



13th Conference

of the European Research Network on Global
Pentecostalism

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Pentecostalism and Socio-Cultural Change

Book of Abstracts



**UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**

Conference Theme

Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity is often seen as a catalyst for social and cultural change. This chimes with how Pentecostals and Charismatics tend to portray their own religion – as transformative, modern, and on the cutting edge of socio-cultural developments. Yet this view tends to de-contextualise Pentecostalism from the wider cultural and social fabric within which these transformations take place. This conference seeks to recover a more inter-connected perspective that not only asks how Pentecostal movements have effected socio-cultural changes, but also to what extent they have rather themselves been influenced and driven by larger transformations in World Christianity and society at large. The goal of the conference is to place Pentecostalism firmly within the recent history and contemporary expression of World Christianity.

Conference organised by:

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Keynotes

Plenary 1: History

Religious Entanglements: Central African Pentecostalism, the Creation of Cultural Knowledge, and the Making of the Luba Katanga

David Maxwell, University of Cambridge

Engaging with two great issues of contemporary and historical interest, knowledge creation and cultural entanglement, the lecture examines the role of missionaries and Africans in producing knowledge about Africa and explores the interlocking connections between missions, local society and the colonial state in which researchers were entwined, while highlighting the transnational networks of museums and universities that framed their work. The presentation takes as its case study the interaction of the Congo Evangelistic Mission (CEM) with the Luba speaking peoples of south-east Katanga in Belgian Congo. Under the leadership of one of twentieth century Pentecostalism's most extraordinary architects, William F.P. Burton, the CEM grew from a simple faith movement founded in 1915 to become one of the most successful classical Pentecostal missions in Africa, with a legacy of over one million members in present a day Democratic Republic of Congo.

The lecture reveals how research about Africa was produced by a larger group of people than just missionaries or social anthropologists, bringing into focus the role of Africans in shaping texts, collections, and images and in challenging and adapting Western imported presuppositions and prejudices. It finishes by considering how the Luba deployed that knowledge in the construction and critique of custom, the making of ethnic identity and ethno-philosophy, and the founding of an African church.

Plenary 2: Anthropology

Presidents, Priests, and Prophets: Covenantal Christian Nationalism and the Challenge of Biblical Analogy

Naomi Haynes, University of Edinburgh

This lecture draws on recent fieldwork in Zambia's now-defunct Ministry of National Guidance and Religious Affairs to explore how established Pentecostal ways of reading the Bible structure contemporary Christian nationalist activism in Zambia. Christian nationalist activists, who are primarily Pentecostals, view their country as an analogue of biblical Israel, which makes contemporary government and church leaders analogues of Old Testament kings, priests, and prophets. This approach presents challenges. On the one hand, support for Christian nationalism by government leaders encourages the compliance of church leaders with state-led religious projects; on the other hand, however, the analogical reading of the biblical text on which this support depends casts the church in a prophetic role, which in turn opens the door for criticism of the government. Pentecostal Christian nationalist activists in Zambia therefore find themselves caught in a double-bind that simultaneously encourages submission and critique. An analysis of this process contributes an important non-Western perspective to contemporary discussions of Christian nationalism, in part by highlighting how Pentecostal theology shapes this movement. It also complicates easy interpretations of Christian nationalism as abetting state power by demonstrating its critical possibilities.

Plenary 3: Study of Religions

Prosperity Gospel and Prosperity Politics: Building a National Cathedral in Ghana

Karen Lauterbach, University of Copenhagen

The Prosperity Gospel is conventionally known as the theological principle of 'sowing and reaping' or the idea that believers will receive God's blessings in abundance if they are ardent believers and give generously in church. In this lecture, I provide a critical discussion of the prosperity gospel approached as script (a uniform theological system of thought) that travels from one place to another. I suggest studying the prosperity gospel from the ground to grasp its contextualisation and entextualisation in a deep sense. The lecture focuses on the prosperity gospel in a Ghanaian context and more concretely how it is constructed and expressed in relation to the building of a national cathedral in Ghana. I link the analysis of the prosperity gospel to context-specific understandings of progress and wealth and discuss how changing ideas of prosperity and progress are weaved into the discussion of the National Cathedral in Ghana. The case is used to analyse how different key actors of the project have discursively presented and constructed the building of a national cathedral as a way to enter into a transactional relationship with God; one that yields wealth, success and prosperity, but one that has also been accused of representing fakery. This is discussed in the intersection between Christianity (particularly Pentecostal Christianity) and nation building.

Parallel Panels

1 Pentecostalism and Migration

Religious Spaces of Care in the Postsecular City: Nigerian Pentecostals and Civic Engagement in London

Richard Burgess, University of Roehampton, UK

The function of African Pentecostal churches in Europe as social and religious support networks for their members has been well documented as has the influence of transnational networks on their religious practices (e.g. Adogame 2013; Burgess 2020). What has been less explored is the significance of their civic engagement in the wider society. This paper examines the civic engagement of two Nigerian Pentecostal churches in London: the London Lighthouse and Freedom's Ark. The London Lighthouse belongs to a large transnational Pentecostal denomination with its headquarters in Nigeria, while Freedom's Ark is a small independent Pentecostal church. The paper, first, sets the context by examining the relationship between postsecularism, faith-based civic engagement and social policy. It then describes the case study churches and outlines their civic activities. Finally, the paper considers the factors that shape Nigerian Pentecostal civic activities. The increasing prominence of churches and faith-based organizations in social welfare provision in Britain has led to claims that faith groups are being co-opted into the wider processes of neoliberal governance. Drawing upon research conducted in London, I show that in some contexts Nigerian Pentecostal civic activities represent ethical forms of resistance to neoliberal politics, especially those that address issues related to social and economic justice.

Between the Market and the Bible: Translingual Marketing Strategies in an African Pentecostal Church in Madrid

Michele Cunico, Universidad Autónoma de Madrid

This paper describes some translingual modalities of communication used by an African pastor in Madrid, contributing new understandings of how the African Pentecostal churches come to be positioned within a local diasporic landscape through various marketing strategies. Starting from the idea that “charismatic churches [...] offer people a way of *feeling connected* to and part of the world, of being global citizens—consumers, [...] without having to lose their sense of being African” (De Witte, 2018), I will analyze the logo of the church, as well some aspects of the Sunday service, showing how its complex

composition reveals the influence of global neoliberal discourse. I will engage with the notion of the *spatial repertoire*, proposed by Canagarajah (2018) and Pennycook (2017) and, through an interdisciplinary analysis, highlight how images, words and people interact with objects, such as phones and dresses, to turn a small African church attended by migrants into a space of communicative tension, translingually realized, between the promises of participation in the global consumerist market and the condition of marginalization that migrants suffer. The data for analysis come from an ethnographic study that combine analytic observation with self-reflexivity and emotional autoethnography (Bochner & Ellis, 2016).

Digitized Faith in a Digitalized World? A Case Study of Transnational Migrant Pentecostalism in Norway

Stian Sørлие Eriksen, VID Stavanger

The massive digitalization witnessed in recent decades has arguably revolutionized not only how individuals live their lives but also how societies function. Not only have smart phones and social media become part of our daily routines, but digital media has altered the ways organizations and societies operate, not the least being highlighted during the Covid-19 pandemic. This has also affected practices of religion, including how churches operate globally and locally, challenging churches to interact in digitalized ways at unprecedented extents. Based on digital ethnography and interviews in selected transnational Pentecostal migrant churches in Norway, the article asks if, how, and to what extent digitized practices of faith have changed migrants' relation to faith, church and society. At one level, many migrant communities have used digital media long before the pandemic as ways to connect and expand beyond the local realm. In extension, this also provides an opportunity to ask more critically to what extent such digitalization challenges the very notion of Pentecostal faith and community. Taking inspiration from digital learning theory and premises of Pentecostal theology, the article discusses how a digitalized society may challenge migrant Pentecostals' faith, identity and modes of interaction in their contexts.

Rebuilding Social Relationships in Contexts of Refuge: Spiritual Kinship in Congolese Pentecostal Churches in Kampala (Uganda)

Alessandro Gusman, University of Turin

Early studies on the upsurge of Pentecostalism emphasized individualist identities conveyed by conversion, and intergenerational tensions caused by the

antagonism between kinship solidarity and the idea of the “break with the past”. This latter has been interpreted as a way of setting free from familial obligations (Van Dijk 1992; Maxwell 2002). Subsequent studies nuanced the view of the break of social bonds, recognizing that adherence to the new religion doesn’t inevitably imply abandoning the moral obligations towards the kin group (Lindhardt 2010; Haynes 2012).

Based on ethnographic research with Congolese Pentecostals in Kampala, this paper analyses the ways in which spiritual relatedness is (re)established in contexts of refuge, with a focus on the role shared religious belonging has on kin work, or “kinning” (Howell 2006), and on the formation of kinship-like relationships with other Congolese in Kampala. To do so, I rely on some cases of adoption, in which Pentecostal families welcomed newly arrived refugees into their kin group. The paper reformulates the question of what conversion to Pentecostalism does to kin relationships, focusing on “what kinship does” (Carsten 2013) to the way Congolese born-again in Kampala conceive forms of relatedness in the context of refuge.

From Actual Migration to Imagined Migration: A Case of Ghanaian Pentecostalism

James Kwateng-Yeboah, Queen’s University Canada

What generates an aspiration to migrate? How do such migration aspirations intersect with Pentecostalism? There has been quite extensive research on Pentecostalism and migration, but the conventional approach examine Pentecostalism in the lives of people whose international movements can **actually** be observed. This paper breaks new ground by shifting the study of Pentecostalism from actual migration in the present to imagined migration in the future. Although imagined migration might never occur, it materializes in peoples bodies and emotions through experiences that are central to Pentecostalism. Focusing on the experience of dreams, prophecies, and divinely-attributed intuitions, the paper examines how migration is desired and experienced in ways that depart from actual mobility across state borders. Drawing insights from online surveys (N=590) and semi-structured interviews (20) among Ghanaians, the paper argues that migration aspirations are not always the result of rational economic choice. The aspiration to migrate exists also within, and because of—*embodied, legitimized, and subjective*— forces in the contours of experiential religion. Overall, this paper opens a new chapter on the transformative forces of Pentecostalism that reconstruct migration as matter of who you are, not where you are.

2 Pentecostalism and Politics

Political Pentecostalism in the Global South: A Comparative Attempt

Leandro Luis Bedin Fontana, IGCM Frankfurt

This paper is located at the intersection of theology, religion, and politics, and sets out to capture significant changes taking place in the Global South on the political scene, particularly owing to Pentecostal political engagement. More specifically, the study will devote particular attention to both the rhetorical patterns of argumentation deployed by Pentecostal actors in the political sphere and their theologically informed, symbolic performance. The question it seeks to address is whether any meaningful, discernible (theological) nexus connecting various nodes of Pentecostal engagement in the political realm worldwide, especially in the Global South, can be identified. For there is in the meantime a wide array of research works, mostly drawing on ethnographic case studies conducted in specific contexts, that demonstrate and account for this development. However, there seems to be, as of yet, not as many studies providing evidence to substantiate the argument that there are significant correspondences or even commonalities between apparently similar phenomena occurring at different spots worldwide. The paper will draw on four surveys conducted between 2020 and 2021 in a joint effort with internationally renowned researchers in the field of Pentecostalism, as well as on the results of a supplementary international conference, and aims at carrying out a comparative analysis of these findings, identifying possible parallels or cross-continental corresponding patterns.

Societal Involvement and Theological Changes in Swedish Pentecostal Churches in the 21st Century

Fredrik Wenell & Ulrik Josefsson, Academy for Leadership and Theology,
Sweden

This presentation discusses how contemporary believers within the Swedish Pentecostal congregations express their involvement in society as well as how they understand such involvement theologically in the context of Swedish secularism. The results of this initial survey are then compared historically to the same Pentecostal movement in its early 20th century form. The data for our analysis consists of eight web-based group interviews (two in four different Pentecostal congregations) and five individual interviews with national Pentecostal leaders (three men and two women). In order to analyze our data we draw upon the Belgian political scientist Chantal Mouffe's terminology "politics" and "the political" and her theory of agonistic politics.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Pentecostal movement in Sweden could be characterized in terms of what the theologian Richard H. Niebuhr calls *Christ against culture*. Although Sweden was a country deeply affected by its Lutheran heritage, early Pentecostals understood society as thoroughly unchristian. But according to the World Value Survey, Sweden could now be classified as a heavily secularized society. The current relationship between Swedish Pentecostalism and general Swedish society has changed and could nowadays be expressed in terms of *culture against Christ*.

Pentecostalism and the Amended CAMA 2020 Law in Nigeria

Grace Nwamah, University of Leeds

This paper addresses the intersections of Pentecostalism, politics, and law in contemporary Nigeria. It focuses on the controversy about the (amended) Companies and Allied Matters Act (CAMA, 2020), which was passed into law by the Nigerian government in August 2020. The enactment of the new CAMA law generated a lot of controversies with mixed feelings from different quarters. While some applaud it as step in the right direction, others oppose it and see certain provisions of the new law as deliberate attack on faith-based organisations. Among the key actors in the opposition against the CAMA 2020 law are the leaders of Pentecostal churches in Nigeria. Although some scholars have suggested that Nigeria has become a 'Pentecostal republic' (Obadare 2019), the controversy about CAMA 2020 demonstrates that Pentecostal churches and leaders feel, in fact, threatened by government interference in religious affairs and are concerned about what they consider as unequal treatment of Christian and Muslim groups. Based on extensive fieldwork and media reports, this paper explores the key arguments and concerns reflected in the Pentecostal opposition against CAMA 2020, and what this tells us about the instability of Pentecostalism as a political religion in contemporary Nigeria.

The Characteristics of Political Participation by Pentecostal Churches

Sangil Song, BU School of Theology, alumnus

This paper aims to explore the various characteristics of political participation by Pentecostal churches. As one of the fastest growing religious movements in the world, Pentecostalism has much potential to exercise a great deal of political influence. The scope and extent of political impact that Pentecostalism can exert has attracted the attention of scholars. As witnessed in many parts of the globe, Pentecostal movement has turned away from its apolitical stance

toward active participation in the political arena. It displays an wide array of political orientations from conservative to progressive one. It is partly because of the high degree of pragmatism prevalent in Pentecostal churches, which allows them to adapt to different political situations easily. In terms of democracy, the pragmatic approach toward politics yields mixed results, sometimes strengthening democracy and at other times undermining it. To fully understand the nature of Pentecostal's political participation, we need to examine the Pentecostal worldview that is mystical and conducive to individualistic approaches to politics. Recently, a particular slice within Pentecostalism emerges that focuses attention to the structural change of the societies. They are called "Progressive Pentecostals", who serve as the evidence of Pentecostals having higher education and more wealth than ever before. The direction of the political participation by Pentecostal churches in the future will be determined by this increasing segment of Progressive Pentecostals.

Electoral Prophecies: What Can They Offer Ghana's democracy?

Gideon Tetteh, University of Eastern Finland

This paper discusses the potential of electoral prophecies in promoting or eroding democracy in Ghanaian politics. It focuses on Pentecostal neo-prophets. Pentecostal neo-prophets are the new political actors in Ghana's democracy. Though they have gained much popularity in Ghana, their acceptance is doubted by some Pentecostals and non-Pentecostals. No doubt they present a new mode of Pentecostal political and public engagement: electoral prophecy. Neo-prophets now provide legitimation of authority and wealth and, to some extent, bolster power and authority for Ghanaian elites. This political legitimacy is contested and rejected by some Pentecostal and non-Pentecostals. They claim the nature of electoral prophecy and the prophetic figure are problematic and rarely will they provide any positive socioeconomic or political change, but rather generate fears and panic. Neo-prophets categorize political parties and candidates into good and bad. Neo-prophets also make God a political actor who decides the outcome of elections.

This paper considers the unique contributions neo-prophets make to democracy. It will give a critique on how and why electoral prophecy might promote or erode democracy. Is this new mode a challenge to Pentecostal political engagement? What ways can be used to harness the benefit of or curtail the challenges of electoral prophecy?

3 Pentecostalism and Gender

The Involvement of Women in the Formation and Development of Nascent British Pentecostalism

Jan Hocking, University of Birmingham

Research on the pioneering efforts of church-based evangelistic activity in early British Pentecostalism abounds, whereas scant attention has been paid hitherto to the part played by women. This thesis discovers and allows their voices from this early period to be heard and their testimonies to be successfully gathered and preserved. My research is supported by substantial documentary evidence and extensive interview material gathered from elderly Pentecostals who either ministered themselves or knew women who had ministered in early Elim (1915-1940), Apostolic (1916-1940) or Assemblies of God (1924-1940) British Pentecostalism.

It is now known that many women in this era ministered in full ministry roles and pioneered new churches as did the men. For some women their ministry roles suffered rise and demise, struggle and disappointment. For many this was not according to merit but often because of their gender and men's dictatorial rule and blatant misuse of them. My research has contributed to knowledge and the lacuna that existed in the literature has been filled. This study provides information and insights that are of benefit to the study of Pentecostalism in the UK and in the wider world.

Perception of Women's Leadership in Neo-Charismatic Churches on the Example of "The Word Of Life" Church

Tatiana M. Krihtova, Saint Tichon Orthodox University

Women in neo-charismatic churches are allowed to be priests and lead a church, but in Russian churches, this happens very rarely in reality. Usually women have many duties but do not become priests or lead pastors. Based on fieldwork in the neo-Charismatic church "Word of Life," this paper examines three Pentecostal models of female leadership in order to explain this phenomenon. The model of Julia Popova assumes that women and men differ little in their qualities, even as they may not be in the same positions at church. According to this model, a woman can take on leadership functions as long as this does not interfere with her family duties. In the model of Lisa Beaver, women are viewed as much more independent than in the other two models. Female leadership is thus fundamentally different from male leadership, and women must understand what their special female leadership qual-

ities are and then act on an equal footing with men. In the model of Priscilla Shirer women are encouraged to accept their passive role to the benefit of themselves, their community, and all of society. None of these models prescribes how women should operate in family affairs, but they do entail different degrees of freedom and responsibility for women in the church as parishioners.

Women and Prophetism in Neo-Pentecostal Christianity in Kenya

Philomena Njeri Mwaura, Kenyatta University, Kenya

In the past two decades in Kenya a different strand of Neo-Pentecostalism has emerged that emphasises prophecy and the prophetic. This has especially captivated a different type of clientele, especially those who are interested in understanding their present circumstances. This latest form of Pentecostalism designates itself as prophetic churches and their leaders are referred to as prophetesses.

While the word “prophecy” may connote spiritual power and mystery, in fact, the prophetic tradition is deeply embedded in both the Old Testament and indigenous African religion. Prophecy and prophetism has generally emerged in the past in times of social, political and economic upheaval. By analysing prophecy and the role of women prophetesses in the biblical narrative, indigenous African religion, and in the new women-led prophetic churches in Kenya; this article seeks to demonstrate the hope that these women leaders bring not only to churches, but to the national landscape as they access power that surpasses the ‘corridors of power.’ This article will focus on three women leaders of Neo-Pentecostal churches namely; Teresia Wairimu of Faith Evangelistic Ministries, Margaret Wanjiru of Jesus Is Alive Ministries and Lucy Natasha of Prophetic Latter Glories Ministries International.

Cultural Hierarchies and Freedom of the Spirit: Reimagining of Pentecostal Women in Nigeria

Donatus Pius Ukpong, University of Uyo, Nigeria

There are cultural hierarchies which mitigate against the freedom of the Spirit in a particular cultural milieu. This makes it difficult to negotiate between cultural boundaries and religious freedom especially in a Pentecostal context, where freedom of the Spirit often implies disruption of gender based cultural hierarchies. Hence there is a tension between the Spirit-empowered women and cultural models of women as wives and mothers and their domestication in the hierarchy of values in Nigerian communities. It is, therefore, problem-

atic for many women to define their cultural image of womanhood in harmony with their freedom in the Holy Spirit. This paper adopts a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative research via phenomenological and survey instruments in studying the cultural hierarchies of the Oron people in Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria and their employment of Pentecostal practices and theology. The study discovered that Pentecostal freedom of the Spirit is disruptive of cultural hierarchies and metagenderized. The Spirit-empowered women are negotiating between their cultural and Pentecostal imaging. Therefore, scholars have to reimage spirit-empowered women in a model capable of reconciling cultural stereotypes with Pentecostal empowerment of women. The cultural and gender based imaging of women are not in harmony with Pentecostal freedom of the Spirit. The paper, therefore, calls for a restructuring of cultural hierarchies to include spiritual empowerment of women.

Atonement for Sexual Abuse Survivors: A Feminist-Informed Pentecostal Somatology

Faith Van Horne, University of Birmingham

Many feminist theologians consider Pentecostalism inherently incompatible with feminist goals. Pentecostal theologians have also been slow to acknowledge feminist critiques, sticking to 'women's issues' within Pentecostalism when they do engage feminist concerns. Likewise, feminists from other contexts are unlikely to look to Pentecostal theology to expand their own work. This siloing of intellectual efforts impoverishes both 'sides.' This paper asks: how can feminist Pentecostal scholarship provide new directions for doctrinal critique and construction beyond its own theological tradition?

This paper explores one such effort: a feminist-informed Pentecostal somatology (theology of the body) to examine atonement doctrine. I argue that the expression of North American feminist theology that has been most influential in critiquing atonement holds an overly individualistic conception of bodily autonomy. As a result, these theologians' doctrinal construction fails to offer a redemptive vision for healing from sexual violence. A Pentecostal conception of bodily autonomy, where bodily redemption is linked to atonement, might add a necessary dimension to feminist critiques. Linking shared feminist and Pentecostal concerns, this work attempts to bridge the divide between these traditions, offering an example of ecumenical engagement.

4 Pentecostalism and Healing

Inner Healing and the Therapeutic Transformation of Charismatic Christianity

Peter Althouse, Oral Roberts University, Tulsa

Therapeutic culture and the ways in which it permeates social institutions has been observed since the mid-twentieth century. As a collective gestalt of knowledge and practices focusing on emotional health, self-help, personal development, and recovery, therapeutic culture is transforming Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity. Christian Healing Ministry, a charismatic organization founded by Francis and Judith MacNutt, promotes health, deliverance, and prosperity through healing practices that include therapeutic techniques to deal with emotional imbalance, grief, addiction, trauma, and post-traumatic stress disorder. Specifically, inner healing is a charismatic ritual that includes a range of rituals and practices designed to help participants address emotional and psychological needs. The contention of this paper is that therapeutic culture is transforming charismatic Christianity, which is observed in the ways in which therapeutic techniques are enfolded into the practices of inner healing. Findings are based on participant observations and interviews.

Medical Pluralism and Commodification of Healing by Pentecostal Pastor-Prophets in Ghana

Francis Benyah, Abo Akademi University

One of the attractions of the Pentecostal movement globally is its promise of healing. In Africa, especially, the embedment of illness and disease causation in local ontologies and the promise of Pentecostal pastor-prophets to offer answers to the problem of illness have made them a viable alternative to hospitals. Indeed, the dichotomy of worldviews that guide the practices of both religious healing and biomedicine produces conflict and competition between different health providers – sometimes causing a disruptive effect for people in search of relief. The opposing views of illness or health-beliefs are moulded in personal development, social events and cultural history. In this paper, I examine the competing narratives of sickness and healing and the promise by pastor-prophets at Pentecostal healing centres in Ghana to offer cure to sicknesses that biomedicine is not able to heal. I argue that the promise and competing narratives of sickness and healing evince an ethos of the commodification of religion.

Divine Healing and Pentecostal Theology in the Era of Covid-19 Pandemic

Lord Elorm Donkor, Birmingham Christian College

This paper discusses the extent to which “the Pentecostal promises of health, deliverance, and prosperity can be seen as an expression of a wider commodification of religion and the proliferation of self-help cultures”. Using the four voices of theology as a method for reflection, the paper examines the theology and practices of a Pentecostal group that promises healing in their religious practice but fought anti-vaccine movements whilst affirming that their religion provides health, wealth, and deliverance. Reflecting on papers presented at conferences organised by The Church of Pentecost in 2020 to fight anti-vaccine communication within diaspora communities, the paper argues that Pentecostalism reinterprets itself when faced with new challenges to facilitate cultural change. The paper concludes that viewing Pentecostal insistence on health, wealth, and deliverance mainly as means to commodifying religion could cloud our view of Pentecostal theological consistency. When taken together, the four voices of Pentecostal theology of health and wealth reveals that Pentecostals’ ability to respond to changing circumstances gives them the necessary power to shape religious practices in a relevant manner instead of losing power to change.

Economies of Affect in a South Africa-Based, Zimbabwean Transnational Pentecostal Church

Admire Thonje, University of Witwatersrand

When Pastor Alph Lukau raised Elliot from the dead¹, questions, criticism, and derision circulated from public officials, prominent local pastors, and the general public. How could people defend such acts? Within Pentecostal assemblages, scholars have identified how notions of community and unity typify Pentecostal churching. Yet community and churching are not monolithic but comprise of various layers of affective relationality. Developing my arguments from ethnographic work on a transnational Pentecostal church from Zimbabwe, I demonstrate how affect contributes to formation of multiple notions of community/solidarity within a religious body. I highlight how invitations to church weddings and participation in funerals contribute to multiple solidarities among the laity and within the church. In theorizing the process through which such dynamics play out, I borrow Sarah Ahmed’s affective economies but eschew her Marxian scheme. My work approaches economies in a primordial sense, and borrows from theological language to show circulation, management, and curation of affects in a religious organization. Curation im-

plies that there are normative expectations of how members affect one another. Meeting or not meeting these expectations contributes to the laity's different conceptions of community(ies) in the church.

Pentecostalism and Nigerian Social Change: The RCCG as Religious Symptom of Nigeria's Turbulent Postcolonial History

Christopher Wadibia, University of Oxford

Founded in 1952, the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) is one of Nigeria's most influential Pentecostal churches. The RCCG has evolved from a small fellowship in a Lagos slum to a transnational religious corporation that claims a membership of 10 million congregants and has parishes in almost 200 countries. Scholars have studied how the RCCG creates what it views as solutions to the social challenges confronting its members, and how the church sees itself as helping to compensate for the Nigerian state's weak development institutions. Whilst much scholarship has explored how the RCCG delivers its own brand of development solutions to beneficiaries, little attention has been paid to how the church responded to various Nigerian sociopolitical and economic contextual factors which created the conditions required for the church to evolve into its current institutional configuration. This paper argues the RCCG is a religious product whose existence has been made possible by its willingness to adapt its Pentecostal theologies and state engagement strategies in ways symptomatic of broader socioeconomic and political changes in Nigeria. The RCCG is a symptom of the very Nigerian contextual factors it tackles. This paper shows how the RCCG emerged from decades of dictatorships and economic stagnation as a socioreligious service supplier with a vision to alter the course of Nigeria's future.

5 Pentecostalism and Global African Identities

Pentecostalism and/as Blackness – A Diasporic Conversation

Marlon Millner, Northwestern University

In the first wave of critical academic scholarship on Pentecostalism, Walter Hollenweger, Leonard Lovett and James Tinney put forward a Black thesis on Pentecostalism. Blackness – understood as cultural, ethical and radical/political for these thinkers offered a novel analysis and constructive proposal for how to understand Pentecostalism – both in the United States and around the world. However, the Black thesis was largely marginalized in first wave critical efforts of the 1980s and 1990s to theologically and historiographically explain Pentecostalism in all its varieties. Pentecostalism, as theologically and histori-

ographically articulated enunciates itself, in the words of former theologian and Black theorist J. Kameron Carter, as cultural property of the West. This paper returns to the Black thesis, with the flowering of global and Black descended academics who study Pentecostalism to interrogate if and on what basis can the Black thesis – in its cultural, ethical and political formulations be retrieved as a critical analytic. The paper will do this by thinking of Pentecostalism as diaspora, and in simultaneity with Black diaspora, opening up dialogue between certain Pentecostal thinkers and articulators of Black diaspora.

A Pentecostal Paradox: The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada's Evangelical Efforts in a Transitioning Trinidadian Society 1920-1962

Aakeil Murray, University of the West Indies, St. Augustine

This paper takes a primarily historical approach to highlight the transformative and modern elements of Pentecostalism, which allowed for its establishment in a uniquely multi-racial and multi-religious Trinidadian society. It also illustrates how the fragmenting of the British empire across the globe impacted the rapidity with which the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada (PAOC) moved to indigenise the institution in the region, as Trinidad and Tobago and other British West Indian territories engaged in the process of decolonisation. The work gives particular attention to the similarities in charismatic phenomenon between Pentecostalism and the African derived faiths on the island that enabled Pentecostalism to gradually increase in popularity among persons of African descent. It also argues that Trinidad's transition from European colonial ideals to creole nationalism on its way to independence in 1962 also significantly contributed to the growth of the faith. The work also identifies and assesses the paradox that Pentecostalism created as the island experienced the vicissitudes of a British colony in transition to nationalisation.

African Literature and the Socio-Cultural Critique of Pentecostalism: Okey Ndibe's Foreign Gods, Inc.

Adriaan van Klinken, University of Leeds

Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity is often seen as a key driver of socio-cultural change, not at least in contemporary Africa. However, what is often overlooked is how Pentecostalism itself is also subject of critique by a range of socio-cultural actors who are concerned about the impact that Pentecostal religiosity has on society. Building on the notion of African literary writers as social thinkers and critics (Adebanwi 2014) and expanding on the tradition of African literary texts offering critical representations of Christianity (Gikandi 2003),

this paper foregrounds contemporary African writers and their representation of Pentecostal churches, beliefs and practices. One case in point it discusses Okey Ndibe's novel, *Foreign Gods, Inc* (2014), which uses various literary methods to offer a narrative critique of central themes in contemporary Pentecostalism, such as charismatic leadership, miracles and wealth, and spiritual warfare. Where Achille Mbembe (2021) has proposed the notion of Pentecostal movements as a form of 'practical cosmopolitanism', Ndibe appears to offer an Afropolitan critique of Pentecostalism. Methodologically, the paper will advocate for broadening the 'cultural turn in Pentecostal studies' (Bergunder 2010), to allow for an analysis of Pentecostalism as embedded in a broader field of cultural production, and therefore also as subjected to cultural critique.

6 Pentecostal Boundaries

The 'Presbycostalisation' of the Church in Cameroon: The Influence of Pentecostalism on the Worship and practice of Presbyterian Church in Cameroon.

Felix Kang Esoh, Presbyterian Theological Seminary Kumba, Cameroon

In recent times, the religious practices and worship in Cameroon have been directed by the "Born-Again" movements or neo-Pentecostal churches and Charismatic movements. These groups promote a gospel of salvation evidenced by physical healing, prosperity, deliverance from demonic influences, battle against spiritual forces, uphold the inerrancy of the Bible, and emphasise the practice of charismatic patterns Christian worship. This new impulse is greatly transforming the face of Presbyterianism or the Reformed Tradition in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC). This paper demonstrates the tension between the old generation "orthodox" Christians/clergy who maintain a strict observance of Presbyterianism and the new generation "progressive" Christians/clergy who favour an adoption of Pentecostal beliefs and practices. It argues that the changing environment of Global Christianity is such that, in part, classical Christianity will not always be normative in the expression of Christian beliefs and practices, and that, it is impossible to do holistic/inclusive mission without taking into consideration the present religio-cultural context of Cameroon saturated by Pentecostals.

On "Sheep-Stealing" and Community-Building: Changing Local Christianity in Eastern India

Sophia Schäfer, Humboldt University of Berlin

In a small town in indigenous (Adivasi) hinterland a predominantly Lutheran community is currently struggling for its identity. Drawing on former missionary land, buildings and church structures, since 1882 the Christian converts had continuously evolved into a prospering neighbourhood. After the German missionaries left the "Mission compound" in the 1960s, local forms and interpretations of Indian Christianity balanced indigenous as well as missionary values.

During the last 30 years, several Pentecostal churches, prayer towers and house churches have come into being here. While the Lutheran ordained pastors accuse Pentecostal "greedy hate-speakers" of sheep-stealing, my qualitative-empirical study makes a different observation: the Pentecostal groups, preachers and their conflicting activities emerge within the Lutheran community. Instead of division, many community members started visiting different churches during the week. Calling themselves "Christian" rather than "Lutheran", they acknowledge a growing diversity and bear witness to the decline of the local Lutheran church monopoly.

Whom does missionary heritage belong to? My presentation deals with local conflicts regarding the legitimacy of religious and social practices as well as local processes of community building and belonging including the negotiation of values. Questions of religious authority are intertwined with the decline of confessionalism and the re-evaluation of tradition.

Navigating Between "Evangelical", "Charismatic" and "Sect": Constructing Belonging in a Church in Switzerland

Rahel Weber, University of Basel

In my dissertation, I am researching a church in Switzerland that can be classified as "Independent Charismatic" (Johnson 2014, 276-277). However, in ethnographic conversations and narrative interviews, not every member of the church identifies with the label "charismatic". Some identify with the label "pentecostal" or "evangelical", while others emphasize that these labels do not matter to them at all. In addition, these members describe a number of criteria for their self-understanding as Christians such as conversion and gifts of the spirit. Considering this situation, how can this church be conceptualized as a subject of research?

Following the understanding of labels such as “Pentecostal” as a product of local identity politics (Maltese et al. 2019), this paper will show; first, the ascription “sect” plays an essential role in the religious identity politics in Switzerland. This affects the local “Pentecostal/Charismatic” churches and their members in their construction of belonging; second, the “Pentecostal/Charismatic” movement is influenced by the institutionalized forms of religion manifest in the so-called “historical” churches; and third, the constructing of belonging must be interpreted in correlation with the position of the researcher in the field.

7 Pentecostalism, Commodification and Consumption

Time, Technology and Theology: The Neo-Pentecostal consumerist ethos of the ‘more’

Miranda Klaver, VU Amsterdam

Pentecostal megachurches are at the forefront of integrating media technology in their practices: both in the production of church services as well in their use of media platforms like Instagram, YouTube, and Facebook. Yet, the integration of technological innovations is not innocent but alters the experience of time as Tomlinson argues in his book *Culture of Speed* (2007). Temporal regimes not only structure social life but also affect the ways the world is imaged and understood. Tomlinson uses the term impatient media technologies because they bring about new norms of direct delivery and abundance and constitute new temporal regimes shifting toward immediacy. Also, the German sociologist Hartmut Rosa (2016) relates the acceleration of time in contemporary modern societies due to technological innovation which affects the sense of one’s identity and the understanding of the good life.

In this paper I will discuss the interrelation between media technologies, the experience of time and how technological innovation enforces the rise of a neo-Pentecostal theology of immediacy, a consumerist ethos of the ‘more’ and an eschatological perspective of bringing heaven on earth.

Producing and Consuming Experiences: The Megachurch as a Place of World-building and Self-making

Katja Rakow, University of Utrecht

Megachurch worship services are carefully orchestrated and choreographed multisensory events aimed at creating an immersive atmosphere in which worshippers can encounter divine presence. Neo-Pentecostal megachurches’

characteristic “emotional style” (Hitzer and Scheer 2014) actively engages and stimulates emotionality, which translates into visible experiences and the expression of strong feelings during worship services and prayer meetings. As such megachurches have a strong experiential dimension, which offers sensory experiences of faith and convictions (Luhrmann 2004; Stevenson 2013; Scheer 2021). Taking the sociology of emotion and the sociology of consumption as a starting point, the paper will analyze megachurch worship services as ‘emotional commodities’ (Illouz 2009) related to an ever-expanding network of spin-off products and branded content to be employed by religious prosumers in the context of world-building and self-making.

The Aesthetics of Class Distinction in Brazilian Pentecostalism

Cristina Rocha, Western Sydney University

Brazil suffers from enormous social inequality and performance of social distinction through consumption and body decoration is key in its society. The upper and middle classes constantly patrol and reinforce class borders by copying the (imagined) tastes of the Global North, particularly the US, and denigrating the tastes of the poor. Religion can also be mobilised for this purpose. Although in the past two decades Pentecostalism has made inroads among the youth and aspirational lower-middle classes, it is more prevalent among the poor. As such, the Brazilian media, intellectual elites and the (upper) middle classes stigmatise Pentecostalism as the religion of ‘ignorant people.’ Here, I build on Bourdieu’s theory of social distinction through taste and the scholarship on material religion to argue that a focus on dress, body decoration, church merchandise as well as infrastructures (e.g., highly experiential services and built environments) allows us to understand how Pentecostalism is changing in Brazil. This paper draws on fieldwork in Brazil and Australia and analysis of digital media (especially Brazilian Pentecostal influencers on YouTube, and US-based youth movements and the Australian megachurch Hillsong).

8 Pentecostal History in Context

The Wrong Sort of Secularization: Pentecostalism and Socio-cultural Change in Copenhagen, 1907-1912

Nikolaj Christensen, Diocese of Oxford

In several countries, Pentecostalism has been squeezed between the twin powers of the established church and secular modernism. On top of that, rejection by the most significant evangelical and Holiness movement gatekeep-

ers had nearly consigned the Danish Pentecostal revival to oblivion at its conception, but its instigator, Anglo-Norwegian preacher T.B. Barratt (1862-1940), secured a scoop with the spectacular conversion of a famous actress, Anna Larssen (later Bjørner; 1875-1955). Both Barratt and Larssen were eager to collaborate with leaders in the state church, who nonetheless ignored the opportunity and instead left it to Larssen's more radically secular colleagues to deal with her in textbook Foucauldian fashion: by locking her up in a mental institution. Larssen refused to de-convert and was finally released with much publicity. Barratt seized the opportunity to capitalize on the renewed interest in Pentecostalism through a campaign of Pentecostal meetings. These were, however, physically interrupted from another secular front, by loud and occasionally violent Young Socialists. Again, other church leaders left the Pentecostals to struggle on their own, and even supported some of their critics. Nevertheless, the 'Battle of Copenhagen' became something of a victory, and a short-lived Pentecostal assembly was established.

Indigenization Among Pentecostals in Russia

David Lewis, University of Cambridge

The largest country on Earth, in terms of territorial extent, includes great diversity not only of ecological zones but also of cultures and ethnic groups. Even if one were to regard Pentecostalism as relatively homogenous (which is debatable), the interaction between this religious outlook and a diversity of local cultures produces a spectrum of local adaptations reflecting the degree to which Pentecostals are willing to contextualize expressions of their faith. In many ways this is a learning process whereby Pentecostals over time have come to recognise the extent to which various practices are acceptable within Pentecostalism as expressions of cultural diversity. To some extent the exposure to non-Russian ethnic groups has also been accompanied by some reflection on the roots of their own Russian expression of Pentecostalism. This paper examines some of the ways in which some Pentecostals in Russia have adapted to multi-culturalism over the last three decades.

North American Pentecostalism and the Legacy of the 1960s Counterculture

Joseph Williams, Rutgers University

The merger of pentecostal-charismatic spirituality with the counterculture of the 1960s helped fuel the rise of the Jesus People movement in the U.S., and as previous studies note, these developments provide crucial context for understanding everything from the success of the Vineyard movement to the

popularity of Christian rock. Scholars also have described young Jewish converts' attraction to the movement, and the conscious decision by many to retain ritual elements and symbols that reflected their Jewish heritage. But far less attention has been paid to the implications of these latter developments for pentecostal-charismatic Christianity more generally since the 1970s. Three effects stand out: 1) Just as the counterculture inspired numerous Americans to seek out novel religious insights and experiences beyond traditional Christianity, a somewhat similar dynamic played out among a growing number of (non-Jewish) pentecostals and charismatics in subsequent years as they experimented with Jewish rituals and traditions. 2) This enhanced sense of identification with Jews and Israel added a more experiential dimension to Israel-centric prophecy traditions, which in turn expanded their appeal. 3) All of the aforementioned trends focused attention on the unification of Jews and Gentiles into "One New Man," bolstering expectations that believers were witnessing the arrival of a society-transforming end-times church.

The Role of Emerging Neo-Charismatic Faith in South Korea: Rethinking Korean Christianity from the 1980s to the Present

SuYeon Yoon, Boston University & Indiana Wesleyan University

This research discusses the role of neo-Charismatic faith in indigenous Korean Christianity by exploring the emergence of three neo-Charismatic Korean Churches, by referencing neo-Charismatic research done in North America. Through tracing the historical Korean Christian faith, the neglected elements of Biblical faith that have impacted the formation of Korean Pentecostal denomination identity will be identified in a constructive way to propose a direction for rethinking Korean Christianity to becoming more mature. The field study, comprising of the qualitative research of neo-Charismatic Churches in South Korea, will affirm that neo-Charismatic Christianity is not merely a western Christianity, but rather a Christianity that was indigenously developed and practiced in a Korean way is deeply rooted in local Korean culture today. Furthermore, this research will be conclude by proposing that such an understanding of 21st century local Korean faith is also a pathway to formulating World Christianity globally.

9 African Christianity and Development

Pentecostal Promises and Economic Development: The Nexus and Impact

Henerieta Mgovo & Elias. G. Konyana, Great Zimbabwe University, Masvingo,
Zimbabwe

This paper argues that religion can be a saleable commodity particularly among expectant people. For instance, people are often proud to be associated with a brand that is trendy, falling for anything that represents the religion. Pentecostalism, for Africans both on the African continent and the diaspora, has portrayed itself as a panacea to most infirmities and vulnerabilities which include disease, famine and poverty. Thus, belief in divine solutions to human calamities has seen many Pentecostal Christians going for anything that promises health, deliverance and prosperity. In the process, some African Pentecostal Christians have fallen prey to religious commodification that has proliferated all over. Using phenomenological and utilitarian reflections, we focus on the extent to which Pentecostalism has impacted on the commodification of Christianity in Zimbabwe. The paper presents the effects of Pentecostalism on the beliefs and ethics of Christians as they participate in wider national economic frameworks of innovation and industrialisation through self-help cultures. Findings show that Pentecostalism has had a huge positive impact on members' economic development. Arguably, Pentecostal Christians' mindsets have shifted because followers have embraced the national economic developmental trajectory that is driven by a culture of local production not only for consumption but also for export.

The Redeemed Christian Church of God and their Involvement in the Rehabilitation of Male Juvenile Delinquents in Southwest Nigeria

Rotimi Alaba Oti, RCCG Bible College

The Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) as a Pentecostal church is socially engaged in the rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents in Southwest Nigeria, enabling professional organisations to support their social needs, rights of dignity and inclusion. Scholars have discussed juvenile delinquents variously without linking them to the RCCG rehabilitation's programme. So, there is still the need to interrogate the Redeemed Christian Church Of God and their involvement in the rehabilitation of male juvenile delinquents in Southwest Nigeria. The paper intends to highlight Pentecostal Churches and Rehabilitation of male juvenile delinquents in Southwest Nigeria. The paper employs a documentation method for data gathering. Primary data is sourced from the interviews, while secondary data is sourced from published works on juvenile de-

linquents. Data will be content analysed within the ambit of the rehabilitation theory. The prevalence of juvenile delinquents in Nigeria is not only a problem to those families that have them as children but also has social implications on society. Therefore, this paper is based on the understanding of rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents as a strategy within the church/corporate social responsibility(CSR), for their equalization of opportunities and social integration. Therefore, the paper makes recommendations for Churches on how to effectively rehabilitate male juvenile delinquents in Nigeria.

Christology and the Concept of Okra: Reimagining New Christological Possibilities in Africa

Samuel Sarpaning, University of Basel

The prevalence of telling existential crises such as structural violence, corruption, wars, and plunder in the 20th and 21st centuries against the backdrop of the worldwide expansion of Christianity has continuously warranted a global dialogue and questioning regarding the nature of Christological imaginations in global Christianity. However, facilitating such a global discussion necessitates the provincialization of the question to facilitate the exchange of ideas to reimagine and reframe new Christological discourses in such a complex world. Consequently, this paper grapples with two central questions: 1. Can African concepts and notions contribute to this discussion? 2. Is there a possibility to imagine a new Christology that offers both the potential for community building and socio-political transformation? In answering these questions, the paper explores the notion of okra (life-force) among the Akan of West Africa to ascertain how it can contribute to the dialogue around Christology. The paper uses a historiographical approach to trace the evolution of the concept and also offers a constructive philosophical, anthropological, and theological investigation and reflection to ascertain its Christological character. The paper argues that the concept of okra provides the basis to conceive and articulate new future-oriented imaginaries of the Christ-event in Africa that offers both the possibility for community building and socio-cultural transformation.

African Initiated Churches and Ecological Sustainability in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Empirical Exploration

Juliane Stork, Marie-Luise Frost, Philipp Öhlmann, HU Berlin

Working up to ecological sustainability is a major challenge for societies around the globe. African countries are among those most affected by climate change and environmental degradation worldwide. At the same time, the fast-

growing movement of African Pentecostal and African Independent Churches shape the worldviews and everyday lives of millions of members in sub-Saharan Africa. Although these African Initiated Churches have been recognized as a driving force of social development by scholars in the field of religion and development and increasingly also by development agencies and governments, little empirical research has thus far elucidated their views and actions on ecological sustainability. This paper responds to this research gap by exploring empirically how African Initiated Churches view and react to the social, economic, and spiritual effects of environmental and climate change on their members. The article draws on results from interviews and survey responses from Burkina Faso, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda. Environmental concepts and actions of African Initiated Churches are described to analyse the entanglement of African Initiated Churches' activities and theologies with climate change as a major environmental and social impact factor.

10 Pentecostal Theologies

Union With Christ: A Missing Link in Pentecostal Eucharistic Theology

Geoffrey Butler, Wycliffe College, Toronto

Although Pentecostal statements of faith often grant little attention to the Eucharist, Pentecostal experience of the sacrament has a long and vibrant heritage. Testimonies, newsletters, and tracts from the movement's early days often speak of how communicants enjoyed fellowship with the risen Christ during the meal, leading some contemporary Pentecostal scholars to propose their movement should adopt some form of "real presence" in their theology. Yet, what has often been overlooked in Pentecostal understandings, is how communion with Christ occurs.

The answer to this mystery may lie in developing a robust understanding of Union with Christ, by the Spirit. Not only would this help combat the bare memorialism that Pentecostal sacramental theologians have long lamented within their movement, but it would also counter individualistic notions of salvation that have long hampered the wider evangelical church. It would also help Pentecostals more immediately connect their doctrine of the Eucharist with related theological categories. This paper will therefore draw on Scripture, Pentecostal history, and the wider Christian tradition to argue for a closer link between the doctrines of Union with Christ and the Lord's Supper within Pentecostal theology.

Translating Prosperity in Germany: A Theological Evaluation

Frank Liesen, Southwestern Baptist TS, USA

The prosperity gospel is growing in its influence across evangelical denominational lines in Germany. A multi-case study of three church plants examines their interpretation of prosperity teaching from an evangelical theological perspective. Hope Center in Berlin, an independent Pentecostal church led by a second-generation Ghanian migrant, openly embraced prosperity teaching for their socially disadvantaged constituency. ConnectKirche Erfurt, which belongs to Germany's largest Pentecostal denomination, viewed the claim to health and wealth critically but affirmed the gospel effect of upward social mobility and healing. The pastor of the non-charismatic Gospel Church Munich rejected prosperity teaching for its affluent community while affirming God's supernatural intervention. He directed his congregation to find spiritual riches in healthy relationships. The churches translated the prosperity gospel differently while adhering to an evangelical view of conversion and discipleship. Converts applied prosperity teaching according to the direction of their churches and reported healings, economic mobility, and improved relationships. A theological review of the prosperity gospel discloses that the claim to physical wellbeing as a Christian birthright must be rejected as syncretism. Nonetheless, prosperity teaching does not necessarily imply the abandonment of evangelical affirmations about transformative conversion. Various forms of contextualizing prosperity call for careful theological assessments.

Bridging the Distance: A Microcosm of Filipino Classical Pentecostal Identity

Lora Angeline Embudo Timenia, Oral Roberts University

As a Filipino Classical Pentecostal, I propose that my theological identity is a spiral construct of the Filipino Christian consciousness with the Classical Pentecostal theology of Spirit empowerment. However, this theological identity can be challenging to describe without presenting a grassroots narrative of the socio-religious developments that contributed to its formation. Hence, this paper shall present a microcosm of Filipino Classical Pentecostal identity through an autobiographical theological method. The study asks: what socio-religious developments contributed to the formation of my Filipino Classical Pentecostal identity? What theoretical framework can I use to analyze the cohesiveness of my theological identity? The research will present a critical narrative of formative experiences that contributed to my Filipino Classical Pentecostal identity and utilize epistemological constructivism as an analytical framework.

Conversucation – On the complex Role of Learning and Education in Pentecostal Conversion Narratives

Stefan van der Hoek, University of Jena

The term »Bildung« is notoriously difficult to translate from German into English. Although it is often translated as "education" or "learning," this attempted translation neither conveys its actual meaning nor explains its contexts of use. In this presentation, I will elaborate on the German-language term »Bildung« and its theological roots as a concept for the study of Pentecostal testimonies in transnational contexts.

My preliminary hypothesis is that the distinction between »Bildung«, learning, and conversion is a modern Eurocentric perspective. Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, for example, referred to "conversion" as a concept to describe individual processes of social change through learning. Although conversion is a common theme in research on global Pentecostalism, there is no unified understanding of what Pentecostal conversion means and often excludes the perspective of learning. However, the research material for my current study on the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in Germany makes me consider the term »Bildung« as an adequate concept to describe conversion narratives.

Looking more closely at the personal testimonies of adherents of the UCKG, they report not only that they were baptized with the Holy Spirit, experienced miracles, and were born again, but that they understand their participation in worship services as an ongoing process of learning and education.

11 Pentecostalism and Aspirations of Modernity

Churches-in-process and Unachieved Future: Pentecostal Constructions in Rural Southern Benin

Bertin Carla, EHESS Paris

Based on an ethnography (2014-2017) in rural areas of Benin, this communication addresses the relationship between temporal mobility and Pentecostal materiality. These churches are 'in movement' places: believers build, destroy and renovate them, firstly with tree branches, then with earth and eventually with concrete bricks. This materiality is ultimately oriented towards the aspired multi-storey concrete church of the 'future', which is associated with tropes of modernity, development, prosperity and salvation. In a region where building is a symbol of realisation for oneself and one's family, what does it mean to build a church, namely a place for a larger community? Moreover,

multi-storey concrete churches are rarely truly completed. This is due not only to the lack of resources but also to the way people manage the equilibrium between different spheres of their 'good' life. Thus, the church under construction ('chantier') materialises a liminal Pentecostal space-time: it reveals that the process of construction is as important as its achievement. This in-betweenness space-time appears to be different from the temporality of nostalgia and ruins which has dominated recent enquiries about post-development and Pentecostalism in Africa. Furthermore, the liminal time-space is also made of invisible components, like aspirations, expectations and active waiting on God.

Neo-Pentecostalism and Uganda's Socio-economic Context: Unveiling the Rhetoric of Pastor Robert Kayanja

Fred Jenga, Tangaza University College, Nairobi

This Uganda-focused study examines how a combination of the traditional Ugandan cultural worldview, the neo-liberal reforms of the 1980-1990s, and the numerous civil wars in the country influenced the rise and shape of Pentecostalism in the country. Situated in cultural studies, the paper employs methods drawn from the field of rhetorical studies to intrinsically and contextually analyze rhetorical artifacts such as religious broadcast programs, books, and pamphlets produced by prominent Ugandan 'Mega-church' pastor, Robert Kayanja. Pastor Kayanja is the young brother to former Anglican Archbishop of York, Archbishop John Sentamu. Kayanja is the Senior Pastor of the 10,500-seater, glass-walled, Miracle Centre Cathedral. He superintends over a nationwide network of "Miracle Centre" churches in Uganda, runs Miracle Bible College, and owns a television station. My paper analyses the construction of Kayanja's neo-Pentecostal religious rhetoric in light of contextual Ugandan factors such as the numerous civil wars in the country over the years, and the World Bank/IMF imposed neo-liberal reforms. The study demonstrates the impact of contextual factors on influencing the shape and the neo-Pentecostal religious rhetoric currently operative in the country. I conclude with an interrogation of the implications of such religious rhetoric in poor countries such as Uganda.

Narratives of Modernity and Narratives of Pentecostalism: A Foray into the Relations of Two Massive Aggregations

L. William Oliverio, Northwest University

Modernity and Pentecostalism represent two massive aggregations of human realities. Accounting for either one of these two is itself a task that transcends

the abilities of inquirers to work comprehensively, let alone putting the two in relation. Nevertheless, the relationship between modernity and Pentecostalism – or modernities and Pentecostalisms – is crucial to our understanding of religion in the late modern world. Relations here have been almost entirely implied or assumed, although occasionally they have been the subject of a brief foray in Pentecostal studies. If a larger account is not offered up, pieced-together approaches become the norm. In my presentation, I will thus provide a foray into this relation, as a set of relations, by providing an initial typology for some leading narrative accounts of modernity and Pentecostalism, and then considering their relations. As a tradition-based as well as religiously and philosophically-focused account of these, I will consider accounts of modernity in Catholic, Protestant, Secular, and Jewish traditions. These will be brought into a dialogue with the accounts of modernity developing in and also often implied in scholars from Pentecostal traditions. The multiplicity and complexity of the relations between the two aggregations will thus be quite evident.

Megachurches as Locales of Religious Individualization

James Ponniah, University of Madras

Based on the empirical study of two megachurches in India, FGAG in Bangalore and NLAG in Chennai, this paper enquires into the vision, mission and the strategies of the Pentecostal mega churches in India that are constantly re-imagined and recast in response to the sweeping socio-cultural-technological transformations and the contemporary/personal needs of its members. The paper examines the powerful messages and the innovative programmes of the chief pastor (and his team), which offer a wholistic package to the congregants, a package that is constantly renewed and improvised to take care of their situations and all-round needs such as spiritual and physical, transcendental and mundane, individual and relational, recreational and professional, familial and social etc., To a congregant from a low caste/class background and to an alien city dweller from another region/state/nation, megachurches offer a sense of respectability, belonging, personal care and corporate identity. This study suggests that these mega-church pastors seem to not only engage themselves in the process of 'religious individualization' (as proposed by Otto, 2017 and Fuchs et al., 2019) but also facilitate the same for their clientele.