

[Dena Freeman](#)

## Pentecostalism and economic development in Sub-Saharan Africa

**Book section**  
**(Accepted version)**  
**(Refereed)**

**Original citation:** Tomalin, Emma, (ed.) *The Routledge Handbook of Religions and Global Development*. Abingdon, Oxon, UK : Routledge, 2015

© 2015 The Author

This version available at: <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/67826/>  
Available in LSE Research Online: September 2016

LSE has developed LSE Research Online so that users may access research output of the School. Copyright © and Moral Rights for the papers on this site are retained by the individual authors and/or other copyright owners. Users may download and/or print one copy of any article(s) in LSE Research Online to facilitate their private study or for non-commercial research. You may not engage in further distribution of the material or use it for any profit-making activities or any commercial gain. You may freely distribute the URL (<http://eprints.lse.ac.uk>) of the LSE Research Online website.

This document is the author's submitted version of the book section. There may be differences between this version and the published version. You are advised to consult the publisher's version if you wish to cite from it.

# **Pentecostalism and Economic Development in Sub-Saharan Africa**

Chapter 8 for *Routledge Handbook for Religions and Global Development*.

By Dena Freeman

## **Introduction**

Up until the 1980s scholarly thinking about development was largely focussed on macro-scale economic matters – it was just a case of getting the right economic structures in place and bingo – ‘economic take-off’ would occur. Walt Rostow’s ‘five stages of economic growth’ was one of the most influential of these types of theory and postulated that for a traditional society to develop it had to first manifest the ‘preconditions for take-off’ (largely a new external demand for raw materials, which would *somehow* stimulate increasing production and investment and drive social change) before it would indeed ‘take off’ (by developing manufacturing, transport systems and schools and universities) and so on until it reached the fifth and final stage of ‘mass consumption’ (Rostow 1960). While there was a certain neatness to this approach, it turned out that it did not actually work in practice. External demand for raw materials grew, but it did not appear to stimulate all the other changes that Rostow postulated. The ‘somehow’ that Rostow had glossed over, seemed to be more complicated than originally envisaged.

Since then development studies has broadened out considerably and more attention has been paid to the human aspects of development through, for example, the livelihoods approach (e.g. Chambers and Conway 1991, Scoones 1998), Amartya Sen’s human development approach (Alkire 2005, Sen 1999), and the more recent interest in development and wellbeing (Gough and McGregor 2007). In one way or another all of these approaches try to shed light on the ‘somehow’ of how individuals choose new behaviours and societies actually change. Increasingly scholars have come to the realisation that human beings are not rational economic agents and do not make their life decisions solely based on economic criteria and the soulless and lonely goal of economic maximisation. Instead there has been an increasing appreciation for the importance of non-material matters – such as beliefs, values and morality – in the development process (eg. Goulet 1997). It is slowly becoming clear that these

ephemeral and non-rational factors actually form a large part of the ‘somehow’ of how individuals decide to make changes, to take on new behaviours and to transform their social relations – activities that make up some of the key aspects of the developmental process.

Beliefs, values and morality traditionally reside in the realm of religion and culture and thus a number of scholars from various different disciplines have recently started to look at the role of religion in development (eg. Berger 2004, 2009; Deneulin 2009, Deneulin and Rakodi 2011, Freeman 2012a, Goody 2003, Marshall & Van Saanen 2007, Rakodi 2007, Selinger 2004, Ter Haar and Ellis 2006, Tomalin 2008, Ver Beek 2002). Anthropologists, as specialists in culture, have also engaged with these questions, and the anthropological literature is now full of case studies which show how various development projects did not work because the proposed innovations clashed with local people’s ideas, values and social forms. In one place, for example, people did not behave as economic rationalists as expected but instead invested new-found wealth in religious rituals or gift-giving ceremonies, while in another it was impossible to create a bounded target group of farmers because the whole community was linked through kinship ties, or what have you. These cultural factors, often poorly understood by development practitioners, have led to the downfall of many a well-meaning development project.

Key questions for development actors, then, are how to design interventions which fit with local people’s beliefs and values, or more radically, *how to change people’s beliefs and values to fit with the behaviours necessary for economic development*. In the rest of this chapter I will focus on the second question and consider the role that Pentecostal Christianity can play in this regard. First I will give a brief outline of the rise of Pentecostalism in Africa and the form that it currently takes. Second, I will briefly discuss how Pentecostal churches rarely run explicit development projects themselves and do not in fact separate ‘religion’ from ‘development’. Then finally, drawing on examples from across the continent, I will show how Pentecostalism’s impact on development is not through consciously defined ‘development’ activities, but rather through the very nature of Pentecostal belief and practice itself. I will focus on the Pentecostal transformation of the person and show that Pentecostalism does indeed shift people’s beliefs, values and morality in such a way that, when other factors are favourable, very often leads these people to then make quite radical social and economic changes which then lead them in the direction of development.

## **The Pentecostal Explosion**

In the last 30 years there has been a massive ‘Pentecostal explosion’ that has radically altered the religious landscape in much of the developing world. Millions of people in Africa and elsewhere have joined Pentecostal churches. From humble beginnings as an early twentieth-century revivalist movement among America’s poorer socio-economic groups, Pentecostalism has spread across the globe to become what is widely believed to be the fastest growing Christian movement today (Anderson 2004: 1, Burgess and van der Maas 2002, Hollenweger 1997). In just over 100 years Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity has won over half a billion souls worldwide (Barrett 2001), representing almost 28% of organised global Christianity (Barrett and Johnson 2002). David Martin has called the phenomenal uptake of Pentecostalism ‘the largest global shift in the religious market place’ in recent years (Martin 2002).

By far the majority of the new Pentecostal and charismatic converts are to be found in the non-Western world, particularly in Latin America, Asia and Africa. In Africa alone there are estimated to be some 126 million Pentecostals and charismatics, constituting about 11% of the continent’s total population. The vast majority of them, some 109 million, have joined since 1980 (Barrett and Johnson 2002: 287). Christianity is, of course, not new to Africa, and there have been Protestants and Catholics in Africa since colonial times (Gifford: 1995, 1998), but what is new about Pentecostalism is that it is a form of Christianity that even though it first emerged in the United States, fits extremely well with African ontologies and sensibilities. Whereas earlier forms of Christianity were essentially transposed from Europe and ignored African traditional beliefs in spirits and demons, Pentecostalism shares the basic African ontology of good and bad spirits, and embraces supernatural beings (God, Jesus, demons) that can have a direct influence in the world (Meyer 2004). In this way Pentecostalism becomes a lot more meaningful and powerful to Africans than earlier forms of Christianity. And in this power we find an astonishing ability to bring about change and transformation – often in the direction of what we usually call ‘development’.

There is a huge variety of different Pentecostal and charismatic churches in Africa and it is impossible to generalise across them all. Nonetheless, it is broadly accepted that there are three broad categories of Pentecostal and charismatic Christianity: classical Pentecostal, charismatic and neo-charismatic (Anderson 2004, Hollenweger 1997). Classical Pentecostal

refers to churches with links to the early American and European Pentecostal churches and which stress the importance of speaking in tongues, or glossolalia, as evidence of baptism by the Holy Spirit. Examples include the Assemblies of God, the Church of God in Christ and the Pentecostal Church of God. Charismatic Christians are those members of mainline Christian denominations – Lutheran, Presbyterian, Catholic and so on – who began to experience the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the form of speaking in tongues, spiritual healing, miracles and the like. This ‘Pentecostalisation’ of mainstream Christianity started in the 1960s and there are now charismatic churches across virtually all Christian denominations (e.g. Coleman 2000, 2002, Csordas 1992, 2007). The third wave, or neo-charismatics, is the broadest category, serving much as a catch-all for the vast number of non-denominational or post-denominational churches and fellowships that have exploded onto the scene since the 1980s. Neo-charismatics have been particularly creative and innovative in their adaptation of Pentecostal doctrine and styles to new settings and contexts. Examples could include Mensa Otabil’s International Central Gospel Church, David Oyepedo’s Winner’s Chapel, the Rhema Church and the Vineyard Fellowship (Bialecki 2008, Luhrmann 2004). Churches from all three waves are flourishing in Africa today and they are having an extraordinary effect on the continent. This chapter mainly focusses on the neo-charismatics, although much of what is said here also applies to the charismatics and, to a rather lesser extent, to the classical Pentecostals.

### **Pentecostal Development Projects**

Mainstream Christian churches have been active in development work in Africa for many decades. In recent years, particularly since the 1980s, many of them have set up separate ‘development wings’ to expand their development work and tap into the increased flow of donor money to civil society organisations. However, perhaps surprisingly, Pentecostal churches have been far slower in setting up ‘development wings’ and joining in with explicitly development-focussed activities. Although there are some exceptions, particularly in the area of HIV-AIDS (eg. Burchardt 2013, Dilger 2009), it is actually quite noticeable that Pentecostal churches have *not* gotten actively involved with development-focussed projects. As just one example, in Ethiopia most of the large mainline churches have development wings that source donor money and carry out development projects in both Christian and non-Christian communities, while none of the Pentecostal churches have set up similar development wings or carry out explicitly development-focussed activities.

This is not to say that Pentecostals are not involved in development projects. It is just that for the most part, and in contrast to mainstream Christianity, the churches themselves do not run development projects. There are however a number of Pentecostal NGOs, or faith-based organisations (FBOs), that carry out development work from a Pentecostal perspective. These FBOs are often not linked to any particular church and their activities are outside the remit of this chapter (but see De Temple 2006, Hofer 2003, Kamsteeg 1998).

By far the greatest impact that Pentecostals have on development in Africa comes not from these FBOs, but from the changes instilled in ‘believers’ by the religious activities of the churches themselves. In these churches ‘religion’ is not separated from ‘development’. Church leaders take a holistic focus on the ‘whole person’ and try to bring about change socially and economically, as well as spiritually. The rest of this chapter will focus on the type of change that Pentecostal churches bring about in their followers and will seek to show how in very many cases this change impacts on peoples’ economic activities and leads them in the direction that we tend to call ‘development’.

## **Pentecostal Transformation**

### *Transformations of Subjectivity*

It is well-known that Pentecostals and charismatics are extremely effective in bringing about dramatic changes in subjectivity. Numerous scholars have noticed this tendency, dubbing it a ‘revision of consciousness’ (Martin 1990: 287), a ‘remaking of the individual’ (Maxwell 1998: 352), or a ‘reorientation of persons’ (Barbalet 2008: 75). What has been less noted is how the re-formed Pentecostal subjectivity is very similar to the neoliberal subjectivity required to succeed in the contemporary capitalist economy (although see Comaroff 2000, Maxwell 2005). Whereas ‘traditional’ Africans are embedded in tight-knit webs of kinship and community, with the associated economic demands of helping less wealthy relatives and contributing to costly individual and communal rituals and ceremonies, the ideal Pentecostal African is an individual (or a member of a small nuclear family), with no economic demands beyond his or her immediate household. While the ‘traditional’ African is reticent to become wealthier than his peers lest he be accused of witchcraft or sorcery, the Pentecostal African

strives to become rich because he believes that this is what God wants for him. While the ‘traditional’ African is generally rather fatalist and accepts her lot, the Pentecostal African has a strong sense of agency and believes that she can improve her situation with hard work and deeply felt prayer. While the ‘traditional’ African favours stability and is slow to take risks, the Pentecostal African strives for improvement and is more likely to try something new. These changes to the individual, and to the web of social relations in which they find themselves, have a huge impact on economic behaviour.

Thus, Pentecostal churches are exceptionally effective at bringing about the type of change that is often called ‘development’ – sustained social and economic transformation from ‘traditional’ modalities to forms of behaviour and relationship that fit well with the prevailing neoliberal capitalist system. How is this radical transformation brought about? As I will show in more detail below, there are three key interlinked processes of change that are brought about by Pentecostalism: Firstly, a major embodied personal transformation and empowerment of the individual; secondly, a shift in values that provides moral legitimacy for a set of behaviour changes that would otherwise clash with local sensibilities; and thirdly, if other factors are favourable, a radical reconstructing of the social and economic relationships in families and communities.

Most of the followers of Pentecostalism in Africa come from either the poor or the new middle class (or relatively more wealthy farmers in rural settings). Pentecostalism caters to these two groups in quite different ways, often having different churches for different socio-economic groups (eg. Comaroff 2012, Hasu 2012). Many poor people, particularly the urban poor, first come to Pentecostal churches feeling wretched, despised and hopeless. Often newly disembedded from tightly knit communities in the countryside, they feel lost and bewildered in the urban environment and struggle to find somewhere to live and enough to eat. Their self-esteem is low and they feel powerless to change their situation. In many countries, including for example Tanzania and South Africa, people in this situation often complain of being turned into ‘zombies’ (*misukule* in Swahili), people who are thought to be taken to carry out nocturnal unpaid labour for witches, while their bodies lie in bed at night (eg. Hasu 2009, 2012). Victimised and slaving away for their imaginary owners in an underground occult economy, these people wake up listless and exhausted and suffer from many of the symptoms that we might call depression. Engagement with a Pentecostal church, and their ensuing conversion, can radically change these people’s sense of themselves and

their place in the world. Through their engagement with pastors and other church members, in study, prayer and healing, these people begin to see themselves as valued individuals, part of God's people, a 'somebody' rather than a 'nobody'. Most important of all, they begin to move beyond a passive fatalism and come to realise that they have agency in their lives (Maxwell 2005). Eventually they shift from seeing themselves as a victim to seeing themselves as a victor.

This transformation is often brought about by spiritual healing and deliverance. Many churches offer healing services where pastors and lay people pray for those with problems, lay on hands and attempt to heal 'in the name of Jesus'. For someone going through such a healing ceremony it can be a very powerful experience – suddenly finding themselves at the centre of a crowd of praying or chanting people, all focussing on them, supposedly channelling the divine healing force into their body and their soul. Often simply accepting the possibility that Jesus might be able to help them opens a mental door out of the preceding blackness.

Pentecostal ontology is binary, with right and wrong, Jesus and devil, as polar opposites. So another type of healing ceremony is the 'spiritual warfare' against, and deliverance from, the devil or associated evil spirits who are believed to be the cause of the person's suffering and distress. Many Pentecostal churches carry out exorcisms where evil spirits are cast out of the sufferer with much crying, weeping and wailing. Again, these emotive services have the power to deeply touch an individual and enable them to reframe their situation so that they can more easily deal with it.

Paivi Hasu, for example, describes the case of Neema, a 17-year old girl she met in Dar es Salam, Tanzania, who had dropped out of school, argued with her family in Moshi, and eventually come to the capital city, feeling lonely, tired and listless, with headaches and chest pains, and complaining of having been taken as a 'zombie' and having to work in the 'land of the witches'. She writes how Neema described her personal transformation at the hands of the Glory of Christ Tanzania Church:

Neema described how, one day in the land of the witches, she heard somebody calling her name from afar. She heard the voice calling her: 'Neema come, Neema come!' Then she saw a white person resembling



pastor Gwajima who came and took her hand and said that Neema had been tormented enough and that it had to stop. She then unexpectedly found herself at Glory church. At the beginning she was possessed by spirits (*mapepo*), but she was prayed for and since that day she has not had any more headaches or chest pains... She received Jesus as her personal saviour and wanted to serve God. She saw a clear difference in her life compared with what it had been before. Previously she was ill all the time and had no direction in her life. Now she had received Jesus and was not ill any more. She had joy in her life as well as direction. She wanted to go back to school and complete her education. Despite her bleak circumstances, Neema had begun to feel more hopeful about the future (Hasu 2012:82-3).

In a similar although less dramatic fashion, Charles Piot quotes from an interview with a Pentecostal convert in Lomé, Togo:

When I walk down the street as a Christian, I hold my head high. I know I have something that others don't. I am not wealthy and I am not classed ['classé'], but I have something even better. I have Jesus on my side, and with Jesus anything is possible. Others look at me and wonder where this confidence comes from, because they don't see money or class. But this is what Jesus does for you. Every day I get out of bed and feel that today will be even better than the day before (Piot 2012:122-3).

These subjective transformations can radically change a person's life. From being wretched and helpless, new believers find inner strength, hope and purpose. They become motivated to work or to study, they seek to improve their lives. Most importantly they develop a sense of agency, of personal power. They move from a fatalistic acceptance of their situation, to an awareness of the importance of their actions and the potential of their own efforts to bring about the social and economic changes that they desire. The ecstatic ritual and worship that is so characteristic of Pentecostalism plays a fundamental role in this transformation of embodied subjectivities and in creating the felt experience of newness which makes the rhetoric of rebirth feel actual (cf. Csordas 2002, Maxwell 2005). Such charismatic experiences make possible a fundamental rupture in the social order and then lead to the

possibility of the establishment of a new order (Keyes 2002: 249). What other forms of Protestantism may seek to do with sober stories and prayer, and what secular development organisations may seek to do with dull workshops, micro-credit schemes and the like, Pentecostalism achieves far more effectively with its exuberant rituals, exorcisms and gifts of the Spirit. Many people shift from begging or dependency on relatives to getting a job or operating in the informal economy, becoming productive members of society. This shift has major implications for development.

Nonetheless, it is important to stress that such changes in subjectivity on their own do not always lead to shifts in peoples' social and economic actions. The shift in subjectivity re-orientates people so that they become able to grasp new opportunities when they are available. However, new opportunities are not always available, and in these situations the change in subjectivity can both empower and frustrate people, as they seek to change their lives but find themselves unable to do so. Gregory Deacon describes such a situation in the slums of Nairobi (Deacon 2012, Deacon & Lynch 2013). In this case Pentecostalism offers people defence mechanisms and survival strategies, but does not lead to any significant change in their economic behaviour as there simply are no new options available to them. In a similar fashion my own work in rural Ethiopia shows how the initial conversion to Pentecostalism led young men to desire change and new ways of living, but ultimately left them frustrated and dissatisfied as they found no way to break from the traditional production system in which they worked with their fathers on family agricultural land. It was only several years later when a development NGO came to the area and started a market-based development project that these young men found the opportunity for something new, and they were indeed the first people in the community to take the chance and participate in the new project, and in so doing eventually became very economically successful (Freeman 2012c).

For relatively wealthy rural people or those in the urban middle-class, Pentecostalism offers a somewhat different reformulation of subjectivity. For these people their major problem is not loneliness and poverty, but rather how to make more money and how to deal with the social and moral dilemmas of becoming newly rich while their neighbours and kin continue to struggle.

While earlier forms of classical Pentecostalism promoted a rather ascetic approach to the material world, shifts since the 1980s have led to a fundamental realignment with regard to

views about the material life and this-worldly concerns. The new view, often termed the ‘prosperity gospel’, was taken up with phenomenal enthusiasm in churches with more middle class members in post-1980s Africa, and promises an ‘economically advantageous redemption’ (Bialecki et al. 2008: 1149). Salvation, in this view, can take place in this life because Jesus wants his people to enjoy abundance and prosperity (Marshall 1991, Maxwell 1998, Ukah 2005, Van Dijk 2005). Churches that preach the prosperity gospel encourage their members to pray to Jesus for wealth and abundance, and also to do their part in the bargain, by engaging in business and working hard. Sermons are often blatantly materialistic. Birgit Meyer describes a visit to a ‘prosperity gospel’ Pentecostal church in Ghana, during which:

I heard the pastor ask all members to rise, close their eyes and fill in a cheque in their minds which was then sent up to heaven; the people were assured that God would sign this cheque and that they would, in the future, receive the money requested - if only they believed (Meyer 1998b: 762–763).

Furthermore, many of the new Pentecostal churches encourage people to start businesses and they play a major role in stimulating and shaping business behavior. They empower people to be courageous and aim high, to take risks and follow their dreams, and to start enterprises, large and small. Paul Freston for example, quotes a Pentecostal pastor telling his congregation:

It’s not enough just to give the ‘sacrifice’ (a special offering) and cross your arms. You have to leave your job and open a business, even if it’s only selling popcorn on the street. As an employee you’ll never get rich (Freston 1995: 132).

In many of these churches, pastors are actively training their members in business and management skills. Van Dijk has commented that various Pentecostal churches in Ghana and Botswana, ‘devote extensive time and energy to the particular matter of how a modern believer is to be transformed and developed into a proactive and goal-oriented agent’ (Van Dijk 2012:96). In several publications (eg. Van Dijk 2009, 2012) he describes how these churches run courses in planning, goal-setting, time management and budgeting. These

churches are not an anomalous few, but a growing trend throughout Africa. They draw on the works of several well-known African Pentecostal preachers who write books about how to understand the workings of the market and how the gospel can help one to reach economic success. Some of the most well-known publications include Mensa Otabil's *Four Laws of Productivity*, Dag Heward-Mills' series of booklets entitled *Success and the Ministry*, Michael Ntuny's *Financial Breakthrough: Discovering God's Secrets to Prosperity*, and David Oyepedo's *Maximise Your Destiny*. Through church training courses and books such as these, Pentecostal preachers take the role of instructing Africa's newly emerging middle class in how to engage with the market, build a business and manage their time. (For other examples across the continent see Comaroff & Comaroff 2000, Maxwell 1998, Meyer 2007, Shlemmer 2008, Ukah 2005). These are skills that development organisations have long sought to instil in their African 'beneficiaries' with little success. On their own they seem alien and unnecessary, but when packaged up with the Pentecostal message of economic salvation and God's desire for abundance, they become useful tools to create a good and meaningful life.

### ***Transformations in values and social relationships***

The Pentecostal enthusiasm for material wealth is not without its dilemmas, often associated in Africa with witchcraft, and in some cases churches acknowledge traditional fears of wealth accumulation and create practices that purify potentially dangerous commodities and legitimise accumulation by good Christians (Meyer 1998b). In other cases Pentecostal teachings encourage followers to withdraw from social obligations that would block them from reaching their financial goals. For many Africans one of the main barriers to accumulating wealth is the pressure to spend any money they have on costly traditional rituals, such as rites of passage or rituals of commensality. Redistribution, in one form or another, is inherent in most traditional African religions and moral systems, and it makes personal accumulation virtually impossible. Pentecostal theology links traditional African religion with the devil and labels all traditional practices as forms of devil worship. In this way, Pentecostalism makes avoidance of traditional religious obligations, and separation from more distant kin, intensely and aggressively moral, and thus enables the emergence of previously impossible behaviours, such as not participating in expensive ceremonies or refusing to contribute to communal rituals.

In my own research in rural Ethiopia, this newfound ability to absent oneself from expensive redistributive rituals and the concomitant ability to reinvest one's wealth into education and new business opportunities, was something that made Pentecostalism very appealing in an otherwise traditional farming community. Farmers in the village of Doko in the Gamo Highlands of southwest Ethiopia had recently started earning money through the production of a cash crop - in this case, apples. Those who were among the earliest to take up apple production soon found themselves in an uncomfortable situation, they were successfully generating a fair amount of wealth but suddenly the community elders were asking them to sponsor the large redistributive rituals and to become initiated. If they accepted this offer they would have no choice but to spend the most part of their newly earned wealth on huge feasts for the community. Many of them had other ideas for their money, such as investing in more apples, opening local bars or hotels or sending their children to school. Until recently there had been no morally legitimate way to refuse this request from the elders (Halperin & Olmstead 1976). At most people could put off sponsoring the feasts for a year or two, but any longer than that would bring about severe social discord and communities had ways to force potential initiates to comply (Freeman 2002a, 2002b). However, with the introduction of the small Pentecostal church in the village, people finally had a way out. By joining the church people could effectively exit most aspects of the traditional culture – by claiming that it was devil worship and that they now followed Jesus. This was not just a rhetorical discourse, these men had lived in fear of the spirits for most of their lives and had therefore carried out the required traditional practices. Now that they felt that Jesus was more powerful than the spirits, and would be able to keep them safe if they did not carry out the traditional rituals, they finally had a safe way out. As one of these farmers told me:

Before there was no way out. You had to follow *dere woga* [traditional practice]. There was no other option. You can't stop *dere woga* unless you believe. The community will force you back. The only way out is to believe. Then Jesus helps you and then you have peace.

By joining the Pentecostal church apple farmers found a way to hold onto their newfound wealth, and this enabled many of them to become relatively rich in a fairly short period of time. Eventually, as apple production spread amongst the community, nearly everyone converted to Pentecostalism, the initiation rituals largely stopped and social and economic relations were radically reformulated (Freeman 2012c, 2013).

This type of behaviour is often framed as ‘making a break with the past’ (Meyer 1998a), where believers make every effort to separate oneself from former social networks and to actively shun traditional cultural practices. Despite the challenges of doing this in practice, this push to break with the past is paradoxically one of the main attractions of Pentecostalism, as people increasingly seek a ‘way out’. It is worth noting that Pentecostal theology does not deny the existence of evil spirits, as do many other branches of Christianity and most secular development organisations, it rather accepts their existence but overcomes them with the superior power of Jesus. By acknowledging the existence and power of spirits and demons, and simultaneously providing a route for believers to distance themselves from them – to make a break – Pentecostalism offers its followers a way out of traditional practices that is at once both safe and legitimate (Robbins 2004).

In many urban centres across Africa the dilemmas of separating oneself from traditional religions and from distant kin ‘in the village’ are ubiquitously visible in the increasingly popular genres of Pentecostal film and teleserial. In these media, seeking to both entertain and evangelise, protagonists are seen trying to live a good Christian life while their domestic sphere gets invaded by demons, witches or other supernatural beings from the village. Mirroring the polar ontology of African Pentecostalism, these films and teleserials portray the struggle of good against evil, as played out in the lives of the urban middle classes, and show the ways in which a good Pentecostal must act in order to successfully disengage herself from occult traditional practices and distant village kin. In her study of Pentecostal teleserials in Kinshasa, Congo, Katrien Pype thus describes the key scenario that is repeatedly explored in numerous Pentecostal TV dramas as:

‘Life in Kinshasa is hazardous because of the working of the Devil and his demons. They invade the domestic sphere with the help of witches, who threaten collective and individual health (in a physical and social sense). Christians can however arm themselves against evil through prayer and by listening closely to the advice of pastors’. (Pype 2012:10)

Similarly, Birgit Meyer claims that Pentecostal films in Accra, Ghana:

represent modern life in the city – in a beautiful, well-furnished house, which is only inhabited by a caring husband, his loving wife, and their children, who all lead a Christian life – as ultimately desirable. And yet, this ideal is so difficult to attain because it is threatened from so many angles. Films thrive on a moral geography that opposes the village, which is the realm of the extended family, and the forces of nature, on the one hand, and the secluded house in the city, on the other. (Meyer 2003:212)

Pentecostal films and teleserials saturate the media in many African cities. They are enormously popular with the growing middle class, who are often trying in their real lives to fathom the very same dilemmas that the films and teleserials portray. They are frequently discussed on TV chat shows, used as examples in church sermons and talked about avidly amongst friends. The Pentecostal promise of individualisation and modernisation is strongly desired, but difficult to fully attain. Nonetheless, many Africans are moving in this direction using the faith, teachings and re-configured morality of the Pentecostal churches.

Pentecostal preachers also encourage believers to be thick-skinned and to ignore the constant requests for help that they receive from poorer relatives, particularly distant relatives in the village. In many cases this leads to cutting or weakening kin ties and Pentecostal belief has been shown to bring about a dramatic restructuring of families, as believers loosen ties with the extended family and focus on the nuclear family - as represented in so many Pentecostal films - as the central unit of production and consumption. In a similar way Pentecostalism also challenges traditional power structures and modes of social organisation – particularly in rural contexts - and instead emphasises individualism and personal achievement.

Another way that Pentecostalism changes economic behaviour, for both the rich and the poor, is by changing consumption patterns. Across the continent Pentecostals call on their followers to abstain from alcohol, tobacco and extramarital relationships (including visits to prostitutes). As believers make strong efforts to change their behavior in the name of Jesus, they bring about a highly significant change in their spending patterns. Money that is earned is no longer distributed among kin and community, and no longer frittered away on unproductive endeavours. Instead there is a marked limitation of ‘wasteful consumption’ and a reorientation towards investment and accumulation.

Whilst Pentecostalism goes far beyond these social and economic impacts for its followers, providing a new type of community, new form of moral framework, and an intensely powerful embodied experience of a new belief and way to be in the world, for our purposes here it is these social and economic changes that show us how Pentecostalism affects development in Africa.

## Conclusion

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber (2008 [1904–1905]) argued that there was an elective affinity between the spread of Protestant Christianity and the growth of capitalism in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe. He sought to show that Protestant belief led to an ethic of hard work and limited consumption that had the *unintended consequence* of leading to successful enterprise and capital accumulation, and thus the further growth and spread of capitalist economic practice. While there are many differences between sixteenth century Calvinism and twenty first century Pentecostalism (see Freeman 2012b), there are nonetheless also many parallels and I have sought to show here how Pentecostalism plays a similar role in Africa today. It is a form of Protestantism that stimulates a transformation of behaviour that can lead to success, or at least upward mobility, in the contemporary neoliberal economy. It motivates new behaviours and renders them moral. It promotes hard work, saving and a limitation on certain types of unproductive consumption. As such it leads people to participate, and succeed, in the capitalist economy. This, at least in present thinking, is what we generally mean by ‘development’.

\* \* \*

## References

- Alkire, Sabina. 2005. *Valuing Freedoms: Sen's Capability Approach and Poverty Reduction*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Anderson, Allan. 2004. *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Barbalet, Jack. 2008. *Weber, Passion and Profits: 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism' in Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



- Barrett, David. 2001. *World Christian Trends, AD 30–AD 2200*. Pasadena: William Carey.
- Barrett, David and Todd Johnson. 2002. Global Statistics. In Burgess, Stanley and Eduard van der Maas (Eds). *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*. Michigan: Zondervan.
- Bialecki, Jon. 2008. Between Stewardship and Sacrifice: Agency and Economy in a Southern Californian Charismatic Church. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute (N.S.)*, 14: 372–390.
- Bialecki, Jon, Naomi Haynes and Joel Robbins. 2008. The Anthropology of Christianity. *Religion Compass*, 2(6): 1139–1158.
- Burchardt, Marian 2013. ‘We are Saving the Township’: Pentecostalism, Faith-based Organisations, and Development in South Africa. *The Journal of Modern African Studies* 51(4): 627-651.
- Burgess, Stanley and Eduard van der Maas (Eds). 2002. *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*. Michigan: Zondervan.
- Chambers, Robert and Gordon Conway. 1991. Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: Practical Concepts for the 21st Century. IDS discussion paper 296.
- Coleman, Simon. 2002. The Faith Movement: A Global Religious Culture? *Culture and Religion*, 3: 3–19.
- Coleman, Simon. 2000. *The Globalisation of Charismatic Christianity: Spreading the Gospel of Prosperity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Comaroff, Jean. 2012. Pentecostalism, Populism and the New Politics of Affect. In Freeman, Dena (Ed). *Pentecostalism and Development: Churches, NGOs and Social Change in Africa*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Comaroff, Jean and John Comaroff. 2000. Privatising the Millenium: New Protestant Ethics and the Spirits of Capitalism in Africa, and Elsewhere. *Afrika Spectrum*, 35(3): 293–312.
- Csordas, Thomas. 2007. Global Religion and the Re-Enchantment of the World: The Case of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. *Anthropological Theory*, 7(9): 295–314.
- Csordas, Thomas. 2002. *Body/Meaning/Healing*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Deacon, Gregory 2012. Pentecostalism and Development in Kibera Informal Settlement, Nairobi. *Development in Practice* 22(5-6), 663-674.
- Deacon, Gregory and Gabrielle Lynch. 2013. Allowing Satan in? Moving Toward a Political Economy of Neo-Pentecostalism in Kenya. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 43, 108-130
- De Temple, Jill. 2006. ‘Haiti Appeared at my Church’: Faith-Based Organizations, Transnational Activism and Tourism in Sustainable Development. *Urban Anthropology*, 35: 155–181.

- Digler, Hansjorg. 2009. Doing Better? Religion, the Virtue-Ethics of Development, and the Fragmentation of Health Politics in Tanzania. *Africa Today*, 56 (1): 89-110.
- Freeman, Dena. 2013. Pentecostalism in a Rural Context: Dynamics of Religion and Development in Southwest Ethiopia. *PentecoStudies* 12(2): 231-249.
- Freeman, Dena, (Ed). 2012a. *Pentecostalism and Development: Churches, NGOs and Social Change in Africa*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Freeman, Dena 2012b. The Pentecostal Ethic and the Spirit of Development. In Freeman, Dena (Ed). *Pentecostalism and Development: Churches, NGOs and Social Change in Africa*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Freeman, Dena 2012c. Development and the Rural Entrepreneur: Pentecostals, NGOs and the Market in the Gamo Highlands, Ethiopia. In Freeman, Dena (Ed). *Pentecostalism and Development: Churches, NGOs and Social Change in Africa*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Freeman, Dena 2002a. *Initiating Change in Highland Ethiopia: Causes and Consequences of Cultural Transformation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Freeman, Dena 2002b. From Warrior to Wife: Cultural Transformation in the Gamo Highlands of Ethiopia. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (NS) 8:34-44.
- Freston, Paul. 1995. Pentecostalism in Brazil: A Brief History. *Religion*, 25: 119-133.
- Gifford, Paul. 1998. *African Christianity: Its Public Role*. London: Hurst.
- Gifford, Paul (Ed.). 1995. *The Christian Churches and the Democratization of Africa*. Leiden: Brill.
- Gough, Ian and J. Allister McGregor (Eds). 2007. *Wellbeing in Developing Countries: From Theory to Research*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Goulet, Denis. 1997. Development Ethics: A New Discipline. *International Journal of Social Economics*, 24(11): 1160–1171.
- Halperin, Rhoda and Judith Olmstead. 1976. To Catch a Feastgiver: Redistribution among the Dorze of Ethiopia. *Africa*. 46: 146-166.
- Hasu, Päivi. 2012. Prosperity Gospels and Enchanted Worldviews: Two Responses to Socio-Economic Transformation in Tanzanian Pentecostal Christianity. In Freeman, Dena (Ed). *Pentecostalism and Development: Churches, NGOs and Social Change in Africa*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Hasu, Päivi. 2009. The Witch, the Zombie and the Power of Jesus: A Trinity of Spiritual Warfare in Tanzanian Pentecostalism. *Suomen Antropologi – Journal of the Finnish Anthropological Society* 34(1): 70–83.
- Hofer, Katharina. 2003. The Role of Evangelical NGOs in International Development: A Comparative Case Study of Kenya and Uganda. *Afrika Spectrum*, 38 (3): 375-398.

- Hollenweger, Walter. 1997. *Pentecostalism: Origins and Developments Worldwide*. Peabody: Hendrickson.
- Kamsteeg, Franz. 1998. *Prophetic Pentecostalism in Chile: A Case Study on Religion and Development Policy*. Lanham: Scarecrow.
- Keyes, Charles. 2002. Weber and Anthropology. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 31: 233–255.
- Luhrmann, Tanya. 2004. Metakinesis: How God Becomes Intimate in Contemporary US Christianity. *American Anthropologist*, 106: 518–528.
- Marshall, Katherine and Marisa Van Saanen. 2007. *Development and Faith: Where Mind, Heart and Soul Work Together*. Washington, DC: The World Bank.
- Marshall, Ruth. 1991. Power in the Name of Jesus. *Review of African Political Economy*, 52: 21–37.
- Martin, David. 2002. *Pentecostalism: The World Their Parish*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Martin, David. 1990. *Tongues of Fire: The Explosion of Protestantism in Latin America*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Maxwell, David. 2005. The Durawall of Faith: Pentecostal Spirituality in Neo-Liberal Zimbabwe. *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 35(1): 4–32.
- Maxwell, David. 1998. ‘Delivered from the Spirit of Poverty’: Pentecostalism, Prosperity and Modernity in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Religion in Africa*, 28(3): 350–373.
- Meyer, Birgit. 2007. Pentecostalism and Neo-Liberal Capitalism: Faith, Prosperity and Vision in African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches. *Journal for the Study of Religion*, 20(2): 5–28.
- Meyer, Birgit. 2004. Christianity in Africa: From African Independent to Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 33: 447–474.
- Meyer, Birgit. 2003. Ghanaian Popular Cinema and the Magic in and of Film. In Meyer, Birgit and Peter Pels (Eds). *Magic and Modernity: Interfaces of Revelation and Concealment*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Meyer, Birgit. 1998a. ‘Make a Complete Break with the Past’: Memory and Post-Colonial Modernity in Ghanaian Pentecostalist Discourse. *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28(3): 316–349.
- Meyer, Birgit. 1998b. Commodities and the Power of Prayer: Pentecostalist Attitudes towards Consumption in Contemporary Ghana. *Development and Change*, 29: 751–776.
- Piot, Charles. 2012. Pentecostal and Development Imaginaries West Africa. In Freeman, Dena (Ed). *Pentecostalism and Development: Churches, NGOs and Social Change in Africa*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Pype, Katrien. 2012. *The Making of Pentecostal Melodrama: Religion, Media and Gender in Kinshasa*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Robbins, Joel. 2004. The Globalisation of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 33: 117–143.

Rostow, Walt. 1960. *The Stages of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Schlemmer, Lawrence. 2008. *Dormant Capital: Pentecostalism in South Africa and its Potential Social and Economic Role*. Johannesburg: Centre for Development and Enterprise.

Scoones, Ian. 1998. Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: A Framework for Analysis. IDS working paper 72.

Sen, Amartya. 1999. *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Ukah, AF-K. 2005. Those Who Trade with God Never Lose: The Economies of Pentecostal Activism in Nigeria. In Falola, T. (Ed.), *Christianity and Social Change in Africa: Essays in Honor of J.D.Y. Peel*. Durham: Carolina Academic Press.

Van Dijk, Rijk. 2012. Pentecostalism and Post-Development: Exploring Religion as a Developmental Ideology in Ghanaian Migrant Communities. In Freeman, Dena (Ed). *Pentecostalism and Development: Churches, NGOs and Social Change in Africa*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Van Dijk, Rijk. 2009. Social Catapulting and the Spirit of Entrepreneurialism: Migrants, Private Initiative and the Pentecostal Ethic in Botswana. In Hüwelmeier, Gertrud and Kristine Krause (Eds), *Traveling Spirits. Migrants, Markets and Mobilities*. New York: Routledge.

Van Dijk, Rijk. 2005. The Moral Life of the Gift in Ghanaian Pentecostal Churches in the Diaspora: Questions of (in-)dividuality and (in-)alienability in Transcultural Reciprocal Relations. In Van Binsbergen, W. and P. Geschiere (Eds), *Commodification: Things, Agency and Identities*. Hamburg: LIT Verlag.

Weber, Max. 2008 [1904–5]. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by Talcott Parsons. Miami: BN Publishing.