical piety, *Create Your Revival in Us* is a comprehensive collection of old and new praise choruses (as well as some hymns from the hymnal). Now in its second printing, this compilation includes musical notation in a

much-simplified style with transliterated Arabic not underneath and between the musical staves but rather printed separately below the printed melody. Much of this music is directly translated from English (like the very popular *Kam 'Inta 'Azīm ya Allāh* (“How great you are, oh God,” a translation of “How Great is our God” by Chris Tomlin, or “Holy, Holy, Holy” by Kari Jobe). These newer forms of Christian music are part of a longer genealogy that, for many Evangelicals, began with the praise team Better Life, a cultural giant within Evangelical Egypt and the Protestant Middle East.

Unlike the Better Life team, and the musical styles of KDEC and other large Presbyterian churches, Simon had worked for half a decade for a musical ministry associated with Maher Fayeze, a worship leader, writer, and musician associated with the non-denominational revivalist gathering *al-Gama 'iyya*. Though the tradition of nomadic revival meetings predates Maher Fayeze's involvement, through his celebrity the movement has become largely associated with his style of preaching, music, and theology. *Al-Gama 'iyya* is decidedly and staunchly non-denominational in its affiliations and is marked by the musical style that has grown out of Maher Fayeze's own poetic, oriental musical style. His *tarānīm* are originally composed in Arabic, and his musical instrument of choice is not the acoustic guitar of KDEC or the keyboard of Dr. Makram. It is the *'ūd*, the quintessential oriental musical instrument. His *tarānīm* (as well as his performances of them) are well represented online for free streaming, as are his various appearances on Christian talk shows, including his own show “Revisions” on Sat7.

It is these styles of praise and worship choruses that have proliferated among Evangelical and Orthodox communities, just as Western melodies and instrumentation dominate Arabic pop music in Egypt and the wider region. It constitutes for many Evangelicals a distinctive style of piety, sensibility, and aesthetic taste with a relatively wide range.

Young adults like Simon and Magdy, raised in the wider Evangelical community and shaped by its norms of the sensible, the reasonable, and the pious, represent the cosmopolitan vanguard of Evangelical cultural production. Magdy's band produces slickly edited videos of beautifully framed and lighted young musicians soulfully singing both original songs and popular Arabic hymns, as well as translated Evangelical hymns. This aesthetic is sharply dissonant with the bricolage of images that make up the visual repertoire of the PowerPoint presentations on a Sunday night at Zeinab, as well as the memes that emerge in WhatsApp groups, on Facebook pages, and on living room walls. If we return, for instance, to the small home of "the girls" whose strivings to leave Egypt were the subject of Chapter 2, the walls of the small stuffy apartment are largely unadorned except for stray Bible verses and photographs of the girls in Asyut. Baba Yasū's face looks out from behind the clock hands, his piercing blue eyes unrelenting in their gaze. When I sit by Salma in the KDEC church pew, I can see his face also peering out from the lock-screen on her old, cracked iPhone. These images of Jesus, like the one sitting on the desk in al-Minya with which this chapter opened, connect her to the Baba

Yasū‘ with whom Salma and others of “the girls” have an intimate relationship. Once in the home of one of them, Iman, I was sitting on the floor playing with her daughter, and she attempted to cajole the two-year-old with a claim that Baba Yasū‘ would be pleased with her compliance with her mother’s demand. I was surprised by this phrasing and Iman looked sheepishly at me, admitting that, of course, it was not “correct” to call Jesus a father (*baba*), but it was the way that her daughter could feel close to him.

Like Magdy’s adult appreciation for the somber and distanced tone of the Orthodox Mass, many older Evangelicals that I met were wary of this encroachment of a particular kind of Orthodox aesthetic sensibility that spoke of too much image and too much familiarity. Dr. Makram, professor of biology at a governorate university outside of Cairo, bemoaned the disrespectful familiarity with which contemporary worship songs utilized colloquial Arabic, eschewing the formality (and, to Dr. Makram’s mind, the respect) which attended to the use of formal Arabic in the old Presbyterian hymnal that he had spent time in his part-time job with a local mission organization compiling and editing. Here, it was the formal, intricate modern standard Arabic in the brown hymnal. Dr. Makram was a faithful attendee of all the Evangelical Church in Zeinab’s corporate worship services as well as a servant in their burgeoning youth program. He was also the designated “very old man playing on the piano” whom Simon joked was a mainstay of Protestant worship. His love of the old Evangelical hymnal went beyond his Sunday morning accompaniment of Pastor Ramez’s booming voice; he was also an

instrumental part of the team that revamped the old Presbyterian hymnal, and provided me with a copy of it and the musical recordings for church musicians to follow as they learned the songs. A meticulous man, Dr. Makram desired the music of the church to be not too familiar and preferred the style of corporate music in which the lone instrumentation was a piano, with the robust singing of the congregation following in their hymnals.

Conversion, Piety, and Connection

“I want to ask you, and to ask myself: Do you know Jesus? Personally? (*bi-ma ‘rifa shakhṣiyya*)?”

This question of Amir, the deacon that October evening in Zeinab, is a core question of much of Evangelical Egyptian piety. It is asked in a variety of ways and mediums, and I would argue that it would not be a stretch to say that a great deal of the work that Evangelicals do—to themselves and to others—seeks in one way or another to answer this question. The work of images, music, and memes that constitute the Evangelical sensorium is to train the Evangelical believer to feel God’s presence in their lives.

As Susan Friend Harding (2000) notes in her work on Fundamentalist Christianity in the United States, the born-again experience is one of being drawn into a way of speaking and being spoken to, scripts that frame experiences in ways that affect a person viscerally. When I sat with young Evangelicals to explore their stories, a common arc emerged of presence and absence. After a religious childhood (or early experience), a

young believer would find herself in a period of feeling far away (*ba ʿīd*) from God and note an inability to feel his presence with them (*ḥāsis bi-ʿinnuh mish mawgūd ma ʿiyya*). As the ethnography in this chapter has shown, the shaping of a sensorium primed for familiarity and distance, for respect and right feeling toward God, is centrally organized by the cultural production of images and music in contemporary Evangelical Egypt.

One such telling happened at an AENM weekly staff meeting, where we were paired up during a small group discussion and asked to draw a timeline of our lives and to mark specific “events” that had changed our relationship with God. Noura shared with me a difficult time in her late teenage years when she “could not feel God’s presence.” In this time she doubted a great many things—among them God’s love for her, the veracity of the Bible, and Jesus’s presence in the world. As her life continued to fall apart around her, she decided to take a short Bible study course, which focused on Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount. Through spending weeks working through these four chapters in the Gospel of Matthew with other attendees, she suddenly felt the truth of God’s word, the heart of Jesus for her. This moment was narrated as a momentous revelation—not in the sense that she learned new information but in the sense that she found Jesus. In this particular telling, there are no images and no music, but there is a mediated presence, not unlike what images of Baba Yasūʿ and the Orthodox Mass provide for other Evangelicals.

What has been called the “media turn” in the study of religion reflects this resonance between the conceptual categories of “religion” and “media,” principally the sense that these social practices or assemblages “cannot be understood without the middle grounds that substantiate them” (Engelke 2010, 371). Mass media, in this turn, has been construed not as a transparent, unilateral means of disseminating information (or representing cultural forms), but rather as practices by which the construction of communal feeling or values are themselves constructed (Morgan ed. 2008). What is clear from these negotiations of the terms of sensible and sensual engagement with images and sound waves are the terms for belonging, from the charismatic wave of Judy and Zeinab, the Coptic Orthodox and rural sensibilities of “the girls” affections for Baba Yasū’, and the bricolage PowerPoints of the youth at the Evangelical church of Zeinab. The fundamentally contested nature of “semiotic ideologies” and their bearing on the shape of a believer’s imagined community are clear here, but as Amir reminds his fellows in impassioned, whispered tones in the spaces between *tarānīm*, these practices and technologies are not understood as principally about the production of community so much as they are practices for instantiating, for making sensible, the person of Jesus.

Conversion is a sine qua non of what scholars have called Evangelicalism since David Bebbington’s (1989) four-fold definition. It is often thought of as synonymous with the proselytizing programs of Evangelical traditions such as those which planted the Evangelical Egyptian church. As Harding (2000) notes, however, conversion is a key

thematic of Evangelical ways of thinking about the world, about history, and about the self, not simply a name for changing one's religious identification. This conversion, however, is not fundamentally about a shifting religious affiliation but of being "touched" by God. What I am calling conversion here is also not primarily a process of self-improvement. Indeed, in some ways it is not even centrally about the self; it is a sense of being moved from the outside. Importantly, this form of conversion is less about mental assent to propositional statements or persuasion on empirical or logic grounds and more about an embodied encounter. Interestingly, this type of conversion fits compellingly with scholarly critiques of analyses of Christianity that presume that belief is primarily cognitive and not also seductive, embodied, visceral, and affective.

The absence/presence dialectic within the anthropological study of religion in general and the anthropology of Christianity in particular has been a central thematic of the work. Transcendence in these readings demands an absence that must be mediated—mitigated by an intervening factor—to become realized. In churches across Egypt on Friday mornings and Sunday nights, at youth meetings, revivals, and prayer vigils, material objects—from Bibles to hymnals, the sonic waves of the keyboard and guitar to the images flashing across the PowerPoint, the feeling of a fellow worshipper's hand on your shoulder to the sight of the afternoon sun enlightening towering stained-glass windows—mediate these experiences of the divine, certainly, but also the experience of what Evangelicals call "the body of Christ" (*gasad al-masīḥ*). A controlling

biblical metaphor that evokes the central doctrine of the incarnation and provokes the absence/presence dialectic, “the body of Christ” most importantly here gives voice to the pastiche and physical religious aesthetic.

On the one hand, as Fenella Cannell has argued in her masterful introduction to *The Anthropology of Christianity* (2005), “the mediation of the power of God withdrawn from the world of mortal men [became] a key trope of the anthropology of Christianity. The same perception also drives most anthropological treatments of aesthetic practices in Christianity” (18). While earlier studies of media and Christianity worked to establish the congruency between the flourishing of religious communities, logics, and institutions with the mass mediating effect of neoliberal capitalism, the centrality of mediation to experiences of the absent, transcendent deity has led scholars to follow philosopher Hent de Vries’s (2006) assertion that in late modernity religion and media are perhaps interchangeable processes, mutually co-constituting and, if distinguishable, at least not separable.

Media studies has been, of course, concerned with the relationship between media and message, content and form. What Noura’s experience and her witness to it, however, cues us to is the sense that, for Evangelicals, media of piety are not principally conveyers of messages. As a devout Evangelical young person, Noura had read the Sermon on the Mount many times before. For Noura, this moment of mediation was a conversion event. The medium itself, the print on the page, is a stable, dead material, but

the moment of mediation is likened to that iconic New Testament event of conversion in which Saul on the Road to Tarsus is blinded, confronted, and changed. In the highly personalistic piety of Evangelical Egyptians like Noura and Judy, mediation is a way of touching, smelling, and tasting the divine as one would a body.

If the Protestant ideology of purity, in Webb Keane's sense, created a sense of worship as austere, disembodied, rationalistic, and textual, this chapter argues that to understand Protestantism in Egypt is to attend to it as a "saturated phenomenon" (de Vries 2008) in which materiality and sensibility are always trying to find their way back into the practices of pious Protestants. Fenella Cannell, in her introduction to the influential reader *The Anthropology of Christianity* (2005), sees this dynamic as endemic to Christianity.

The processes by which these presences—of the divine, but also of the "body of Christ"—are instantiated within Evangelical lives are certainly enabled by these mediating material objects in ways that are distinctively non-Islamic, with its iconoclastic posture toward pious images, and also in ways that are, for Evangelicals at least, uncomfortably close to the oversaturated sensorium of the Coptic Orthodox tradition. And it is within this dense and pervasively religious world of circulating images, sounds, and technologies that Evangelicals actively participate in the discursive tradition of Protestant Christianity.

What is important here is that these practices that mediate the body of Christ to Christians also mediate the larger world of Egypt—through repertoires of listening and looking that are too “Orthodox” (i.e., too visceral, too earthy, too gory) and those that are suspicious of images, both Western and Islamic. There is a contestation at play in these practices, that the pastiche of the Evangelical Church in Zeinab and Judy’s dream illustrate and constitute.

Conclusion

During the January 25 Revolution, KDEC became popularly known as “the church in the square” as it offered its spacious sanctuary for meetings of revolutionaries and distributed food, blankets, saline solution, and face masks to protestors. The unlikely participation of such a high-profile Christian establishment was the topic of my monograph *The Church in the Square* (2013), which probed the relationship between the charismatic, prophetic practices of KDEC and their revolutionary zeal in a moment of tangible uncertainty. One key practice, however, that caught the attention of global media was what was described by Reuters as a “Coptic Mass” but was in fact the leading of *tarānīm* and prayers by KDEC pastors. As Anthony Shenouda noted in his reflection on the politics of visibility of Christians in Egypt, the structure, style, and material markers of this religious ceremony embedded in the revolutionary square would have been clearly recognized as Evangelical by anyone familiar with the larger religious aesthetic that is explored in this chapter. Collared-shirts, jeans or pressed

slacks, acoustic guitars, and impassioned, extemporaneous prayers in colloquial Arabic were all hallmarks of this particular brand of Egyptian Evangelicalism, which has fashioned and been fashioned by these dialectics of mediating the body. It is no coincidence that this community was, in part, etched into the history of the square through practices of care (which were the subject of Chapter 1) and the practices of corporate song.

4. Evangelical Sensibilities: Visions, Dreams, and Imaginations

Divine Readings

A young charismatic woman in her mid-thirties, Hanan is one of “the girls” who were introduced in Chapter 2 and live in the Hadayek al-Maadi neighborhood in the Cairene suburbs. Hadayek al-Maadi is a 15-minute metro ride from Tahrir Square, though anywhere from a half-hour to a two-and-a-half-hour car ride down Corniche al- Nil, the main thoroughfare that connects the southern suburbs to Cairo’s downtown. Although just a five-minute microbus ride from the wealthy, cosmopolitan parts of the upper-middle-class Maadi neighborhood, Hadayek is a popular neighborhood, replete with four- to six-story apartment buildings with exposed brick facades and innumerable electronics stores, household goods shops, small grocers, and *fūl* and *tā’miyya* shops crowded along and encroaching onto the sidewalks. Hanan herself came to Cairo as a live-in nanny for an Evangelical doctor living in Heliopolis. For the last four years, however, she has been living in small apartments in this neighborhood, working intermittently for various expatriate families until she landed her dream job at an international school. Her paycheck allows her to live comfortably and even help out those in her network who need more support than their meager salaries as childcare workers in bustling Cairo can afford them.

Since coming to Cairo, Hanan has been a faithful attendee of KDEC, as well as occasionally other small charismatic fellowships and congregations around the city. KDEC's emphasis on small-group meetings to foster intimacy among congregants, as well as provide a context for corporate scripture study and prayer, led Hanan to a small group that would change her life. At first shy and reserved, Hanan tells me several times over the two years in Cairo about a ministry (*khidma*) that she participated in that would mark a turning point in her personal development, her sense of her place in the church, and her understanding of divine inspiration.

She and two members of her small group were visiting the homes of poor Christians in a very depressed informal settlement on the northern outgrowths of the city, when she found herself in the home of an older Orthodox mother. Experiencing terrible hardship and crushing poverty, this lady was receptive to the prayer and counsel of these attentive, devout Evangelical youth. Hanan, at first, felt no ability to speak to this woman (she couldn't even speak at her small group, surrounded by her friends). While sitting in that living room she was suddenly "given" a word from the Lord, a verse. She opened her Bible to the verse that came to her in that moment and read it aloud to the mother, who was astounded by the power of the words she had heard and exclaimed that it must be a part of the Protestant Bible that was not included in her own Orthodox one. Hanan said that she then reached to the top of a cabinet in the cramped living room, pulling down a perfectly pristine but dusty Bible. Hanan showed

the woman the verse in her own Bible, and its perfect correspondence to the one that Hanan had brought with her, both versions reflecting the Van Dyck translation used widely by the Orthodox and Protestant denominations. The woman was stunned, insisting that she understood the Protestants to be using a different, corrupted Bible.

Hanan was filled with a sense of purpose beyond herself and began expounding on the verse's significance for the mother and for all believers. She was surprised, the Orthodox mother was encouraged, and her colleagues were in awe. After they left the home, her colleagues ask where she had found such eloquence, confidence, and passion. "I told them that I did not know! It was a blessing from God," she replied. Hanan repeats this story often in telling me about her relationship with the Lord (*al- 'alāqa ma' rabbina*), as it represented to her and her friends a turning point in her life of faith. I ask her at each telling if she can remember the verses or the message that had spoken so powerfully to her, the Orthodox mother, and her friends, and she always waves off the question, as if it is an irrelevant detail. But she remembers the inspiration, its profound weight, God's presence, and their witness.

Hanan tells me this story several times during my two years of fieldwork. It is at once a story about her coming out of her shell in her small group, of being affirmed as a valuable member of KDEC's young missionally minded and burgeoning youth community, and a story of God's inspirational power in the lives of those who love and serve him. It was God that put her in the right place, at the right time, and with the right

listener. He brought to her mind the verse that was to spark the conversation. Given the power of this moment, and the reverberations that she would feel in her life, was it not striking, I asked her, that she could not remember the “word” itself? Her disinterest in this question led me to wonder whether this gap in memory of such an oversaturated moment was intentional. Was it evidence (or an argument) that it was not just a verse that she was particularly familiar with, one that she had read that morning in her private devotional time (*khilwa*)? Its absence in the story is what indicates the presence of something, or someone, not seen by the secular eye.

Introduction

In this chapter I chase the significance of and relationships between various utterances of the lacunae, the gaps, the insensible that nevertheless signals to the Evangelical believer the very presence of the divine other. Following on the exploration of Evangelical mediascapes of the last chapter, this chapter searches within Evangelical Egyptian discourse for the gaps that matter to constructing meaning out of chaos, truth out of conspiracy, and coherence out of confusion. Since Geertz’s (1973) dominant framing of religion as a system of cultural production meant to procure shared meanings, anthropologists of both the Middle East and the anthropology of religion have offered robust revisions of Geertz’s culturalist program, focusing on the historical and institutional force of religious reason (Asad 1983, 1993) and the political and bodily shaping that attends recent religious revivals, Christian and Muslim alike (Mahmood

2005; Hirschkind 2006; Agrama 2012). In the anthropology of Christianity, Geertz's influence has been notably more ambivalent. Engelke and Tomlinson's *The Limits of Meaning: Case Studies in the Anthropology of Christianity* (2006) provides a re-reading of Asad's influential critique of a Geertzian emphasis on cultural as a cipher for a (thoroughly) Christian notion of consciousness, which thereby cannot ask the questions that religion poses for social scientists. That is to say, as they read it, Asad's critique of Geertz—and in the longer view, of Evans-Pritchard (1976)—does not so much negate the need for understanding how particular “moods and motivations” are produced materially, institutionally, and politically but rather provides the very questions with which a properly materialist or genealogical approach to religious meaning is produced. Ultimately, they argue “that the concern with discipline or power is not incommensurable with the concern for religion as a ‘cultural system,’ in which meaning plays a central role” (2006, 5).

What is “meaning,” however, in Hanan's encounter with the divine inspiration in this opening scene? Engelke and Tomlinson focus on the pervasiveness of the threat of meaninglessness within ethnographies of Christianity. Here, however, Hanan is not attempting to understand something or pull significance into a mundane encounter. As she narrates it, she finds power in this mundane site, which is guaranteed—intellectually, socially, and narratively—by the gap that it leaves behind. It is this re-arrangement of the temporal relationship between religion and meaning that I aim to

explore in this chapter. In order to do this, I lean on Susan Friend Harding's work on Fundamentalism in the United States in the 1980s. In *The Book of Jerry Fallwell* (2000), she offers a careful analysis of the imbrications of certain peculiar methods of narrating—that is, making sense of events—that rely on the persistence of the “gap” rather than its bridging.

On at least one point, Talal Asad has provided the anthropology of religion in the Middle East with a clear mandate, that is, to explore “meanings” within and through a Foucauldian focus on “discipline and reasons of power” (1993). In this chapter, then, I aim to contextualize a particular form of Evangelical narrative that flourishes in Evangelical communities in this precarious, post-revolutionary moment in Egypt.

As anthropologist Amira Mittermaier (2011) intimates in her book on dreaming and dream-interpreting in early 21st-century Cairo, ethnographic representation of these types of visions, dreams, and sign-reading is always an elusive, fragile process, such that the material of this account is, in fact, more properly understood as ways of speaking about, narrating, and interpreting these divine answers. As with Mittermaier's dreams, these moments of sensing the divine, by and large, “cannot meaningfully be made the subject of an anthropological investigation,” not least because “they even elude the dreamers' own narration” (27). These moments are temporal ruptures, which I will argue are premised on this notion of the gap in knowing; the imprecision of their telling, then, is a structural element in their existence. It is the ignorance—of the scripture verse,

of the need for the money, of the trip itinerary—that constitutes the possibility of God’s utterance.

These interpretive strategies are part of a larger evangelical sensibility that allows evangelicals like Hanan to be sensible of God’s presence in their lives, to understand divine intentions, to parse the underlying reality unavailable to those without this level of perception. This sensibility also grounds a deep and consistent earnestness in the face of the scripture, music, and images of *Baba Yasū*¹. If this dissertation explores the difference that this particular form of Christianity makes in everyday life in Egypt (Cannell 2005), then this chapter is about the diffuse ways that that difference lends interpretive tools to those who inhabit it and are marked by it. This chapter, then, attempts to chart some of the ways that a particularly evangelical interpretive sensibility of understanding the natural world, hearing the divine voice, and affecting material and psychological change in social worlds allows Evangelical Egyptian to come to terms with the shifting political and social changes that have gripped the nation since 2011.

Ayoub and the New Song

I met Ayoub visiting a small library dedicated to the books and writings of a famous late Evangelical pastor, housed in a satellite city an hour outside of the Cairo metropolitan area. He, his young son, and his wife, pregnant with their second child, had been living in this industrial city, where he was the manager of the conference

center that hosted this small library. I had been invited to explore the collection of preserved handwritten sermons, assorted Evangelical magazines from the second half of the 20th century, and English and Arabic commentaries, devotionals, and history books that this pastor had amassed throughout his life. Neatly dressed in a colorful, carefully pressed button-down and acid washed jeans, I saw Ayoub throughout the day when he came to inquire about the air-conditioning temperature, the internet strength, the next cup of tea. An unsurprisingly generous and attentive host, Ayoub returned to the library an hour and a half after having taken a lunch request, sweaty and out of breath. He had had quite the ordeal trying to find “clean” and healthy food in the middle of the day in Ramadan in the small suburban neighborhood where the conference center was located.

With kind eyes and a young face, Ayoub was a gifted and dramatic storyteller and sat for a long while with me as I ate, telling me about his ministry, his life, and the faithfulness of God to him. His father was a Pentecostal (*Rasūliyya*) minister in the Upper Egyptian city of al-Minya—a faithful pastor who passed away in the late 1990s. Ayoub and his mother and brothers moved to Cairo upon his passing, where Ayoub began college and also went through a period of deep depression and despair. He did not elaborate on the reasons for this despair, but it was accompanied (perhaps caused) by a sense of separation from God, scripture, and the church. His mother and a close friend saw him through this dark passage—she, by “putting the Bible in [his] hand” and he, by sitting and praying and crying with him. As he was devouring the scripture in his room,

making the motion of a highlighter over lines in a book, he was beginning to see that God was real and close to him and his despair was lifting. One night at the end of this experience he found himself alone at a church with a keyboard, and he began extemporaneously playing a new praise song which came to him as if from elsewhere, expressing both the despair and depression and the chains that he had been living with, as well as the new hope and love and vision of God that he was receiving from scripture. Though this song, by his account, arose unbidden and unexpected, Ayoub had had his computer out and recorded the song. He promptly forgot that it existed. Much later some friends found this song, and he was surprised to hear it again and surprised by how powerful (*malyān bi-quwwatu-llāh*) it was to them. The song itself transcended his frail state at the time of the writing. This was the hand of God, at work in him and in spite of him, to bring glory to his work in Ayoub's life.

I met Ayoub near the end of my fieldwork and so was already thinking about this pattern of narrating divine intervention in Evangelical discourse. I immediately asked for clarification of how these friends could have gotten hold of the song without his knowledge. How could they have heard it without his unburying it from the laptop and playing it for them? Were they exploring his laptop? Did he play it for them? He clarified that the situation was more a matter of his not paying attention to the song being played from the laptop than of his being unaware of the circulation of the song. But it seemed a disjointed way to tell the story—that God had both inspired the song in

spite of Ayoub and circulated it in spite of him. The mysterious workings of God's inspiration and Ayoub's weakness were the hinge-points of the story, creating a narrative that demanded certain questions for me, but not for Ayoub. It was the very impossibility of a depressed, despairing man writing a song of great spiritual power, as well as the impossibility of his seeking affirmation or credit for its power, that makes space for God's work. To find God, Ayoub suggested, one must look in the gaps and moments of failure, including both—as for like Hanan—failures of memory and moments of personal failure.

Zeinab and the Quiz

We met Zeinab in Chapter 3 when considering the visual repertoire of contemporary charismatic youth in Evangelical Egypt. Her dreams are widely considered reliable mental images for representing God's interaction with those in her large circle of friends and acquaintances. Zeinab's listening, however, is not confined to dreams. She sees the entire world as a template for divine utterance, as a map for understanding divine intention. A top student in her classes and, indeed, across the *malga*, Zeinab was always winning the academic and spiritual challenges the *malga* ran several times a year to motivate the children to excel in their academic and devotional lives. As the children got older, these prizes were most often monetary. Since she was both frugal and amply provided for at the orphanage, as well as by gifts from her mother's relatives that she would visit in her home village on holidays, Zeinab had a

small but comfortable savings account stashed away with her direct supervisor, “the woman that raised me,” she would say. One Christmas the prize was much larger than usual—50 pounds!—and the quiz had been created and graded by a notoriously clever and “tricky” teacher, Brother Maged. This competition was being held alongside the smaller scripture memorization and singing challenges at which she had always excelled and which were the source of her substantial savings.

It was Christmas, yes it was Christmas because I remember it was winter and I was wearing the blue pullover from Hanan. So I started to study it and I said, ‘God, please I really, really want the 50 pounds.’ Because I had already memorized [the memory verses] and I knew I would get the prize and I knew that I had memorized all the songs. So, I knew that I would get the money [from the smaller challenges] but not fifty pounds and I needed the 50 pounds! Perhaps it was A’ida’s birthday or something? I think it was her birthday. I don’t remember. But I think it was something very, very important. And I did not have the money. I really needed money. I did have money but it was with her and I couldn’t take from her because I wanted to make it a surprise. Because she would not give me the money to buy a gift for her. And I really, really needed the money. I don’t know why but I just needed it. I kept praying, ‘God, I really need it!’ So I tried to memorize and answer the questions in a tricky way - like try it the opposite [from the obvious answer] because maybe it will be a tricky question. Because the person who made it was Brother Maged and he is so, so smart. He taught in English. I know him; he is so tricky.

Immediately upon having completed the challenge, Zeinab felt that she had won. She asked her colleagues about particular questions, and their answers satisfied her that she had, in fact, gotten the full fifty out of fifty marks. Her confidence was momentarily shattered by Brother Maged’s off-hand comment to her that he was surprised that she didn’t do better, that he’d expected her to succeed.

Brother Maged tricked me because he was my friend and he said, 'I thought you would do good! Someone else did [better].' So, he tricked me; I thought that I would do good, but I also thought, 'That's ok. No problem.' I was surprised. And then Pastor George said, 'Zeinab won!' And it was very loud and I was so embarrassed. I was s,o so embarrassed. I prayed for this thing and then God gave it to me. It's not because I am good or anything, but just because God knew that I needed it. Because lots of people from the seminary [the small Bible classes that were held at the *malga* for the *Rasūliyya* denomination] were doing it.

I quote this transcript of her narrative of this incredibly important moment in her life at length to offer a sense of the centrality of wonderment, confusion, and gap that emerge in her telling.

Judy and the Prophetic

Judy, whose visions and artwork were central to my analysis of an Evangelical style, had her own story of the miraculous. Her experience with Orthodox Christianity was limited (due to her family's generally sporadic church attendance and her mother's family's Evangelical background). However, in 2008 Judy went to an annual summer outreach organized by *Rabta* to the small city of Miet Damsis, between Tanta and Mansoura in the Nile Delta, north of Cairo. This was her first *moulid*, or birth celebration, since she had visited Asyut as a young child for her grandfather's funeral and briefly attended the *moulid* at *Dayr al- 'Adhrā'*. Being young, she remembered little, but here at this saintly *moulid* of Saint Gergis, Judy was met with a strange and discomfiting expression of Christian piety, joy, and power.

The practices, sounds, commotion, and crowd were overpowering. Devotees were playing secular songs in the worship times and writing Bible verses backwards to

obtain divine power. But it was here in the midst of this holy or demonic commotion that Judy herself received a gift that would define her own participation in the charismatic movement sweeping Egypt—she received the gift of tongues. Overwhelmed by the moment, by the foreignness around her, by the lostness of the world, praying and crying Judy exclaimed to her friend, “What is wrong with my tongue? I can’t speak normally!” She had before been asked to try to practice speaking in tongues in a small group in Cairo but had not been able to muster the ability. Here in this sweaty, crowded *moulid*, however, she began to speak in the “tongues of men and of angels.”

This journey took Judy from Cairo to Alexandria, to Aswan, and to Kenya and Jordan. In her mid-twenties, Judy had already traversed many borders, and her mental and spiritual life was likewise crowded with images of scenes, events, crises, and divine words that had been her guide through these spiritual and physical wandering.

In 2013, Judy organized a mission trip to Kenya. Evangelical churches do international outreach regularly; what was unique about this journey was that it was organized entirely by Judy and her young 20-something group of friends. I was stunned that Judy’s parents would let her go on such a trip, and even more stunned to hear that fifteen other young women, all unmarried, were also allowed to go on this trip to another country. In expressing my surprise to Judy, she reassured me that the parents trusted Judy’s maturity and piety and that they had prepared for a long time for the trip through weekly hours-long prayer meetings filled with scripture reading and

intercession for Kenya. This was the preparation that Judy highlighted in the telling, but she also highlighted the fact that she knew little to nothing about Kenya, had few contacts there (in fact, her only original contact was an American woman who she knew through a mutual Egyptian friend), and only a very provisional itinerary for ministry.

They arrive in Kenya in the midst of a months-long drought that negatively impacts the village that they visit last in their mission itinerary. The drought lasts all throughout the girls' trip to the village, but they are praying every night in their hot, muggy room, constantly in fear of the sounds of the surrounding village. They are constantly seeking God's direction and intercession on the land, literally on the rain, grass, crops, and soil that surround them. An important part of their ministry is the painting of a mural, which includes some combination of a rainbow, parting clouds, and light, perhaps a plant. Only after they leave do they realize that the mural that they painted without direction shares basic visual themes with the logo of the very organization through which they had come to that village in the first place. And only several months later do they find out that a matter of weeks after their visit and the mural and the prayer, the drought was lifted and water came again to the land.

Witnessing in the Lacunae

What counts as a miracle or a sign of election in these apostolic story cycles varies, but one thing all miracles have in common is semantic risk or ambiguity, some sort of excess or gap that demands interpretive attention and engagement. (Harding 2000, 85)

In her classic study of Christian Fundamentalist rhetoric in late 20th-century America, Susan Friend Harding (2000) draws attention to a key component of the power of what she calls the “populist apostolic tradition” in America: the gap, the lacuna. As she narrates her conversations with Fundamentalist pastors and televangelists as well as congregants, Harding shows the way that these narrative pivots are central to the architecture of Fundamentalist witnessing:

An interpretive gap or excess is a silence or an anomaly in a story that incites the imagination by failing to meet expectations, a little like a clue in a murder mystery; or an odd sound at night, downstairs, near the back door; or two friends, gazing at each other a bit too long and longingly to be ‘just friends.’ A miraculous gap or excess fails to meet worldly expectations in a way that opens up a space for supernatural action. (86)

The pervasiveness of this narrative feature is apparent to any “listener” to Evangelical Egyptian discourse. For Harding, this lacuna or gap is a part of a larger Fundamentalist Christian discursive world in which witnessing is central. She argues that the power of the Fundamentalist world is in its talk—a discursive web designed to entice, entangle, and indwell those caught in its threads. “If,” as Harding suggests, “we conceive of conversion as a process of acquiring a specific language or dialect” (34), then we can begin to see the context in which Hanan comes to see God’s activity in this encounter, as well as understand her own role. In Hanan’s story, the gap is in the telling: the verse and its significance were expressly present in that small living room in the northern limits of Cairo. The other encounters that I will reflect on in this chapter highlight the interpretive significance to which Evangelicals put these gaps. These ways

of speaking are not simply observations of what exists in the world that Evangelicals bump into inadvertently, as it were. They are also interpretive moves through which Evangelicals train themselves and others to see divine action in the world. In this chapter, then, I explore some of the many venues through which divine action is made manifest to young Evangelical believers, venues which include dreams, visions, historical happenstance, words in prayer or conversations, test scores, and images.

Harding's work is organized around the question of witness, that is, the practice by which Fundamentalists seek to persuade, seduce, and entangle non-born-again listeners into a world of Fundamentalist plausibility and, ultimately, inescapability. She is largely disinterested in the question of how conservative Christian speech and practice are not exclusively oriented toward outsiders but are also, and perhaps more importantly, disciplines of the self in the Foucauldian sense. That is, an evangelical is working on herself in telling stories, interpreting dreams, and reading the signs of the times. In fact, a body of literature has arisen in the anthropology of Christianity exploring just these questions of how evangelical selves are constituted (Elisha 2011; Luhrmann 2012; Robbins 2004b), building on conversations in history and historical anthropology around the effects of missionary practices in shaping new subjects of colonial government (Hanks 2010; Comaroff & Comaroff 1991, 1997; Taussig 1980).

These sketches of Evangelical narratives in Cairo, however, cast these silences and refusals as something larger, something deeper. Hanan is certainly engaged in

traditional witnessing, that is, an attempt to convince someone born a Christian (*masīhiyya*) to become a believer (*mu'mina*). Her story, however—its significance and valence—is perhaps most importantly about what she learned about herself and her fellow servants (*khudām*). The moments that I explore in this chapter occur largely between believers (*mu'minīn*), such that the witness here—both among Egyptian Evangelicals themselves and between myself and these interlocutors—could not be aimed at bringing an outsider through the “membrane of faith” (Harding 2000, 59). These stories and their consistent presence in a range of Evangelical speech and practice are not a matter of mere representation or persuasion. They are akin to Foucauldian disciplines of the self, which aim to produce an appropriately evangelical self, one capable of seeing with the eyes of faith, capable of deciphering clarion, divine calls through the hazy opacity of the world.

Amira Mittermaier (2011), researching in Egypt during the early 2000s in the shadow of the Iraq War, a struggling national economy, and a general sense of political stricture amid never-ending emergency law, argues that the practices of her Muslim interlocutors' dreaming and dream interpreting should not be read simply as escapist fantasies that draw one away from the “real” but rather that “the ethical and political dimensions of dreaming require not only thinking through the ethical possibilities of different imaginations, but also reconciling the imaginary dimensions of ethics and politics” (3). Like Harding's notion of witnessing, Mittermaier's interlocutors use

dreams to do things in the world—to interpret the signs of the time. This chapter explores some dreaming, but also seeks to connect this archetypal form of inchoate subconscious expression with alternative forms of seeing often set in ambivalent or controversial relationship to the “real.”

Exploring these attestations to divine activity prompts the question of the relationship between Coptic Orthodox traditions of miracles and the divine breaking into the immanent, as well as the relationship between the mainstream Evangelical church and the charismatic movement now banging at the front door, now sneaking in the back. By paying attention to youthful voices, however, I argue that we can see a sensibility deeply in tune with larger currents of Egyptian youth culture (Bayat 2010, 2017; Schielke 2015; Mittermaier 2011), in which the hopelessness, dread, and general malaise of the current moment are re-oriented toward a different economy. It is to the larger questions of public affect and precarity in post-revolutionary Egypt that I now turn to situate this peculiar strategy of reading the absences.

Evangelical Feelings

During my early fieldwork in 2011, in the height of revolutionary fervor, anxiety, and anticipation, a close friend and colleague of mine began exploring converting from the religious tradition of her birth to Christianity. The social costs of exploring this conversion were prohibitive, so her route was largely a clandestine, tight-lipped affair of meeting with priests, attending mass anonymously, and voraciously consuming all

kinds of devotional literature, historical-critical studies, commentaries, and sermons. She would sit for hours with any of her small circle of confidantes trying to express the way that the Virgin moved her, that the prayers and incense of mass calmed her, that the gender politics of Christianity seemed frustratingly similar to those that were driving her from the religious tradition that she had loved. It was fundamentally, however, the aesthetic beauty of the Christian tradition—its services, its metaphors, its sensorium—that was pulling her.

She had been encouraged by some of these confidantes to seek support from a clandestine Evangelical group known for its ministry to would-be converts. One Friday morning she attended her first Protestant service, at the behest of a woman she had met through this network. I remember so starkly her confusion when she later recounted to me her experience at that service. Many years have passed since that conversation, and I was not at the time interested at all in formally researching the topic of secret converts, but I remember her response: “I didn’t feel anything, Anna. There was nothing there for me. It’s like there’s no God there at all.” She professed a startled disbelief that this religious experience was somehow akin to the rich, evocative ones that she experienced at the Orthodox mass, even that this might be a religious experience at all. Adding to the poignancy of my friend’s bewilderment were the myriad conversations I was having with Evangelical youth whose embrace of evangelicalism was due to the sense of God’s presence, to the way that evangelical worship songs and practices made them feel

something, the way that evangelicalism made sense, both in terms of modern rationality and in terms of the language of worship (not dead Coptic, but Arabic, even colloquial Arabic). This idea that Evangelicals exhibit a distinctive style—sometimes polarizing, sometimes seductive—is what is explored in this chapter.

Since Raymond Williams's defense of a "structure of feeling" (1977) as an affective dimension of cultural consciousness, the exploration of inchoate, diffuse, felt dimensions of cultural formations has sat uneasily with the more structuralist accounts of social life. Attention to the felt and somatic dimensions of human experience has been greatly influenced by the borrowing of affect theory as a locus of ethnographic attention (Rutherford 2016; Stewart 2007, 2017; Massumi 2002). As Kathleen Stewart notes:

The affective subject is a person who waits in the company of others for things to arrive, one who learns to sense out what's coming and what forms it might take, one who aims to notice what crystallizes and how things ricochet and rebound...For the affective subject, there is always the weight of the world in what can be hoped for and what must be feared. (2017, 194)

Here I want to linger on the way that the stubborn gap to which Hanan, Ayoub, and Judy appeal is embedded in a larger affective subjectivity in Stewart's sense, a subjectivity that is at once oriented to a future, to particular coherent forms of listening and sensing, to hearing the divine voice, conscious of effecting material and psychological change in social worlds, and sensitive to the vicissitudes and unexpected turns of post-revolutionary Cairo. I also want to argue that it is through this structure of

feelings that Evangelical Egyptians attempt to come to terms with the shifting political and social changes that have gripped the nation since 2011.

This is to say that, as I have argued in the previous chapter, Evangelical Egyptians live in a relatively distinct institutional, religious, and social world shaped by the history of colonial missions, the shape of global evangelicalism, and the strategies for communal autonomy that all minority groups in Egypt development. They also feel different. In Chapter 3, I explore some of the practices of mediation and cultural production that provide Evangelicals with a sense of themselves as distinct from their Coptic Orthodox and Sunni Muslim neighbors. Though an emphasis on these more traditional forms of cultural representation and subjectivity-forming practices provides leverage for understanding the sensorial world in which Evangelicals construct this style, here I want to linger on these felt differences that constitute this inchoate sense of crafting a distinctive Egyptian Evangelicalism in post-revolutionary Egypt.

Everyday Life and Grand Schemes

In her mid-twenties and three years out of college, Marina greets me with an exuberant smile, giggling through the kisses on each cheek and a brisk apology for being (as usual) 45 minutes late to our meeting. At the behest of a friend, I've asked Marina to work with me as a research assistant, connecting me to her network of religiously devout, young, upper-middle-class friends and colleagues. As a student at the seminary, a member of assorted praise and worship ministries, a long-time KDEC attendee, and a

young person entirely educated within the flagship preparatory and secondary school of the Protestant denomination, Marina proved an invaluable source for exploring the upper-middle-class religious active youth in Cairo's main Evangelical institutions.

She arrived with a frothy hot beverage from Costa Coffee that she had picked up on her way to Abbassia from her home in Heliopolis. I purchased a six-pound *shay bilaban* from the seminary's canteen, served in a small paper cup with folding flaps for handles. She was telling me about her favorite lunch spots in Heliopolis when she exclaimed that she had, for a period of time last year, sworn off sushi. Given that her father had passed away and she was transitioning between jobs at that time, I presumed that this was for financial reasons, though given the variety of sushi joints represented in Cairo—from up-scale restaurants in upper-class districts like Zamalek and Heliopolis to the rolling sushi carts set on the side of the road in the Maadi suburbs where I lived— I also suspected a case of food poisoning. No, Marina assured me, laughing, it was becoming an obsession, something that she couldn't stop thinking about. It was becoming an idol and it wasn't healthy and was taking her away from her relationship with Jesus. It was difficult but she had succeeded in breaking the obsession through abstaining for some months.

The anthropology of Egypt has been indelibly marked by the influence of the Islamic Revival, a popular movement of diffuse conservative practices aimed at transforming the everyday lives of Muslim piety. Saba Mahmood's *Politics of Piety* (2005)

and Charles Hirschkind's *Ethical Soundscapes* (2006) exerted an enormous impact on the way that the Islamic Revival has been read as a renewed emphasis on the self-cultivation of the pious subject. In the tradition of Talal Asad's (1986) call for an anthropology of Islam, Mahmood and Hirschkind have answered such a call by paying close attention to the contours, demands, and debates within a "discursive tradition" that has proven compelling to many Egyptians. This "pious subject" has been positioned as a critical interrogator of the modern subject, which Mahmood and Hirschkind contend implicitly yet powerfully informs anthropological theory.

Like Evangelical Egyptians, the subjects of Mahmood's and Hirschkind's ethnographies inhabit a demanding and diffuse religious sensibility that is ordered by a sensorium rife with structural elements that enable their development of ethical capabilities. Hirschkind's account of how cassette tape sermons circulate, duplicate, seduce, reprimand, and instruct those who encounter them illustrates the power of these technologies for the training of the body, the senses, and ultimately the upright Muslim. As Mahmood so strikingly reminds us, however, these Foucauldian disciplines of the self are also practices of self-cultivation in which devotees work on themselves to inhabit the subjectivity that they pursue. Even the minutest details of their lives are tuned to this process of ethical self-cultivation, a "world-making" project whose very expansiveness is a core component of many Egyptians' complaints about the Salafi movement as an intolerant, extremist (*mut 'aṣṣib*) form of piety.

What does Marina's sushi obsession and consequent fast mean for these conversations? As a part of the 21st-century Cairo social landscape, sushi and its connoisseurs are a part of this globalizing, cosmopolitan Cairo in which Marina lives. Marina is an un-self-conscious cosmopolitan urbanite. She speaks flawless and idiomatic English, was educated from primary to high school in an international curriculum, and has spent the last three years working as a cultural broker for a small NGO hosting international visitors in Egypt on various missions trips. Her relationship to sushi is a refraction of this class position, certainly. However, Marina draws my attention instead, not to the earthly economy of which sushi is a part, but rather to the spiritual economy in which sushi's demands on her internal life—her desires and cravings—come at the expense of that which should occupy her fullest attention, her relationship with the Lord. Marina's sushi problem illustrates the power of the Mahmoodian idea of ethical self-cultivation, though in a distinctly Protestant register: the target of transformation is not the inflection of a voice, not appropriate bodily comportment, but rather the way that one's culinary tastes reflect and shape the innermost desires of the believer's heart (Asad 1993).

If these anthropologists of religion key our attention to the power of these "grand schemes," other anthropologists have pushed back against representations of religions as hermetically sealed "discursive traditions," as Asad would have us believe, as well as the idea that most practitioners experience the religious as being in clear, coherent

opposition to the secular (Hafez 2011; Agrama 2012; Schielke 2012). To have lived in Cairo in the 21st century is to be made aware, of course, of the way that the sensibility of reformist Islam has transformed the country since the 1970s, with the ubiquitous Qur'anic recordings, the increasing presence of the *higāb* head-covering, and the proliferation of neighborhood mosques and charity organizations. If the emergence of these features of the late 20th and early 21st centuries has caught the attention of scholars of the region, so has the simultaneous proliferation of mass marketing, media circulation, and cosmopolitan regimes of cultural consumption in the decades since Sadat's neoliberalizing program of the 1970s (Singerman 2006; de Koning 2009; Amar 2013). Scholars writing in this conversation have paid close attention to what Farha Ghannam calls the "tactics" of resistance and the strategies of survival (Schielke 2015; Ghannam 2002, 2013).

Schielke & Debevec (2012) want to maintain that Mahmood's model, drawing as it does from the Asadian tradition, leaves too much unsaid about the power of discursive traditions, while pointing to a universal human desire for "persons, ideas, and powers that are understood to be greater than one's ordinary life, located on a higher plane, distinct from everyday life, and yet relevant as models of living" (Schielke 2015, 13). What is striking and unaccounted for in these debates is both the grandness and the pervasiveness of the evangelical impulse to bring all things under the harsh light of divine discernment. The moments that I explore in this chapter are the kind of

micro-moments that both produce and index what one might call an evangelical sensibility: a mode of sensing and interpreting the world to listen for that which will make sense of the impossibilities, despair, confusion, and promises embedded in the serendipitous moments of everyday life.

Schielke's work is instructive in this regard. Arguing against what he takes to be the monolithic qualities of Mahmood's and Hirschkind's styling of a certain religious habitus that provides a grand scheme to orient one's life, Schielke instead insists that these Asadian notions of the Islamic tradition are unnecessarily uniform and unwittingly doing the work not of social scientists but of theologians:

Rather than assuming Muslim religiosity to be irreducibly different from other great aspirations, however, this account explores the commonalities of those aspirations by focusing on the existential motivations and ambiguities of pursuing moral and spiritual perfection in an imperfect world. (2015, 4)

In following these stories of Evangelical sensing, I am, like Schielke, interested in these negotiations, which inevitably uncover subtle as well as blatant contradictions, impossibilities, and demands. However, to return to Cannell's question of the difference, I find my Evangelical interlocutors (perhaps like Mahmood's and Hirschkind's) deeply committed to a vision of the perfect that Schielke's interlocutors do not share. This Evangelical web of signification, like that of a large, advantageously placed spider, snare a great many components of their inhabitants' world—money, dreams, dress, internal thoughts, sensory perception, social network, and sushi. The impulse to see the world through what I have called the evangelical modern is to attempt to capture a

kaleidoscope of experience and to refract it through a rigorous, demanding, disciplined sensibility honed over a lifetime.

Perhaps more importantly, whereas Schielke takes the gaps, contradictions, and lacunae to be signs of the failures of grand schemes, such as that of reformist Islam or of the neoliberal dreams of financial prosperity sold on every billboard along Cairo's overcrowded streets, Evangelical Egyptians are primed to see these gaps, contradictions, and lacunae as the very fodder for sensing, interpreting, and witnessing to the truth (*al-ḥaqq*) and the reality (*al-ḥaqīqa*) of God's presence and sovereignty (*siyāda*). Judy's practices of intensive prayer and intercession (*shafā'a*) do not run aground on the beach of missed opportunities, failed projects, or unmet expectations; rather, such are the tools by which these cracks are made to speak not to failure but to opportunity.

Knowing, Rumor, and Conspiracy in Cairo

The necessity of these modes of alternative seeing, interpreting, and assembling of disparate evidence is perhaps most obvious in the landscape of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary Egypt. The dizzying changes in the political landscape since January 2011, as well as the suffocating stagnation of the al-Sisi regime, have produced a generalized disorientation and disaffection in Egypt. The opacity of the workings of political, military, and oligarchic power is an oft-remarked upon, though perhaps not well researched, characteristic of contemporary Egypt. The stranglehold of the military state on most media outlets was momentarily lifted in the wake of 2011 when a series of

small-scale independent, critical media endeavors were established and flourished on raucous and relatively unconstrained internet sites like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Outlets such as Masriyun, a video collective dedicated to collecting and curating videos and images of the January 25 Revolution, and *Mada Masr*, an independent online news site publishing investigative journalism and critical essays on poverty, corruption, and controversial cultural affairs, carved out niches in this alternative landscape. Other, more mainstream platforms came to host risky counter-establishment voices, such as medical doctor-turned-comedian Bassem Yousef's incredibly popular satirical talk show *el-Bernameg* ("The Program"), which aired on the media giant CBC from 2012 to 2013 but was watched perhaps more often thanks to YouTube.

As the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohammed Morsi came to power, state media continued to be controlled by a moneyed military elite and produced content aimed at undercutting the fledgling democratically elected executive and legislative branches. Since Morsi's ouster, however, the authoritarian impulses and strategies of Abdel Fattah al-Sisi have brought even more uniformity to cable news channels and increased government surveillance of social media and independent news sources. The opacity of the Egyptian state mechanisms and the subterfuge produced by state-owned media create an atmosphere of confusion and misdirection for ordinary Egyptians. Official state lines are fed to media personalities whose voices populate private and public spheres all over Egypt—in coffeeshops and living rooms, in restaurants and minibuses.

This ever-present discursive space fills enormous social space in a country where television-watching is an important mode of leisure and bonding. I rarely visited families who did not have a television on in the background of a dinner gathering. However, as Asef Bayat (2017) has called attention to in his work on “the political street,” these authoritarian voices, though pervasive and largely compelling, are far from the only ones that populate Egyptian public spaces:

“...[I]n their everyday lives, they carved out space in the socioscapes of kin and cliques in private homes, backstreet assemblies, worksites, mosques, alternative art galleries, Internet cafes...wherein they operated, produced sustenance, reproduced culture, built trust, and created their own realities. Here in these vast and practical normalized socioscapes, ordinary citizens interpreted, produced alternative meanings, and subverted what they apparently complied with - the state narratives and its governmentality.” (138)

While Bayat sees these alternative spaces as the roots of possibility for the so-called Arab Spring, I am here interested in the way that these alternative forms of cultural production created modes of meaning that allow Evangelical Egyptians to interpret what are often confused and confusing messages from state-sponsored and other alternative media forms. These modes of seeing, interpreting, and hearing allow Evangelicals to “see through” the haze of political conspiracy and social naïveté to the true workings of the world. Indeed, the genesis of this moment in so many Evangelical accounts was the proclamation from Kasr al-Dobara Evangelical Church on the eve of the momentous 2011 protests that God was going to do a new thing—God was going to bring a terrible wonder (*rahīb*) on Egypt. This prophetic word was bloodily etched into

the Evangelical community's communal life when the bomb rocked the al-Quddiseen Church in Alexandria 30 minutes into the new year, killing 23 worshippers.

The Egyptian state's line in the wake of this and other regular attacks on Christian places of worship, bodies, and homes has been to condemn the "hidden hands" that perpetrate such violence against the Egyptian people. In the wake of the ouster of Mohammed Morsi's Freedom and Justice Party in 2013, these nefarious and unknown perpetrators had a name—*al-Ikhwān* (the Muslim Brotherhood)—but their motivations, their membership, indeed their bases and tactics were hazy, unknowable, impossible to account for, except in military parades for the "martyrs." This impulse to the foreign hand is, of course, a strategy of fomenting xenophobia that is intended to promote anxiety among everyday Egyptians and increase the sense that the government is the only effective protector of Egypt's fragile economy and embattled minority populations. Here, however, I am interested in how it is also a mechanism of obfuscation, of misdirection. It produces gaps that must be filled in through alternative interpretive strategies. The hidden hand, the foreign spy, the Muslim Brotherhood conspiracy—all are ways of producing a gap in public knowledge that can allow these "vast and practical normalized socioscapes" to come alive and fill in the gaps.

What We Feared Then, Was Our Deliverance.

On July 3, 2014, I was visiting the church of a Synod leader and elder of a historic church in the old residential quarters of Cairo. It was my first visit to the beautiful

sanctuary, with a high vaulted ceiling, wood paneling on the walls, towering windows with iron bars looking out across the street to adjacent apartment buildings. The music leader was leading on an acoustic guitar plugged into an amp system to the left of the stage. As he reflects on the Old Testament passage of Elisha, he reads the passage in full from the Van Dyck translation:

And Elisha prayed, 'Open his eyes, LORD, that he may see.' Then the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

As the enemy came down toward him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, 'Strike this army with blindness.' So he struck them with blindness, as Elisha had asked.

Elisha told them, 'This is not the road and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will lead you to the man you are looking for.' And he led them to Samaria.

After they entered the city, Elisha said, 'LORD, open the eyes of these men so they can see.' Then the LORD opened their eyes and they looked, and there they were, inside Samaria.

As I discussed in chapter 1, Evangelical Egyptians are voracious readers of the Old Testament, and in this particular devotional reflection that accompanied the *tarānīm* of the first half of the service, the music leader reflected on this particular narrative as a way of challenging the hundred or so congregants to hold their own views lightly and seek the divine sight that is only supernaturally endowed. On the one hand, the image of the servant of Elisha was invoked in the chorus of one *tarnīma*: "I see with my eyes this army around us. / I need the Holy Spirit to cleanse this vision" (*Ana shā'if bi-'ayniyya dīh gaysha ḥawwalayna / lāzim al-rūḥ al-quḍus yunazzaf al-ṣūra dīh*). The music leader prayed between songs, "If there are scales on our eyes, take them off by your own hands" (*wa izhā kān fī 'aynī 'ushūr shilha bi-īydak*). The image of the servant's eyes opened

to the divine reality sitting in front of him is contrasted with the blindness that is the salvation of Israel.

The sermon was preached by a respected, elderly pastor visiting from a larger suburban church. The text from Genesis 37 is about the delivery of Israel from the terrible drought through the miraculous intervention of Joseph, who had been sold into slavery but blessed by God to rise to the very right hand of Pharaoh. The pastor lingered on the unexpected divine path that comes into view and reflects on the events not quite so long ago that Egypt was awash with remembrance of on that day: the coup d'état on July 3, 2013, by a coalition of Egyptian military, religious, and political leaders, which shot the little-known Minister of Defense, Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, to national prominence and, eventually, to the presidency.

Remember when Morsi appointed al-Sisi? We thought it was bad news—but our last hope turned out to be with the Muslim Brotherhood. Now we see that God already then God was pulling the strings, putting al-Sisi in place.

The pastor was here remembering a moment in which the Christian faithful, increasingly fearful under the Freedom and Justice Party's Muhammad Morsi and with the recent explosive, iconic, hours-long siege of St. Mark's Coptic Orthodox Cathedral still fresh in the memory (Kirkpatrick & Fahim 2013), had despaired as the military strongmen and head and deputy head, respectively, of the Supreme Council of Armed Forces, Mohammad Hussein Tantawi and Sami Anan, were replaced by Abdel Fattah al-

Sisi, known for his extreme piety and presumed to be a close ally of the Muslim Brotherhood (TIMEP 2020).

Here the practices of Evangelical piety illuminate in hindsight this productive gap that the church in the grip of human fear is not able to sense. They saw only a surface, reading the situation without the divine inspirations with which Hanan, Ayoub, and Zeinab hone over their lives of faith.

Conclusion: Standing in the Gaps

What, then, can we say about the interpretive sensibility that undergirds these various techniques of knowing proper to Evangelical subjects? Its coolness in the face of contradictions, charges of legalism, and challenges of secular reasonableness. Its impulse to embrace, to invite, to persuade. Thinking with Susan Friend Harding, it is certainly embedded in the rhythm of believers' storytelling: the details that are left conspicuously absent, and the unavoidable sense that there is something necessary about those absences. The absence of intent, of knowledge, of mastery. These lacunae open up the space in the story for the breaking in of divine agency. Zeinab's story of the desperate need for the money and God's provision in the form of her success in a school-wide contest. What was the money needed for? She could not remember, but the need was dire. Didn't she win these contests year after year as one of the most diligent students in the school? Sure, but this was a particularly difficult task, everyone knew it. Or Judy's insistence on international travel with no itinerary, few local contacts, and a stunning

ignorance of the country to which she was being sent as a vessel of God's love and prophetic word. Why didn't you prepare? We did, with hours and hours of prayer. Or Hanan's inspired plucking of just the right verse at just the right moment in the home of the down-and-out Orthodox elderly mother. What verse? Why was it so poignant? She couldn't remember. But therein lies the key: there was nothing to remember because it did not come from her memory in the first place. These stories tell us something about the process by which ambiguity, uncertainty, and ambivalence are caught up in the evangelical web of signification and become meaning, divine utterance, direction, and clarity.

What can these modes of seeing tell us about the way that Evangelicals, like their Muslim and Orthodox neighbors, navigate the uncertainties, dread, and opacity of the future? How do these practices of interpreting and making sense of the world they inhabit—post-2011 Egypt—change the relationship of Evangelicals to their neighbors, to the political and social problems which they bump up against? If Mahmood's seminal work on the production of the pious self of the 1990s Islamic Revival in Cairo suggests that these practices of piety constitute the formation of a habitus, what might one say about the habits of seeing, sensing, and narrating that allow Evangelical Egyptians to come to terms with the now fractious, now shrinking public sphere? How does this complex sensibility provide a scaffolding by which to understand the demands of moral subjects, faithful believers, and active citizens?

If both anthropologists of Christianity and anthropologists of Egypt foreground their ethnographic subjects against secular, disenchanting subjectivity in the vein of Taylor's *A Secular Age* (2007), Evangelical Egyptians navigate a deeply enchanted public sphere. So enchanted, in fact, that the atheist scare of 2013 was produced over a report published in al-Ahram that found that there were 800 atheists in the country. Reflecting anxiety about religious authoritarianism in the context of the Muslim Brotherhood's ruling Freedom and Justice Party, as well as the oft-invoked specter of anarchy in the wake of the toppling of Hosni Mubarak after his 30 years of military rule, a concern with atheists and their corrupting influences took over Egyptian media airwaves. In lockstep with these larger discursive spheres, Evangelical Egyptians published a slew of translated books by leading American evangelical authors on the social dangers and intellectual deficiency of atheistic arguments and their proponents. I was in Cairo in the summer of 2014 when conferences, workshops, sermons, and books were proliferating about the atheist threat. One pastor in the Upper Egyptian city of Asyut confided that the problem was so pervasive that even primary-age children in Sunday schools across the country were evidencing the adoption of this atheistic attitude: "You wouldn't believe what these little children ask in Sunday school. One child asked this week, 'How do I know that God is real if I cannot see him?' He was five! It is a disaster."

This return to the notion of an evangelical modern, in which the technologies and discourses of progressive modernity are embedded in the technologies and discourses of

a globalizing form of Protestant witnessing, provides a productive angle from which to understand this affective structure of feelings.

A great deal of literature on contemporary Egypt has focused on the effects of the neoliberalizing economy on the fortunes and lives of the working and middle classes, especially as it has affected Egypt's youth. Hope and boredom have been key topics of concern (Schielke 2015; Pettit 2019), as have despair and disaffection with politics of the overt or revolutionary variety (Sprengel 2019; Makram-Ebeid 2019). Indeed, the abrupt return of a crushing autocratic rule coupled with the economic crisis caused by the instabilities of the revolutionary years have produced a bleak outlook for Egypt's enormous youth population. In this chapter, I have traced one striking aspect of Evangelical praxis within post-revolutionary Cairo: momentum. Though drawing on detailed stories of particular individuals and the details of Evangelical witnessing, this chapter has sought to establish the fervor with which Evangelicals continue to see the active hand of God, providing an opening success, transformation, and change in the bleak times. In fact, as I have argued, it is the gap, the menace, the silence that guarantees the divine hand of God. Indeed, the genesis of this project was in the peculiar insistence by leaders of KDEC in the spring of 2010 that they had brought God's *rahīb* to the land of Egypt and that its guarantee was the horrific bombings of the al-Quddiseen Church in Alexandria on January 1, 2011. It is to the "revolution"—its shadows, its

analogues, and its enduring power among Evangelicals in post-revolutionary Egypt—
that I now turn.

5. Christianity and Crisis: Revolution, Revival, and Reformation

Essam, the Revolutionary

Essam is a strange revolutionary. A wiry man in his late forties with the energy of someone in their early twenties. We met serendipitously in an English class at the Evangelical Theological Seminary in Cairo (ETSC), where I was filling in for the teacher. Within two minutes of my having begun the class, he raised his hand and gently but firmly informed me that this was not how the class was generally commenced and that we should be doing a different exercise than the one that I had chosen. Also, I spoke too quickly to be understood in an English class with non-native speakers.

He laughed when I reminded him toward the end of my fieldwork of this inauspicious beginning to our friendship. "I've been telling you, I am an activist person," he exclaimed, laughing. He had, indeed, been telling me that. I had found out relatively quickly and surprisingly that Essam had been an active participant in the January 25 Revolution. Over bags of chips, juice boxes, and hot tea at the seminary canteen, Essam told me of his passion for the revolutionary protests, how he had slept in the Square most of the 18 days. A servant at an Evangelical church in a well-to-do suburb of Cairo, he had lobbied for his youth group to be allowed to accompany him downtown to the protest, even as their parents and the pastoral staff resisted in fear of what the protests were and where they would lead. In spite all of the resistance he met,

Essam told me, “If you feel responsible, then you can’t stay home.” And so he participated bodily and fully in what he called the “complete life” (*hayat mutakāmala*) of the revolutionary square, which tied those who defended it together through bonds of food, drink, protest, drugs, and marriage. “Everything that you can think of. It happened in the Square. People got married, people had sex, people did drugs. Everything.”

Including, Essam told me to my surprise, street evangelism, a practice that is outlawed everywhere and whose historical appearances became watershed events in missionary history in Egypt. During those heady days of street protests and skirmishes, with military helicopters circling overhead and pieces of brick being hammered out of the pavement and flung at riot police, Essam and his youth were writing and distributing tracts (*nabtha*). He told me that he instructed his youth group participants to hand a stranger a tract and then run in the opposite direction so as not to be identified. The ability to distribute tracts relatively unscathed within Egypt was (and is) a tribute to the liminality of those days in which certain highly regulated inter-religious practices became possible. This hit-and-run tract distribution system was a mutation of other forms of interreligious mingling, like the Evangelical worship service held in the square and the Christians who encircled their Muslim co-revolutionaries as they prayed. They also highlight something central to this chapter’s argument: Evangelicals are strange revolutionaries.

Introduction: Revolutions, Revivals, and Reforms

What were the events of January and February 2011 in Cairo? Was it a revolution? How does one identify a revolution? What are its necessary and sufficient features? These questions have animated a good deal of conversation in the study of the Middle East since Mohamad Bouazizi set himself on fire in rural Tunisia, triggering (or presaging) a series of political uprisings that unsettled three long-time elderly despots and embattled another in a still roiling civil war.

In his book *Revolution Without Revolutionaries* (2017), sociologist Asef Bayat explores these questions by contrasting two moments of political upheaval in the MENA region: the revolutions of the 1970s and those of the 2011 Arab Spring. If the former was defined by a certain ideological coherence and “radicalism,” those of the so-called Arab Spring (as well as the global Occupy movements that scattered in their wake) were marked by “a post-ideological posture and horizontalism” that boasted the strengths of flexibility and big-tent mobilization, but also suffered from “precarious operation, uncertain commitment, vague message, blurred strategy, and quick breakdown of mobilization” (13). It is this lack of ideological focus and radicalism that, Bayat asserts, led to the sense of the revolutionary square as a “utopian order of solidarity and salvation” (14), a reading that anthropologists in the region narrated themselves. As his title suggest, Bayat argues that since these movements were revolutions without “revolutionary ideas,” they were, in essence, revolutions without revolutionaries. Bayat

draws our attention to the difference between a focus on revolution as appreciable change in the rules and structures of state governance and the revolutionary mobilization of the masses. For the former, in Bayat's terms, there must be revolutionaries possessed of sufficiently radical and principled ideals. The former rarely happens without the latter, and Bayat's book is an analysis of the factors that may have led to a revolutionary movement with nowhere to go.

In Bayat's reading, Essam is anything but a revolutionary. He is not a radical in any political, social, or religious sense. He is a patriotic Egyptian citizen, who believes that corruption is neither necessary to or endemic to the Egyptian government, though it does appear when otherwise honorable men do not take care to guard themselves from the temptations of vice. I argue in this chapter, however, that as important as Bayat's question is, the framing of revolution in these terms does not capture the way that this term is utilized and understood by large swathes of the Egyptian populace, including, in their own idiosyncratic ways, Evangelicals. Most superficially, the events of January 25 to February 11 are referred to almost universally in Egypt as "the January 25 Revolution" (*thawrat 25 yanāyir*). As Essam himself insists, he is a revolutionary, always looking for new ways of change, fighting patterns of corruption and oppression in his everyday life, his church, and his country. What can an anthropologist make of such a revolutionary? What genealogies of change and historical thinking motivate Essam's

activism, including both his commitment to the political demands of the square and his clandestine evangelism?

The seeds of this dissertation project were planted in the intellectual, political, and social fertility of those uprisings and in the unlikely support and fervor of Evangelicals like Essam in those endeavors. But Evangelicals are strange revolutionaries, as Essam's story indicates. The received story of Evangelical and Christian engagement in the revolution is, of course, that all segments of Egyptian society had to engage in what was the most politically explosive popular movement since the early 20th century. Christians were forced to navigate a longstanding truce with the military regimes that promised protection from Islamist elements at the expense of certain forms of negligence and tokenism. There was certainly a degree of politicking involved in these negotiations. But as Essam's story and others like his indicate, Christians of all stripes found themselves caught up not simply in the aftermath of these revolutionary events but in the revolutionary spirit itself. Essam wrote defenses of the revolution on his social media pages, spent his days in the square, and rallied for his church youth to march downtown to "take their rights."

The political quiescence of the Coptic community in Egypt is a well-known story, but it is one that requires taken-for-granted distinctions of the secular nation-state. As Ruth Marshall argues in *Political Subjectivities* (2009), there is great value in following the political languages and insinuations of religious, devout discourse instead of translating

them into either false consciousness or metaphor. As I spent time listening to Evangelical Egyptian conversations about the revolution, and against the background of my training in the anthropology of Christianity, a larger category of “rupture” came into view and sutured several kinds of events endemic to Evangelical ways of thinking about the world, history, and the transcendent: revolution (*al-thawra*), revival (*al-nahḍa*), and reform (*al-islāḥ*). My fieldwork in Cairo from 2016 to 2018 coincided with the 2017 celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation, that momentous event that Evangelical Protestants in Egypt, like their co-religionists across the globe, consider the auspicious start of a purified and true Christian church. All across Egypt, in churches big and small, revivals were held. Consisting of visiting pastors and *murannimīn* attempting to rupture the mundane religious practices of congregations and call them to more radical, intimate, and vibrant lives of faith, the *nahḍa* is one of the earliest forms of Christian corporate gathering. This chapter is a meditation on the imbrications of these three fundamental discursive practices for Evangelical Egyptians.

If Middle East studies post-2011 has been preoccupied with the question of revolution as rupture, what does it mean to attend to Evangelical Egyptian interpretive strategies of revival, reformation, and revolution that are indebted to a different discursive strategy? In previous chapters, I have explored the particular set of sensitivities, practices, and semiotic ideology that provide Evangelical Egyptians with a way of navigating a tumultuous, conspiracy-laden, and opaque post-revolutionary

Egypt. In this chapter, I ask alongside these Evangelical interlocutors what it means to interpret the signs of the time? What does historical change signify about agency, divine–human relations, and the nature of this shared social world? These broad questions were behind the pressing ones during my fieldwork: What does it mean to witness revolution? What does it mean to participate in one? What does this violence have to do with love? What is a revolution of love, anyway? What kind of revolution is Essam witnessing to and how is it informed not just by the days in the Square in 2011 and forward, but by the themes of rupture, violence, and historical time, which are embedded in Evangelical narratives and practices?

Reviving the Dead

One curiosity of the Protestant missions to Egypt was that, whereas the prestige zones of Christian missions in the 19th and 20th centuries were places where Christianity was a genuinely new ideological and institutional form, in Egypt Protestant missionaries found themselves principally working to convert a Christian community whose historic roots were deeper than these heirs of the British and American Evangelical awakenings could boast. What is now the modern Middle East was then the Holy Land, a densely saturated imagined landscape within Evangelical Protestant Christianity. If foreign missionaries to sub-Saharan Africa, South America, and the Pacific were embarking on a journey into the “heart of darkness,” a space bereft of the light of Christianity, foreign missionaries were met in Egypt with an ancient but fundamentally foreign expression of

Christianity. In coming to terms with the conundrum of converting Christians, Euro-American missionaries used the language of awakening and revival. For instance, William Jowett, a British missionary sent by the Church Mission Society in Great Britain for the express purpose of surveying the surviving Christianity of the Holy Land, wrote in his report:

Among the ruins of the Ancient Christian Church, I am exploring and looking for some valuable remains, by help of which the Church of our Redeemer may again be built. Alas! May not they, in their present state, divided by heresies and schisms, benighted by ignorance and superstitions, and depressed by higher powers, be fitly compared to ruins. (1822, 103)

Andrew Watson, in his tome *The American Mission in Egypt, 1854–1896* (1904), famously compared the Coptic Orthodox Church to a mummified body, drawing on potent orientalist tropes that undergirded the popularity of missionary travelogues. The preoccupation with the ancient and atavistic quality of Egyptian Christianity in the Protestant missionary encounter resonates with classic anthropological critiques of early ethnographic representations, in which the subject of colonial surveillance (be it missionary or ethnographic) is frozen in a pre-modern past (Fabian 1983).

In the introduction to this dissertation, I introduced the notion of the evangelical modern, an aspirational framework produced through the 19th-century Protestant missionary enterprise that produced in many parts of the colonial world an entrance into global modernity through the practices and technologies of evangelical Protestantism. In particular, I argued that this form of “modernity” is premised on a

sense of forward momentum implicated in both physical and civilizational senses of mobility.

The imagination of travel is integral to the work of the Protestant mission field, though the historical imagination of the Middle East in general and of Egypt in particular (traditionally considered one of the earliest mission fields of the Apostle Mark) produces a certain imagination of mobility that must presume a notion of regeneration. By this I mean that Egypt enters into the missionary imaginary as the site of the first mobility of the earliest Christian messengers. As the Protestants found it, however, it was frozen in time and dilapidated, as Jowett's metaphor of ruin indicates. These two general senses of (im)mobility stand as the fundamental tropes of mobility into which Egypt's temporal and geographic position in the world was imagined by Protestant missionaries. Out of these complex imaginations, political constellations, and material practices came a dual construction of the "mobile subjectivity" of the Protestant missionary and the "immobile subjectivity" of the Egyptian Coptic Orthodox believer.

The striking comparison of the church to ruins suggests the atrophying quality of isolated, desolate landscapes. These images suggested that Egypt was defined by this crumbling under the weight of history, immobilized by the decaying architecture, superstitions, and political oppressions of the past. Of course, this ancient Egyptian trope was tempered by others invoking the biblical Egypt. Julius Richter, a German professor of missiology at Berlin University, wrote in his history of Protestant missions

in the Near East that studying the contemporary Christian churches of the Near East was akin to “turning over the torn yellow pages of a picture-book. Ancient religious controversies, sympathies, and antipathies come to life again, that have lain under the debris of twelve or thirteen centuries” (1910, 37). If all racialized others of the colonial West were subjected to a kind of temporal othering, the particular shape of that produced by missionaries for native Christian churches in the Middle East was of a historically particular character, drawing on architectural and textual metaphors rather than primarily evolutionary or racial ones.

That is not to say that this reading of an atavistic other was not also informed by a racial argument, but that even racial discourse was built upon this geographic imagination of a people immobilized in its glorious past. Watson (1904) pushes Jowett’s artifactual reading of contemporary Copts further in delineating a racial typology. He saw Copts as “beyond all doubt, the purest representatives of the ancient Egyptians” (53). This was no simple sociological argument. It was a racial typology pulled directly off the walls of these material artifacts of Egyptology. Watson makes such an argument in no uncertain terms: “[I]t cannot be denied that in the general outlines of features, and in disposition and temperament, the Copts are like that people whose profiles are carved on the temple walls” (54).

Additionally, this incarceration or mummification was imagined as a geographical effect as much as a civilizational one:

The chief point to be noted here is the geographical isolation of Egypt. Cut off by desert or ocean from close contact with neighboring lands, and, indeed, not lying to-day in close proximity to any land of great influence, Egypt stands isolated to a great extent. The influences that are to affect her national life are those which are being brought to her by the political, commercial and missionary movements of the day. In one respect alone does this statement need to be qualified. The solidarity, of the Mohammedan world is exceedingly strong. (Watson 1904, 7)

Of course, this imagination of incarceration and immobility—geographic, intellectual and racial—is difficult to square with a territory that articulates the continents of Europe, Africa, and Asia and borders both the Mediterranean Sea in the north and the Red Sea in the east. That is to say, this dilapidation had to be produced actively by missionary narratives of contemporary Egyptian religious life. All of this is to say that central to the enterprise of Protestant colonial-era missions was a “pervasive sense of momentum,” to borrow a phrase from Julie Chu’s (2010) *Cosmologies of Credit*, an exploration of a quite different world of mobile subjectivity-making in late-20th-century China. Like those of Chu’s aspiring guest workers, these mobile subjectivities were central to an aspiration to modernity, to understanding and feeling the truth of stepping into the modern world at dizzying speed.

A key metaphor for this mobilizing of the Arab Christian was of awakening from a slumber, a metaphor that continues resonating in uncritical approaches to presumed Arab backwardness.¹

¹ Paul Sedra’s *From Mission to Modernity* (2011) provides a strident challenge to the normalization of this dichotomy of European mobility and Arab slumber, especially as it effectively presumes “Coptic exceptionalism,” casting “the history of the Coptic Christians in Egypt *sui generis*” instead of showing their

Propelling themselves to the mission field through the religious effervescence of the Second Great Awakening (1800–1870), one of the primal forms of Protestant gathering was the revival (*nahda*). In exploring ETSC's incipient archiving project of over one hundred years of the denomination's flagship magazine, *al-Hoda*, the presence of the revival is pervasive. Each biweekly installment ends with the various revivals being undertaken in cities all over Egypt, including accounts of the topics of the preaching and the hearts that are being changed.

In perusing both the archival record and contemporary Evangelical church practice, the figure of the *nahda* comes into dual view. On the one hand, the revival is a commonplace, even mundane part of Evangelical religiosity and sociality. Churches plan at least one revival each year, having visiting preachers come and speak, extending prayer and worship meetings into the late hours of the evening, and preaching a message of salvation (*wa'za khallāsiyya*) to gathered congregants and, it is hoped, guests. On the other hand, the revival is always aspiring to the status of world-historical event. As I explored in Chapter 2, the nation of Egypt is a divinely ordained socio-territorial unit of efficacy in world-historical time. In the following section I explore an intimate

deep imbrication in broader Egyptian (and Ottoman) political, social, and economic life (2011, 173). The importance of this challenge is nowhere more obvious than in the treatment of Euro-American missionaries. Magisterial accounts of Egypt from George Antonius's *The Arab Awakening* (1939) to Albert Hourani's *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age* (1983) establish foreign missionaries themselves as the catalysts of the flourishing of Arabic literature, education, and national consciousness in the 19th and 20th centuries. As Sedra explores, these historically facile notions of slumber and awakening ignore the internal dynamics of late Ottoman and early Egyptian mobilities, debates, and struggles.

scene that illustrates this duality between the everyday-ness of the *nahda* event, as well as its framing as a moment of seismic rupture for those who participate.

Ethnographic Ruminations: Revival

One evening in October 2017 at 8:00 pm, we were on our way to a revival meeting winding through Cairo traffic with Pastor Emile—first introduced in Chapter 2 as the traveling pastor, father of two, and lover of John Piper sermons—and his wife, Bassant. We stopped in front of al-Hosari mosque where Pastor Emile spotted a cart of bananas, which he offered to us as we waited. We waited for Brother Mina, who arrived and rode with us to direct us to the meeting room in a local *Rasūliyya* church. We arrived just as a small bus was pulling up full of people with dozens of children. Brother Mina ushered us through a metal gate into a narrow-walled courtyard that surrounds a large apartment building. In the back of the building is a double door opening to a set of stairs set down into the ground floor and a single large meeting room, with a low ceiling and two supporting columns. The tiling is an ornamental floral design, and the whole front wall is elevated some two and a half feet all the way across the room, providing a long stage. On the left side of the room are two narrow sets of pews in which people were already sitting. Three men were sitting in the second row, and Brother Mina shoed them away to make space for my partner, Bassant, and me. There are no large or permanent decorations that I can see, but plenty of colorful tinsel strings and snowflake-

shaped cut-outs adhered with masking tape to the ceiling and walls, as well as the remnants of Christmas decorations. Santa's face is the only human icon on display here.

The *murannim* is a middle-aged man with a scruffy beard, who arrives with his wife, teenage daughter, and infant son in tow. His wife accompanies him on vocals, until their son begins taking off down the center aisle, at which point her daughter fills in for her, taking her cues for timing from her father on stage. He plays the electric *'ūd*; none of these *tarānīm* are translated Hillsong choruses. Most have the sound of Maher Fayez's oriental choruses. There is a near-constant buzz of children talking and laughing, as well as visiting between their mothers. Pastor Emile peppers his sermon with invocations to pay attention. "Listen to me, everyone! Focus with me!"

Pastor Emile preached from 1 Chronicles 4:21–23 about the sons of Shela, who, we are told, lived with the king. Pastor Emile had suggested in the car ride to the revival that he would be preaching on an obscure text, though the sermon was about the family of the Israelite patriarch Judah—the death of his eldest sons, his unholy liaison with his wily daughter-in-law, and the birth of his son, Shela, the subject of this sermon. As he elaborated on this biblical story of a failing man of God, Pastor Emile told this story:

I was abroad and there was a man there who was praying and singing in the church meeting with fun sincerity but when he went to drive me home, he lit a cigarette. I asked him, "Brother, what are you doing? How can you do something like this after such a powerful service?" He told me that this is just a bad habit. "No, brother, this is an evil."

Evil kills the wicked.

People believe in the “evil eye.” I did as well. When I was young my mother had to go away and so I had to care for her balcony full of chicks. She warned me especially to make sure that her neighbor did not set eyes on them as she was known as a deeply envious woman who can harm those she targeted. When the neighbor came to the door, I tried to keep her away from the chicks but she got her eyes on them. That evening one third of the chicks were dead, and by the morning the rest were all deceased.

As Pastor Emile got to this detail, a member of the congregation challenged his skepticism, insisting that there was such a thing as the evil eye. He answered, in stride, that, of course there was such a thing as jealousy but that it was something that comes from inside of us and destroys us from within, not a power that comes from without and can destroy things.

Later at the restaurant, I asked why he used this particular example, since it seemed to open the way to skepticism. Why would he tell a story about a woman known for her dangerous jealousy that ended in the destruction of a balcony full of chicks? Pastor Emile explained that he told the story to emphasize how Satan tempts us, like he did Judah and his sons. It was not a normal power of the spiritual world, but rather a malignant power of the devil himself that inflicted him with a sense of the power latent in others. It was a kind of disguise, in his telling. It was also difficult to know how an eighteen-year-old was supposed to untangle this web of true spiritual power. It was, in fact, a supernatural power that had stayed those chicks, though not the one that Pastor Emile was being tempted to believe had done it.

The story of Shela’s descendants tell us how to overcome our histories. Shela was the son of a weak believer (Judah), of a mother who was far from God (Tamar),

of a brother who was evil (Er), and a brother who was deeply selfish (Onan), and yet he dwelled with the king. I will not be like those people around me. Perhaps the evils of my past do not belong to my future.

The service ended with a lengthy prayer, led by Pastor Emile, who pace up and down the middle aisle oscillating between speech directed to God and speech directed to the worshippers. The general din of children playing and parents scolding was joined by passionate, emotive prayers from the pews as men and women poured out their prayers to God at Pastor Emile's urging. He raised his face to the ceiling and loudly intoned, "I know that these tears are not simply from emotion, but tears of the Spirit!"

As noted in Chapter 2, Pastor Emile is an ordained minister without a full-time church. He is part of a group of traveling pastors, worship leaders, and speakers who travel throughout Egypt, the Arabic-speaking world, and even in the US and Europe. Like the Bible colporteurs of the early missions, these native Arabic speakers endure brutal traveling schedules, crowded trains, and a great deal of time away from their families to preach the Word of God to motley crews like those assembled in this basement room. The message is, in tone, content, and delivery, not unlike that of a regular Sunday morning service, but the energy and urgency of Pastor Emile's invocations of turning from lives of sin and evil that, as in the case of his friend abroad, are born of apathy and the drudgery of everyday life into a new life of righteousness functions not as a sermon to fellow believers but rather as a kind of altar call, a form of witnessing (Harding 2000).

The high stakes of the 2011 revolutionary square seem a far cry from this gathering in a tiled basement in a newly constructed neighborhood on the outskirts of the city. They also share important semiotic forms, at least for their Evangelical participants. History, in the biblical story of Shela and in the 18 days in Tahrir Square, is inertia to be overcome not with sheer force of will but by relying on a power from elsewhere. History (*al-tārīkh*) is that which is self-evident, the path that one always sees stretched out before one. It is, as Essam insists, the way that things were going to keep being without the loving fight of the revolutionaries. It is, as Emile demands here, the way that things are, the normalizations that people become encumbered with. For his brother abroad, it is the ubiquity and encroaching normalization of smoking. For himself and his listeners, it is the ideas about jealousy and spiritual forces embedded in such notions as the “evil eye.” These examples index the audience to which he believes he is speaking—not middle-class educated professionals like himself, but rather rural transplants, simple people (*al-nāss al-busaṭā'*), who need to be reformed to move into the evangelical modern. *Nahḍa* is, then, a form of maintaining this relentless sense of forward momentum demanded by Egyptian Evangelicalism. The centrality of “revivals” within the evangelical tradition represents regularized moments of recalibrating a church community to these demands of modern piety, transformation, and activism. These regularized invocations of the event of divine in-breaking are situated within a larger historical arc into which Evangelical Egyptians are enfolded by way of conversion

to this Euro-American religious tradition from their Coptic Orthodox roots. It is to this other governing notion of historical rupture that I now turn to show a widening of Evangelical imagination in contemporary Egypt.

500 Years of Reformation

The history of foreign missions in Egypt is a testament to the politically explosive nature of the demand for institutional religious conversion, and it is in their institutional affiliations, aesthetic styles, theological commitments, and transnational bonds that Evangelical Egyptians depart from the more dominant religious traditions of Egypt, Sunni Islam and Coptic Orthodoxy.

In the case of the Presbyterian church, this small group of converts to this distinctively Euro-American Christian tradition sutured themselves into a history in which Muslims and Orthodox Christians would find little interest or resonance. It is, however, a key part of how this small Protestant sect narrates its own self-history, and one which stands in a kind of tension with the Egypt-centered nationalism of many of its adherents. My fieldwork in Cairo coincided with the celebration of the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation—dated from Martin Luther’s posting of his 95 Theses in 1517—an occasion that Presbyterians were eager to celebrate. Posters for seminars held at churches and seminaries peppered billboards, backgrounded by images of Luther himself nailing his theses to the church door in Wittenberg.

Magdy, the young pianist trained in Western classical music that I introduced in Chapter 3, had invited me and my research assistant Marina to the Protestant denomination's celebration of the 500 years of the Protestant Reformation. I tried to arrive early, as we were told the event would be filled to overflowing, but I was not early enough to get a seat on the main floor of KDEC's sanctuary. Marina and a friend had already found seats in the floating balcony and had saved a seat for me. From our seats we could see the stage and much of the full orchestra, which would accompany the choir arrayed on stage.

The main address was given by the archbishop of the German Evangelical church, in English, which was translated not by a live translator but projected into Arabic print on the screens that usually display the lyrics to praise choruses, a technique I never witnessed before or after. The choice indicated to me that the address itself was a formality, as few in the audience were likely to follow along with the small font of formal standard Arabic while hearing the English address.

The main attraction of the evening was decidedly the "500 years of *Tarānīm*" in which a medley of classic hymns were performed and sung by the choir. "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," written by Martin Luther himself, was performed in German, accompanied by a simple recorder. In the English-speaking evangelical world, "A Mighty Fortress" is such a common hymn that even low-church evangelicals, whose sacred music is primarily made up of praise and worship choruses written in the late

20th century, know its tune and first verses. The English translation of the hymn that is projected on the screen, however, is not the traditional English translation but, it appears, an alternate translation from the original German. Other old, more obscure hymns are sung before the final of the English-language hymns, “How Great Thou Art,” is performed with full harmonies and full instrumentation. The entire audience erupts in applause, as this hymn is a staple of Egyptian Evangelical church services.

This popular cross-over hymn precedes a shift in the musical style, which is indicated by a screen on which is written “1950–2017.” The *tarānīm* that follow are all in Arabic and enthusiastic singing and clapping erupt as each song transitions to the next, filling the spacious sanctuary with energy as the blue strobe lights bathe the room with their shifting waves. Behind the lyrics of the songs are black-and-white pictures of famous worship bands like Better Life (*al-ḥayāt al-‘afdāl*), Praise Team (*farīq al-tasbīḥ*), and Message Team (*farīq al-risāla*). Names of famous *murannimīn* are interspersed between songs, beginning with a Maher Fayez picture and finishing with pictures of well-known and beloved KDEC *murannimīn*.

As the final song, “Jesus is Alive in Me” (*Yasū ‘ḥayyun fiyya*)—which is sung with gusto regularly at the Evangelical Church of Zeinab, often in both the Sunday morning and evening services, indicating its wide belovedness—plays, an image of classic white Jesus comes onto the screen. He is in a white robe looking out from a stone tomb, as the

final lines of this popular Arabic hymn resolve alongside the muted final melody of “A Might Fortress is Our God.”

As I argued in Chapter 3, corporate singing is a seminal and constitutive practice of the Egyptian Evangelical church. Its centrality to this 500-year celebration organized by the Protestant denomination is striking evidence of the resonance that sacred music has for Evangelical Egyptians. The performance was itself a curation of historical change, beginning in 16th-century Germany. The distance that the audience felt to these exotic roots was obvious, as we listened politely to a German hymn that I had never heard in an Egyptian service, or for that matter one in the United States. Interestingly, the music skipped to 1950, on the cusp of the Free Officers’ Revolution, which would bring an end to the foreign ownership of the missionary infrastructure of schools, hospitals, and churches and produce a truly independent national Egyptian Evangelical church. It was also the era of the emergence of the traveling worship bands and medical missions which Bashmuhandis Fadil so fondly remembered and which so deeply shaped him. The Reformation, here, stood for a particular kind of enfolding of Egyptian Evangelicals into a sonic, intellectual, material history of progress and religious enlightenment. The full choir, with Magdy in his sharp tuxedo behind the organ, symbolized these roots proudly, even as the larger congregation responded affectively differently to the multi-modal experience.

The shift in the energy of the room was palpable as the service moved from the German-language address, with at times three paragraphs of small Arabic print translating on the screen, to the raucous appreciation for the musical leaders of the movement for musical outreach represented by teams like Better Life. The pictures of traditional Evangelical Protestant worship, with pews and gowned chorale groups, as well as the prevalence of older instrumentation like organs and accordions, flashed behind contemporary music in the style of Hillsong and Bethel. The slick, professional shots of beloved *murannimīn* on a stage with strobe lighting, electric guitars, and projected lyrics on massive projectors flashed right before Jesus walked out of the stone tomb.

A key argument of this dissertation has been that, far from severing Evangelical Egyptians from their roots, Evangelical practices, technologies, and networks are some of their most salient tools for articulating their primordial relationship to Egypt, as imagined community and as biblically ordained national territory. As arguably the most prominent Evangelical Egyptian, Reverend Andrea Zaki Stephanous (2014), has argued, the task of developing an Arabic political theology is a task for which Arabic-speaking Evangelicals are uniquely positioned by virtue of their religious life as experienced fundamentally in the Arabic language, as opposed to a languages like Coptic or Syriac which remain in use only as liturgical languages in various Oriental Orthodox churches.

There is another important key that representations of the Reformation provide for Evangelical Egyptians in narrating their centrality to the story of Egypt. Tracing their religious lineage through Martin Luther's Germany, even as it produced little felt sympathies in the crowded sanctuary of KDEC, allows Evangelicals to suture themselves to a story that posits a return to the biblical text, the original community of faith, and a pure relationship to the early church. This is true of the way that Evangelicals reflected on the Reformation as a simple story of the triumph of the five solas rather than the complex negotiation of political, social, and material changes in the institutions of European Catholicism.

The effect of this bypassing was not lost on Aziza, an older Evangelical woman, who seemed to show up in every Evangelical church and at every event that I attended. A deeply generous, pious, and curious woman, Aziza was the daughter of an influential Evangelical layman who held high-ranking positions in a prominent university. She was educated, like Marina, in the flagship schools of the Synod of the Nile and had a particularly virulent distaste for Gamal Abdel Nasser, as well as a striking fondness for Mohamed Naguib. I held a series of oral history interviews with Aziza about her life at the intersection of Coptic Orthodoxy (her mother was Coptic Orthodox) and Evangelical Protestantism (her father's family had been Evangelical for several generations), as well as the way that her vast transnational connections had shaped her idiosyncratic, deeply ecumenical religious practices. She told me several times that, though she attends Coptic

Orthodox mass faithfully, it is actually her Evangelicalism that connects her to the Egyptian church of old: Isn't the purified form of Protestant worship, sensibilities, and biblical commitments closer to the church that was established in Egypt at the time of St. Mark's original mission?

In this section, I have attempted to show the complicated relationships that emerge from Evangelical historical entanglements with historically Euro-American religious traditions. To reform, as to revive, is to return to a past. The logic of purifying, with its attendant violences—semantic and bodily—is central not just to the Protestant Reformation but also to the practices of revivalist religion in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. As Ruth Marshall suggests, one way of assembling a scholarly agenda on revivalist religions, particularly Christian varieties, is to begin as they begin.

I maintain that the methodological principle behind Asad's approach is still sound and can be usefully employed for an anthropology of Pentecostalism, indeed, any form of Christianity. So if we should start as Pentecostal and charismatic Christians do, this means firstly recognizing the ways in which this form of Christianity constructs itself as an evangelical project. (2014, 351)

As I take Marshall's point here, to begin as revivalist Christians do is to focus on the evangelical impetus at the heart of these forms of Christian praxis. While revival (*al-nahḍa*) and reform (*al-'iṣlāh*) share with the notion of revolution (*al-thawra*) a sense of significant, decisive change, they are deeply inflected with the notion that has floated in and out of focus in this dissertation, that of conversion.

Conversion and Cultural Change

In Chapter 3, I explored the way that conversion narratives highlight the importance of (mass) mediating objects and practices in the way that Evangelicals come to sense and experience the presence of God. I showed how conversion narratives are seldom about the institutional change from one religious identification to another—an act that in modern Egypt entails a series of intensive and life-changing legal, social, and familial ramifications—but are, rather, about a way of living a pious Evangelical life. Conversion narratives also illustrate something of the structure of Evangelical notions of historicity and change. To be a Christian—to be an Evangelical, in particular—is both to change as a reflexive verb (to be changed, that is) and also to change the world.

In my earlier fieldwork on KDEC's revolutionary practices, I paid close attention to the locus of agency articulated by Evangelical Christians when they looked at the events of the revolution. Where their co-revolutionaries saw popular action, political machinations, and economic forces, Evangelical Egyptians repeatedly saw the "hand of God." It is, I would argue, a distinctive mark of these forms of social change and crisis within Evangelical communities to see the agents of history not as impersonal, mechanistic, or natural forces but rather as the intentional and directive hand of God. In previous chapters, we have seen how this peculiar interpretive move informs Evangelical notions of the miraculous, the conspiratorial, and the sensible, but perhaps most importantly in revolutionary and post-revolutionary Egypt, it informs a unique

sensibility toward rupture, historical change, and the relationship of individuals to these processes of crisis.

The centrality and explosive nature of conversion, both historically and socially, is clear in a conversation I had with Gergis, whom I introduced in Chapter 1 as a well-connected businessman serving in an international faith-based organization. In our conversations, he always framed the Egyptian church as inhabiting of a culturally distinctive world from that of American Christianity. His wife and children are American citizens, but they choose to reside in Egypt, as a response to a divine calling to ministry there, as well as for its ease of life for them and their children. Gergis explicitly stated what many Evangelicals intimated but rarely stated with such bluntness: “I have always said that Christians are better off with a benevolent dictator. We don’t allow students to choose their teachers; no company would choose their CEO through popular voting.” For Gergis, aside from the fundamental problem with the 2011 revolution—that it was funded, inflamed, and masterminded by the Americans and Israelis—the most egregious problem with the 2011 uprisings was the hypocritical imputation of the language of “rights” into a foreign context.

“Rights,” insists Gergis, “are not a native concept here. It is a foreign implant. People speak about rights but they are hypocritical. For instance, if a Christian family had a daughter that tried to convert to Islam - that family would do everything in their power to prevent it. They want to prevent her from going to hell.” This evidenced most

strongly for Gergis by his friend who has a convert daughter whom he hasn't spoken to in thirty years. In order to understand why Christians do this, Gergis re-iterates one must understand "the Muslim mindset" in which a daughter that tries to convert to Christianity must be stopped by all means necessary because it imperils the state of her soul.

What Gergis is pointing to here is a tension at the core of the Egyptian Evangelical identity. It is, at once, built out of a commitment to a kind of authentic Egyptian-ness, one rooted in the time of the Pharaohs. As Professor Makram insisted, at the beginning of the church, that is, on the day of Pentecost, there were not Coptic Orthodox Christians, there were only Egyptian Christians. This authenticity, as Gergis articulates it in the register of religious affiliation, provides a difficulty for one of the quintessential impulses of the evangelical project: the converting of disciples.

To have become an Evangelical is to have been thrown into a forward sense of momentum, into a world with a global history and with the imperative to discern the movings of the Spirit. This is expressed in the colorful prophetic worlds of young charismatics like Judy, as well as in the studied Presbyterian pragmatism of Gergis. Gergis's insistence on the distinction between "Christians" and "converts" in Egypt highlights this kind of tension, striking in one of the most proselytizing religions in modern history.

The Second Revolution

Conversions, then, are fraught, just as revolutions are. In the fall of 2015, I was sitting in the office of the administrative official of a Synod official responsible for overseeing the denomination's Salaam Schools, a network of 20 primary and secondary schools that serve Muslim and Christian youth in all of Egypt's major metropolitan centers. This administrative assistant was a good friend of a pastor with whom I had been discussing this nascent project in my pre-dissertation fieldwork. He was very interested in the revolution, Pastor Rafiq told me. He read widely and conversed passionately about the political tumult of the last years, and while we were waiting to speak with his boss, Pastor Rafiq thought it might be useful to sit for a while with Saad. It was my first return to Cairo after the popular movement *Tamarrod* had brought record numbers of Egyptian demonstrators into the streets to protest the presidency of the Freedom and Justice Party's Mohammad Morsi. It was also my first return since the little-known Field Marshal Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, whom President Morsi had appointed on August 12, 2012, made his televised ultimatum to the Morsi administration to concede to the demands of the popular movement before the military would wrest power from the first democratically elected (and first civilian) executive administration that Egypt had ever known. An interim administration was established, headed by Adly Mansour, parliament was dissolved, and the long standoff between the Freedom and Justice Party, as well as the larger Muslim Brotherhood machinery, and the newly

emboldened military coalition began, which would end with the bloody Raba'a al-Adawiya and al-Nahda Square massacres. The official count was 638 dead. Human Rights Watch estimated a likely death toll of over 1,000.

As Abdel Fattah al-Sisi's authoritarian regime began wresting control of the openings in civil society and political activism, a familiar pallor of fear and trepidation descended on Egypt, in which fear of imprisonment loomed over the activist communities that had found such openness after 2011. This sense of constriction was an ever-present feature of post-revolutionary Cairo during my research.

One debate, however, raged on in some alternative media forums, online communities, and, interestingly, within Evangelical communities. "So, was it a coup or a revolution?" Saad asked us from across his cluttered desk, flanked by two of his colleagues, an English teacher at the flagship Salaam School in Cairo and a videographer at a Christian television station. It was the first time anyone had asked us what we made of the bloody events of the previous year. I was caught off guard. "People are telling us that it was a democratic coup," I hedged. Saad and his colleagues laughed comfortably and said, "Yes! That is the perfect description."

Saad's question and his warm reception of this term that I had picked up from other Evangelical talking points illustrate the broad contours of this debate about whether the popularity of *Tamarrod* made the deposition of President Morsi democratic or whether the heavy-handed, violent actions of the military, which intervened without

the democratic institutions of the ballot box, referendums, or parliament, made it a coup. The fervor of this debate within Evangelicalism was striking to me, given that I met with no Egyptian Evangelicals in Egypt who were troubled by the military's intervention. The Muslim Brotherhood had by then established the National Coalition for Supporting Legitimacy, which operated mainly through exiled leaders as the organization went underground (and to prison) within Egypt, but no Evangelicals were sympathetic to the pleas of an organization they saw as promoting a theocracy that was eroding their rights and legitimacy as equal citizens in Egypt. Saad's boss, Dr. Gamal, in our meeting did not ask our opinion and animatedly expressed his disbelief about the West's response to the "second revolution." He formed his hand into a shape like the base of a cup and wiggled it at his temple—a gesture indicating someone not mentally right—and sighed in disbelief, "How can they not see how evil the Muslim Brotherhood is? (*Mish fāhimīn al-Ikhwān shirīr 'izāy, ya 'nī?*)" He and Pastor Rafiq decided that it was largely because they will not listen to the Egyptians whose knowledge comes from the intimacy of living side by side with *Ikhwānī* neighbors and colleagues. They have "personal experience" (*tagriba shakhṣiyya*), which would illuminate the confusion if only foreigners would listen.

These questions were fraught to the extent that they were largely because of the audience: foreigners (*'agānib*) were prone to believe any lies that the Muslim Brotherhood told on online media. There was a presumed (and true) sympathy afforded us as members of the global evangelical family, but Saad and Dr. Gamal were also wary

of the misunderstandings that might accrue between those with lived experiences of the historical events under discussion and those without. As Bayat might have suggested, the way that Saad and his colleagues saw the revolution was almost exclusively in the sense of mobilization. It was perhaps a coup in the sense that it returned military rule to the executive branch of the Egyptian government (though al-Sisi had taken off his Field Marshal uniform to accept the nomination as presidential candidate), but it was a revolution in the sense that it was the outcome of immense popular mobilization.

My interlocutors' confidence in my ability to parse these distinctions, I found over the course of my fieldwork, was limited. Though Dr. Gamal's colorful gesture was particularly flagrant, the insistence that foreigners were intent upon misreading the events of 2013 followed me through my fieldwork and produced a great deal of tension between my own "readings" of history and my interlocutors'. In the following sections, I attempt to excavate below these dissonant readings to the wider interpretive practices of discerning the truths of history, centered on moments of rupture. In attending to these different repertoires for claiming newness and continuity, I hope to bring into conversation two bodies of literature that have had only tentative conversation: the anthropology of the Middle East and the anthropology of Christianity.

Rupture and Continuity

If, in the anthropology of Christianity in the Comaroff tradition, conversion means conversion to modernity, then what does conversion to this larger Evangelical

network mean? What becomes of religion, when it is used as a shell that, by virtue of its vacuousness, can house the substance of modernity, as Weber ([1930] 2005) long ago suggested? There has been a great deal of literature on the conversions that colonialism brought to Egypt, including those of civilizing, modernizing, and Christianizing (Mitchell 1988, 2002; On 2013; Cuno 1992; Abul-Maged 2013; El Shakry 2007; Fahmy 1997). But, as I have attempted to argue in this dissertation, these conversions rest upon an analytic foundation that, by virtue of its conceptualization of modernity, leaves the kinds of aspirations, structured feelings, and labor of Evangelical Egyptians impossible to understand either in analytic terms or on their own terms.

What does it mean to live always on the cusp of history? What does it mean to always be waiting atop the crest of the conversion of the region? In Chapters 3 and 4 I explored the structure of feelings and means of interpretation that are available through the disciplining of the Evangelical self. Through an emphasis on the divine gap, the structural opacity of human ways of seeing and knowing, and the cultivation of a range of sensory capacities, Evangelicals like Essam are always awaiting the movements of God in unexpected ways.

Now that we have seen these three discursive fields in action—the revolution, the revival, the reformation—what can we make of their semantic overlap, their social interchanges, and their place in a larger global imagination of Evangelical Egyptians? On the one hand, these technologies and narratives of historical change, whether in the

distribution of tracts or the performance of German hymns, appear to be distinctively non-political, although they certainly participate in larger political formations, such as those which make Dr. Gamal and Saad aggressive defenders of the second revolution and the state-sponsored slaughter of nearly 1,000 Egyptian civilians and those that make Essam a brave and eloquent defender of the rights of protestors in Tahrir, even as the ramifications for Egypt's Christians were unclear. What is the status of "the political" in these moments of announcing, pursuing, and enacting historical change?

As anthropologists of Christianity and the Middle East have long argued, the tools of anthropological analysis are indebted to an intellectual tradition that until recently has demanded a strong delineation of the secular and the sacred. As political theologian John Milbank has concisely stated, "Once, there was no 'secular'" (2006, 9). Ethnographically, as Hussein Ali Agrama (2012) has explored in his work on Egypt, the secular has to be continually invented by way of its juxtaposition to the "sacred" against which it is opposed and defined. For scholars of religion, one key effect (discursive as well as institutional) of this bifurcation of the world has been a stubborn insistence on the privatized world of religious faith and the public sphere of political action. Indeed, this bifurcation lurks behind a great deal of literature parsing the question of whether and how missionaries were agents of colonial governance or operated under reasons of power that subverted it (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991, 1997; Beidelman 1982).

Joel Robbins (2003), in his call for an “anthropology of Christianity,” highlights the difficulty for anthropologists of certain forms of revivalist, charismatic Christianity that foreground rupture as a controlling logic of their cultural expression. If anthropologists are primed to seek out continuity in their search for “cultural identities,” they will be unable to see and appreciate the way that narratives of historical change, rupture, and leaving the past behind articulate Christian cultural worlds. Robbins’s diagnosis of the problem has been widely compelling for the small subfield of the anthropology of Christianity, which has taken the imperative to “make a complete break with the past” (Meyer 1998) as a key to revivalist Christianities’ explosion in the global South.

Ruth Marshall (2009, 2014), however, has argued that something more is at stake in anthropology’s inability to take Christianity “seriously.” In her work on what she calls the “Pentecostal Revolution” in Nigeria, she argues that what makes Nigerian Pentecostals unruly subjects is their unapologetic claims on the political worlds of anthropologists. It is their political relationships vis-à-vis the anthropologist that engenders the discomfort that Joel Robbins has, in part, pinpointed as a cause of anthropology’s inability to take Christianity seriously as an anthropological object. Why, then, as Robbins takes up from Harding (1991), are Christians unruly anthropological subjects? Why, as Robbins intimates, is “Urapmin traditional religion...easier to understand for the anthropologists than Urapmin Pentecostalism” (Marshall 2014, 346)?

Marshall suggests that it is the tendency of the Pentecostal to “impose” their particular sensibility onto the anthropologist herself.

Robbins gives us a hint of one way that this will to otherness intervenes in evaluations of the ‘proper’ anthropological object when he cites Harding as she argues that Christian fundamentalists in particular are ‘repugnant cultural other[s]’ who, unlike those whose differences are constituted along lines of race/sex/class/ethnicity/colonialism are not suitable subjects of anthropological attention (Harding 1991:375). Let me rephrase that last sentence; Christians are unlike those who are or have been constituted by a racist, patriarchal, dominating, essentializing, universalizing, imperial, Christian power as both different and subaltern and as one through the other. Why are they not suitable? Because they are not the right sort of subaltern or the right sort of other. (349)

Here Marshall, as in her book *Political Spiritualities* (2009), shifts the question of an anthropology of Christianity from questions of culture, symbol, and representation to those of the corporeal, social, and political claims that Christianity makes possible for people under the strains and conditions of the postcolonial world. As Engelke and Tomlinson (2006) have insisted so poignantly, anthropologists fundamentally misunderstand the “difference that Christianity makes” if they do not see that apologists, preachers, and evangelists are not trying principally to create meaning but to create disciples. As Marshall so astutely adjusts Robbins’s insight, the familiarity of the Christian that renders him unruly as an anthropological subject is not a cultural familiarity but rather a political vulnerability. To attend, then, to these new formulations of global thinking, insistence, and aspiration is to be caught, as Susan Friend Harding was, in the process of “coming under conviction” (2000, 59) in spite of oneself through

the sheer will and narrative power of witnessing, that is, evangelizing, that is, bringing the globe into view.

Conversion and the Evangelical Modern

Talal Asad in his "Comments on Conversion" (1996) begins with the simple question, "Why do people convert?" (263), prompting a meditation on the oversaturated meanings of this term of veritable European and strikingly Christian heritage. In raising this question, however, he means to trouble the subtle slippages in anthropological conceptualizations of change, religious or otherwise. To attend to conversion, in Asad's estimation, is to attend to "the narratives by which people apprehended and described a radical change in the significance of their lives," a change that has dual meanings, transitive and intransitive (266). These shifts in "epistemic structures" (264) have been, in their anthropological usage, popularized by Jean and John Comaroff's notion of the long conversation, implicated in both "religious" and "secular" fields of knowledge and understanding. In teasing out this implication, Asad makes the interesting observation that "religious conversion appears to need explaining in a way that secular conversion into modern ways of being does not" (263). A shift in "epistemic structures" is, of course, a rather limited way of thinking anthropologically about the materialities of conversion, that is, the things that these radical changes make "thinkable and doable" (265).

To return to the question of the strange revolutionary, then, is to attend to the question of the narratives by which Evangelical Egyptians—and, indeed, Egyptians more broadly—apprehended the shift in that which was “thinkable and doable” throughout the political and social changes that have refigured the face of Egypt.

One evening I was sitting in the stuffy living room with Hanan and the girls, watching an Indian soap opera and trying to learn the rules to a computer game that Mariam was playing on her laptop. In the midst of the slow, erratic conversations, Hanan mentioned that, unlike al-Sisi and Morsi, Mubarak was most likely to die a Christian. I took notice and asked her why she thought so. She shrugged and simply noted that it was well-known that Hosni Mubarak had surrounded himself with Christians throughout his presidency and so had been exposed to the gospel. If it hadn’t already convinced him, then God would certainly prevail upon him by the time that he died. At the time of this writing, Hosni Mubarak, the 30-year former president of Egypt, has recently died, his funeral attended by al-Sisi himself and celebrated on national television. He outlived his first successor, Mohamed Morsi, by a matter of eight months. The stories in this dissertation have de-centered the narrative of revolutionary and post-revolutionary Egypt that is focused on the machinations, alliances, and betrayals of political and military elites, but they float in and out of the story of an Evangelical community wrestling with their place and agency in relationship to the ruptures and continuities of the last 10 years.

Praying for the Dictator

Essam and his wife and two sons were at the Maadi military hospital in the days following the 2011 Egyptian Revolution. His youngest son was having a not uncommon allergic reaction, and the doctors were trying to figure out the cause and treat the swelling. The whole family was still, with the rest of Egypt, reeling from the highs and lows of the 18 days in Tahrir Square. When his older son, Martin, found out in the course of conversation that Mubarak was being treated (and incarcerated) at the very hospital where they were now seeking treatment for his brother, he insisted, his father told me, to be brought to Mubarak to pray. They asked the Christian security guard on their floor, who flatly rejected the request, at which point Martin became distraught and cried loudly. Stirred by the commotion, a Muslim bodyguard of Mubarak came to check on the ruckus, asking what was wrong. When Essam told him, the guard asked them to wait and left. He returned saying that the boy should come with him but could not be accompanied by anyone, including his parents.

When Martin returned, he told his parents that he had been taken to Mubarak's hospital room where the now disgraced president was confined to a hospital bed. The old man had asked Martin what he was there for, Martin replied that he wanted to pray for him. In his child-like simplicity, Essam related to me, Martin told the recently deposed strongman that even though he had done great wrong to the people of Egypt, he loved him because God loved him and that he wanted to pray for him. Mubarak

agreed and Martin prayed. Afterwards, the former president kissed Martin on the forehead and sent him on his way.

Essam told me this story a year after I had met him and after several conversations about the church, the revolution, and his greatest passion: serving refugees. I was incredulous. Essam was not a particularly wealthy or well-connected man. He was well-known within the Evangelical establishment for his tireless ethic of service, but he did not have to my eye any discernible strings to pull with the authorities that would make this story possible. Essam, unfazed by my surprise, explicitly drew out the point of this story: that the Evangelical relationship to the revolution was not driven by hatred of political authorities, a rebellious or anarchist streak, or even a tendency toward political activism, but rather was motivated by, and tempered by, love. Perhaps more importantly, the revolution itself was not powered by “the people” as in the famous slogan of the square—“The people want the downfall of the regime!” It was powered by a divine intervention in the mundane and treacherous life of the nation of Egypt. Because of God’s activity, so Essam suggested, one need not be powerful or wealthy in the eyes of the world, and there was no surprise that this random boy was chosen to meet and pray with the most famous man in Egypt. Essam engaged in street politics designed to topple a dictator, and then told me glowingly of his son’s love for that dictator and his desperation to communicate God’s love to him and to pray for his soul.

To this strange revolutionary, the politics of the square is not negated by his son's care for the dictator but is fulfilled in it. For Essam there is no higher duty of the revolutionary than to show that the protest can end corruption *within* the person. The political system is *kida kida*—it is what it is—but to be able to effect change at the most consequential level was to impress upon the man, Muhammad Hosni Mubarak, the truth of his wrongdoing, his value in God's eyes, and the possibility of his conversion to a righteous life.

Evangelicals are, as they call themselves, a “minority within a minority” with limited visibility within the Egyptian public sphere, which obfuscates Christian presence in Egypt except in situations in which the long-suffering loyalty of Copts is useful to reinforce nationalist tropes of unity. Essam's story, a serendipitous event, places this small and committed Evangelical family right at the heart of the revolutionary moment that was rending Egypt in 2011. Essam in the square, his son in the hospital room, and the kiss on the forehead are all arguments for the importance of Evangelical modes and reasons of revolution. Revolution is, of course, a bloody affair and many lost their lives in Tahrir Square, in the street battles of Mohammed Mahmoud, in Nahda and Raba'a al-Adawiya Squares, and elsewhere during the long years of revolutionary struggle, and many more languish in Egyptian prisons even now in that struggle's lengthening wake. Revolution is a key narrative of the modern Egyptian state, stretching from the early

20th-century revolutions against British colonial powers to the Free Officers' Revolution of 1952, which remade Mohamed Ali's modern, industrialized Ottoman hinterland, enmeshed in global capitalist orders of extraction, into an independent, postcolonial regional powerhouse. It would also entrench the very bedrock reality of Egypt's political order: a kleptocratic military regime, free from civilian oversight through pervasive glorification of the largest army in the Middle East.

Conclusion: The Will to the Global

“Say Yes to Change”

In 2015, the Bible Society of Egypt rented two 10×5-meter billboards located on the Alexandria Desert Road, one of the most traveled thoroughfares in the country. Its most distant background is a starry night sky, on top of which is superimposed a book, held open by two hands, featuring the globe spanning the two pages. On the left-side page of the book, the globe is backlit by a bright light whose rays shoot from behind the blue and green orb; the right side is dark and ringed with a blue margin of light, suggestive of moonlighting. Large yellow letters across the top of the image read “Request it now,” and directly underneath in ornamental white font, “Words that changed the world.” This billboard aims to market a book of the same name published by the Bible Society of Egypt in which the “Sermon on the Mount” is printed in Arabic calligraphy and backgrounded by photography. The two visible in the press release are a close-up of lit white candles on a table, the other of a young graffiti artist in a gray hoodie with “yes, yes, no, no” written on a colorful wall to his left.

The idea for this book, which the Bible Society hopes will be a creative way of “promoting and distributing the Scriptures widely,” came from an earlier pamphlet in which, shortly after the January 25 Revolution, the Sermon on the Mount had been printed with the words “Yes to Change!” inserted as a subtitle of the speech. After the printed sermon, the printers had added this note: “This is a calling to change that is

beyond any human ability. The center focus of the Sermon on the Mount is the person of the Lord Jesus himself, and it is impossible for anyone to make the required change apart from belief in the Lord Jesus Christ and obedience to him.”

Personal Piety and the Globe

Here we glimpse, again, that the revolution to which Essam and his youth aspired, to which his son Martin wished to testify in that hospital room, of which Judy dreamed, and which Saad monitored is about something beyond the political machinations of the Egyptian state; it has a great deal to do with an imagination of the globe, of the world outside of Egypt. It is an aspiration for change that toggles precariously between the individualizing ethos of evangelical piety and that of world-historical change—a dialectic which takes as its ground the particularities of the nation, as an imagined community, as a site for Evangelical lives of piety and service, and as a world riven by divine words that Evangelicals spend lifetimes attuning their ears, hearts, and eyes to hear and see clearly. The individual’s hands open the book in private contemplation—that supreme discipline of the self which produces the self-contained Protestant subject. What the individual finds in the act of opening that text, however, are the words that change the world, if only they have the will to say “yes to change!”

I end this dissertation with this particular image-within-an-image to highlight the pervasiveness and enduring power of the themes of this research, centered on the aspirational gravity of the evangelical modern. It is through this political project of the

evangelical modern that the January 25 revolution is both here and not here, mediated through a set of Evangelical visual technologies in which “the nation” and its discontents are subsumed within the peculiar dialectics produced between the priority of the individual pious subject and the inevitability of world-historical change to which she is called to witness and participate. Having explored some of the techniques of visual bricolage that structure the Evangelical sensibility, the layers of these imbricated images come into view. The nation emerges in this image through the graffiti artist in the gray hoodie and the colorful cement wall of post-revolutionary Egypt where the politics of visual appropriations of public spaces has been an important image-sign of the revolution: its youthfulness, its demands on public spaces, its layers of signification. Here the iconic graffiti artists of the square are marshaled from their confrontations with the excesses of state violence, their radical re-writing of the grievability of the victim of state violence from thug (*balṭagī*) to martyr (*shahīd*), and their demands of “bread, freedom, and social justice” (*‘aysh, ḥurriyya, ‘adāla iḡtimā’iyya*) to translate the words of another radical, one who demands that your “yes” be yes and your “no” be no, into the signage of the revolution. Here the visual repertoire of the Egyptian revolution becomes the persuasive apparatus for accessing the possibilities of radical change through the personal reading of Christian scripture. The public-ness of the square and the collectivity of its demands recede from view, as the lone graffiti artist stands for the

heroic station that all Evangelicals are called to man during these world-historical moments.

For all the attention paid to the nationalism of Evangelical Egyptians, it is not the nation that is promised to the Evangelical believer. The received history of the Egyptian church is one of suffering under the rule of those who would have them forsake their religion. It is, after all, the church that grows from the blood of the martyrs. A common critique of this project has been the way that frameworks for understanding Christian-majority societies (like Christian citizenship) have been used to understand the practices of this small, out of the way community. As this dissertation shows, however, it is through focusing on the similarities between these forms of global Christianity that one can see the structuring force of these aspirations and technologies toward something other than “state control.” In this way, I hope that this dissertation contributes to the arguments against “religion as epiphenomenal” and contributes to an understanding of global evangelicalism as fundamentally political, with an aspirational, ambitious agenda for making and remaking the world. There are political demands here, as well as pragmatic decisions to claim allies and foes, to go into the street and to vote. But these political demands are so often organized around the scale of the nation-state and its machinations and limitations. In focusing on a minority population with no reasonable path to wielding effective political power, Evangelical Egyptians allow us to see the

farther horizon of these aspirations—what I have called “the will to the global”—as an integral and pervasive part of the evangelical modern.

The Evangelical Modern and the Will to the Global

Since at least the time of Max Weber’s ([1919] 2004) invocation of the disenchantment of the modern world, the articulation of “religion” and “modernity” has stubbornly remained a key question for understanding the shape of the modern world. Uncritical and normative considerations of the inevitable clash of religion and modernity in the rise of secularism have given way to nuanced, sensitive explorations of the co-imbrication of “religion” and “modernity” (van der Veer 1996; de Vries & Sullivan 2006; Butler et al. 2011). The imperative to produce scholarship that refuses a “clash of civilizations” framework is particularly key for representations of the MENA region—an imperative that has been met by admirable ethnographic attention to the “pious and/as/is modern,” to borrow Lara Deeb’s (2006) formulation (Hafez 2011; Agrama 2012; Hamdy 2012; Heo 2018; Hirschkind 2006).

These richly textured accounts of modern religion, however, often have not been particularly clear about the relationship—historical or ethnographic—of these two master concepts. Indeed, I believe that it is the challenge to the taxonomic collection of Christianities posed most sharply by Anidjar (2009, 2014), Marshall (2009, 2010), and Asad (1993, 2003) that offers the clearest path for understanding the fundamentally political—that is, concerned with questions of the distribution of power, the organization

of collective life, and the institutions to make these aspirations “thinkable and doable”—character of contemporary global evangelicalism (Asad 2006).

To attend to the evangelical modern is to attend to the way that, for the growing majority of the world’s Christians, the process of being enfolded into modernity was not one of (dis)enchantment but of a particular combination of racializing, nationalizing, and mediatizing activism within an imagined global community of Christian believers. Weber’s story, along with that of so many that have followed and challenged it (Taussig 1997; Dube 2009; Bennett 2001) have taken for granted the story of a disenchanted modern, without attending to the historical question of the enormous populations that were coerced, persuaded, seduced, and otherwise passed “through the membrane” of modernity, in Harding’s poignant terms (2000, 59), through the technologies and networks of global Protestantism. As Comaroff and Comaroff (2001, 2007) have shown, the “long conversation” was as much about a conversion to modernity as to faith, but in so doing they reinscribe these fields of exploration (“religious” and “secular” conversion) as two distinct fields even as they collapse the ‘religious’ into the political.

In this way, the Comaroffs’ work maintains the fundamental skeleton of Weber’s famous phrasing:

The rosy blush of its laughing heir, the Enlightenment, seems also to be irretrievably fading, and the idea of duty in one’s calling prowls about in our lives like the ghost of dead religious beliefs. (Weber [1930] 2005, 124).

In this dissertation, I have attempted to trace a counter-story to this narrative, one in which the ghost is not an ethereal, lingering nostalgia haunting the native, but rather the Holy Ghost, a personal presence convicting and guiding the believer.

This will to Christianize that one might call evangelism and one might call globalization (Derrida 2002; Anidjar 2014) is an ever-present aspiration of this particular story. It is not simply that this form of Christianity is “global” in the sense of being spread widely over the surface of the earth (Coleman 2000) but rather that it aspires to the globe. These chapters are windows for exploring the aspiration to the global that revivalist forms of Christianity create, through infrastructures that circulate ideas, sensibilities, media, and images. This will to the global, however, is not a will to a smooth orb; it is a highly textured, historically elaborated, and node-ed spatialization. Its elaboration in Egypt is in a high-prestige node of this global vision and one that is, surprisingly, very often left out of view.

It is this political will that has so challenged anthropologists of Christianity and around which so much ink has been spilled in the articulation of an anthropology of Christianity. As that project has slowed in recent years, there is, it seems to me, a realization of the thorniness of the very fundamental problems that Harding raised in her prescient “Representing Fundamentalism: The Problem of the Repugnant Cultural Other” (1991), most importantly their unwillingness to stay in “the margins in which only sanctioned cultural ‘others’ survive” (376). Indeed, this ethnographic exploration of

a community on the margins of these various phenomena—the Pentecostal/charismatic wave in the global South, the ascendancy and proliferation of revivalist forms of Islam, the ever encroaching logics of global capitalism, the construction of a global Christianity—that sees itself as central to these process is an attempt to think through the questions of the possibilities of solidarity, public religions, and pluralism in a revolutionary age (Brannen et al. 2020; Amar 2013).

There remains the question of an approach to an “adequate concept” of Christianity that provides, rather than dulls, analytic leverage on the means of seduction and persuasion which believers across various cultural, political, and historical spaces have embraced (Marshall 2014, 345). To attend to this problem is to acknowledge that

[t]o be in the world today means moving in a space that is still Christian; studying Christianity as simply a religion, as the anthropology of Christianity does, is no doubt the most problematic aspect of its project. Christianity is anything but simply a religion; the very name ‘religion’ is itself Christian. (350).

Marshall argues here that to approach an “adequate concept” of Christianity means to refuse the taxonomic approach to religious diversity by which the anthropology of Christianity at its least critical has proceeded. To take Asad’s programmatic as transferable, then, would mean to begin as evangelicals themselves begin. For Marshall, this means emphasizing the “universalizing...project of conversion” (352), that is, what I call here the will to the global.

To return to the 19th century then, here at the end, is to recall the slogan of 19th-century missionary networks, from which both Nigerian Pentecostals and Egyptian

Evangelicals descend: “The evangelization of the world in our generation.” In lingering on this image and its larger discursive framing, we can see the heirs of the *Ibis*, traveling up and down the Nile, making mobile the necessary technologies of the Evangelical Protestant world—and making subjects, as well. Established in 1804, the British and Foreign Bible Society was established as the first ecumenical institution for the distribution of Bibles. Initially, the Society was domestically centralized in London but was quickly internationalized through the proliferation of auxiliary organizations throughout the colonized world of the 19th century (Howsam & McLaren 2015).

The distribution of the Bible in Egypt was, of course, the goal of Gulian Lansing’s journeys up and down the Nile in the *Ibis*, with which this dissertation opened. In *Egypt’s Princes* (1865), Lansing bemoans the forward movement of the *Ibis* and all that one misses on this journey into evangelical modernity:

We took down our big sail and turned faces northward. It required a little self-denial to turn away from the interesting ruins which were yet to be seen on the way to the first cataract, and especially at the far-famed Philie, but sight-seeing must be made a recreation, not a pursuit, until the seed of the Word shall have been sown in all the land of Egypt. (87)

Like the Alexandria Desert Road along which the Bible Society’s billboard stands, the Nile represents the thoroughfare that Evangelicals traverse in order to bear public witness to this peculiar way of articulating personal piety, nationalist fervor, and the will to the global.

Intimacy and Precarity beyond Sectarianism

This dissertation began with the energy and promise of the January 2011 revolution, which energized many of the projects, “dreams,” and visions of the Egyptians in this text. It is written, however, in a moment when “the revolution” has receded from both scholarly and church view. As the revolution recedes from scholarly view in the Middle East, there is an ossification of our understandings of what these momentous events meant. This solidification of knowledge around the fundamental importance of social media (Naraghi 2013; El-Sharnouby 2017), the shape of a “politics of the street” (Bayat 2010), and the centrality of youthfulness (Sika 2017; Tohamy 2016; Schielke 2015) can obscure the many effects of “the revolutionary” that we have not yet fully understood. I have argued in this dissertation that to linger in these quiet, intimate, personal sites of struggle can illuminate the deeply personal, affective, and contested labor that goes into navigating a particular kind of precarity in Egypt.

This dissertation dwells on the question of what to make of this strange juxtaposition of intimacy and world-historical change condensed in the visual argument of this Bible Society billboard and elaborated through lives of sprawling Evangelical piety and activism. How does that which is intimate articulate, provoke, or make impossible claims to the political? This is not unlike the question around which Saba Mahmood’s *Politics of Piety* (2006) revolves, that is, how does one write an ethnography of a community that is illegible under the regime of “liberal assumptions...integral to

our humanist intellectual traditions" (2006, 5). Writing against mainstream feminist scholarship on the Middle East, Mahmood insists that the insistence on finding a "voice" that speaks in the register of secular liberal feminism (Abu-Lughod 1986; Altorki 1986; Fernea 1985) in fact obscures the other registers that one might discover speaking back to one in the field.

Missing from this dissertation has been the vociferous articulation of "sectarianism" that animates so much academic, popular, and devotional literature on the Middle East and features in a register in which Evangelical Egyptians are fluent. This choice is indicative of an exhaustion with the incessant demand that Christians in the Middle East must be visible only as victims, survivors, endure-ers of violence (Shenoda 2011). It is also, however, part of my larger argument in this dissertation: that the difference, building on Cannell's question, that Christianity makes in this context is to the lived experience of an imagination of "community" which is at once personal and "global" and within which the nation is subsumed through various technologies and discourses of community-building. The "sectarian frame" through which Evangelicals invoke their marginalization to the wider Egyptian state is premised on a larger imagination in which the small, beleaguered Evangelical Egyptian community is, in fact, central to the global community of believers. It is this imagined community that provides Evangelicals with the tools and resources to engage with and in the nation-state of Egypt.

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Biography

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