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Neo-Pentecostalism in Black Africa

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The religious scene in Black Africa underwent a dramatic change in the 1970s. Up until then, in most areas, there were only four general denominations to choose from: the local Protestant denomination, as determined by colonial mission society allotments; Catholicism; the Jehovah's Witnesses; and the African Independent (or Initiated) Churches, the AICs. During the seventies, however, the region was flooded with a variety of Pentecostal and charismatic denominations. Any given locality now hosts up to a dozen different and competing denominations. Whereas Finke and Stark (*The Churching of America, 1776-1990*, 1992) contend that such an open religious marketplace intensifies religious loyalties and commitment, this is not obviously the case in Central and Southern Africa. Instead of becoming fervent followers of a new denomination, individuals switch back and forth between a random sequence of different denominations in a search for practical improvements in their lives.

This paper covers four general topics. In order these are the resolution of the muddle over African Independent Churches; the new Pentecostal Charismatic Christians; these born-again's approaches to AIDS and gender issues; and the popular Christian cinema.

First, however, a word about religious conversion in Africa. Contra A. D. Nock (1933: 6-7), all available evidence suggests that religious conversion in Black Africa is an additive or syncretic process, rather than an exclusive and irreversible event. As anthropologist M. F. C. Bourdillion puts it:

It is generally recognized that when religious conversion takes place in Africa, the new religions are understood within the categories of the old. New Christians may still emphasize the need for material well-being, or they may still understand diseases in terms of spirits or witches.

Traditional religions fed into each other in a similar way in the past. Understanding necessarily involves fitting what is new to the existing patterns of the mind (Bourdillon 1993: 226; also Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 250; Gray 1990: 75-79).

These existing patterns of the mind, according to De Craemer, Vansina, and Fox's (1976) summary of religious movements in Central Africa include attempts to optimize one's prosperity and minimize misfortune. Such is certainly the recent pattern among the Pogoro of southern Tanzania. About three-fourths of the Pogoro consider themselves Roman Catholic, even though few have any respect for the formerly Capuchin mission whose Tanzanian clergy now demand payment for church-managed health and educational services, and for access to the sacraments. Pogoro Catholics now reject the local priests' "religion of business," and, instead, practice a popular Christianity which features direct and personal access to Mother Mary, to the ancestors, and to diviners and witchfinders (Green 1995, 2003).

Here too anthropologist Maia Green rejects A. D. Nocks' (1933) exclusive and irreversible view of religious conversion:

The image of conversion as a miraculous transformation in the consciousness of an individual is not a sociological account of the historical process of conversion, but a rhetorical device of evangelical Protestantism (Green 2003: 12).

Resolving the Muddle over African Independent Churches

Perhaps the most notable change in the study of African religions over the last thirty years has been the total reversal in the understanding of African Independent (or Initiated) Churches, the AICs. These include the various Zionist churches in Southern

and Central Africa, the Apostles (*Vapastori*) of Johane Maranke and Apostles of Johane Masowe in Zimbabwe and beyond, and the Aladura churches of Nigeria and beyond. Beginning with the second edition of theologian Bengt Sundkler's *Bantu Prophets of South Africa* in 1961, some twenty years of scholarship focused upon the AICs and the search for authentic expressions of African Christianity (Meyer 2004a: 454; Maxwell 2006c: 388). Mission Christianity was viewed as basically alien and European. The AICs – with their spirit possession, prophecy, faith healing and exorcism, hand-clapping, ecstatic dancing, visions and dreams, and charismatic leadership – were considered authentically African (Ranger 1987: 31; Maxwell 2006a: 44; Maxwell 2006c: 394). Or so it seemed at the time.

Once again, this early assessment of the AICs was based upon a simplistic and mistaken dichotomy between Christianity and traditional African religion. During my Zambian fieldwork, I lived some months with an immigrant Shona family. They were Apostles of Johane Maranke (see Jules-Rosette 1975), and I used to describe their faith as a mixture of Old Testament Christianity and traditional Shona religion. This, I now realize, was utterly mistaken, for any simple dichotomy between Christianity and traditional African religion

distorts the true situation. . . . [T]he key point, I think, is not the determination of whether a man is really a Christian or really a traditionalist; the key point is that popular religion consists of both Christianity and African religious forms and ideas (Ranger 1987: 487).

This is admirably demonstrated in anthropologist Marshall Murphree's *Christianity and the Shona* (2004). These eastern, Budjga Shona profess religious

allegiance to four faiths: Catholic, Methodist, Apostles of Johane Maranke, and traditional. Yet only a minority of the Budjga follow a single religious faith. The majority shift back and forth between these faiths as the situation requires. The Catholics have considerable financial resources and political clout. The Methodists have strong Sunday schools and women's organization. The Apostles are admired for the efficacy of their exorcisms and faith healing skills. And everyone respects the wisdom of the ancestors. None of these four religious orientations meet the whole range of contemporary needs. "Each group is best understood as a modality on a religious spectrum which they all must share." Budjga religion is not an integrated, logically consistent set of beliefs. "No single one of them in itself represents 'Contemporary Budjga Religion'; Budjga religion is the complete religious spectrum itself, of which they are only related parts" (Murphree 2004: 151).

It was the mixing of Christian and African religious traits which worried scholars of the AICs, Bengt Sundkler in particular. He saw the AICs as halfway between Christianity and paganism. Sundkler made "syncretism" a dirty word in African religious studies, and incited other scholars to adopt such synonyms as religious "pluralism," "eclecticism," or "bricolage" (e.g., Peel 1968; Ranger 1986; Gray 1990). As a Lutheran theologian, Sundkler saw "syncretism" as "the illegitimate reconciliation of opposing theological views" (Droogers 1989: 9). It denoted something not entirely Christian that, given the sheer weight of traditional religious ideas, threatened to drag nearly Christian AICs back down the slippery slope into heathendom and damnation (Meyer 1999b: 231n18; Meyer 2004a: 455n1, 456).

These are the very same sentiments which derailed the healing ministry of Archbishop Milingo of Zambia. His Irish and Polish colleagues in the Zambia Episcopal Conference advised him to stop his exorcism services in November 1977 in order to avoid further "scandal and division. Milingo's expatriate colleagues were evidently upset with the primitiveness of African spirit possession and his identification of these afflicting spirits with the Devil. They were unable to discuss the whole affair without drawing a contrast between science and superstition. His colleagues seemed unaware that spirit possession and exorcism are nearly universal beliefs, and that Milingo had first learned to harness the powers of the Holy Spirit at a charismatic training course in Ann Arbor, Michigan in June 1976 (Ter Haar and Ellis 1988; Ter Haar 1992). Like the old Sundkler, long since reformed, the Irish and Polish priests in the Zambia Episcopal Conference were committed to protecting their own particular theology against that of the Charismatic Renewal movement (Droogers 1989; also Hexham and Poewe 1994c).

The Ann Arbor origins of Archbishop Milingo's healing ministry raises a final, revolutionary point about the AICs, namely that they are all spinoffs from the American, Canadian, and British Pentecostals that visited Africa between 1905 and 1940. In South and Southern Africa they founded the Apostolic Faith Mission, which was linked to the Pentecostals in Zion City, Illinois (Maxwell 1999, 2006a: 38ff, 2006c: 386; Anderson 2005; Chidester 1992: 136-38). In Nigeria, it was the Apostolic Church and the Faith Tabernacle in the west, both of which fostered the Aladura churches of Nigeria and beyond, and the Assemblies of God in eastern Nigeria (Peel 1968: 132; Ojo 1988a: 176, 1988b: 141; Marshall 1993: 216; Parratt 1969).

Terence Ranger publicized this revolutionary reevaluation of the AICs by suggesting "that we should see mission churches as much less alien and independent churches as much less 'African' than has hitherto been the case" (Ranger 1987: 31). By this he means these are *African* Pentecostal churches. The exorcisms and faith-healing done by the Apostles of Johane Maranke during my fieldwork in Zambia were all accomplished by invoking the Holy Spirit, the only benevolent spirit the Apostles recognize. Maxwell (1999) has documented the influence of Apostolic Faith Mission evangelists on Johane Maranke and Johane Masowe before they began their churches in 1932. Are these not, then, Pentecostal churches?

Churches which emphasize ecstatic possession by the spirit [and always the Holy Spirit], which foster prophecy and spiritual healing and exorcism have been seen as continuations of African belief and practice. Yet these very features, which are taken as being most African, are in reality the most Christian aspect of these churches. They spring directly from increasingly strong tendencies in world Christianity in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They spring in fact either from anti-establishment Christian Pentecostalism, as it developed in Europe and North America, or from evangelical tendencies within the major mission churches themselves. Few independent church leaders have claimed to be continuing African traditions. Most are anxious for their churches to be seen as part of a world movement; many claim legitimacy by means of a connection with one or another of the Euro-American movements of prophecy and healing (Ranger 1987:31; also see Maxwell 2006a: 44).

The current trend, then, is to treat the AICs as an African variety of the Pentecostal churches, but as separate and more or less distinct from the Pentecostal Charismatic churches of the late 1970s and 1980s.

Pentecostal Charismatic Christians

Since the late 1970s, the character of African Christianity has been dramatically transformed with the arrival of born-again, or Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity (PCC). It is probably no accident that this time period is associated with the imposition of the World Bank and IMF's structural adjustment programs, and the massive contraction of government jobs and services, rising food prices and unemployment, and the new "occult economies" that these entailed – this being the belief that market mechanisms are being manipulated by selfish, evil persons (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999). The born-again's numbers "have mushroomed in a context of state contraction, neo-liberal economics, poverty and growing political turmoil" (Maxwell 2006b: 418). It is difficult to quantify the size of this movement, but it is now surpassing both the historic mission churches and the AICs. "Indeed, in states such as Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe born-again's are so numerous and their leaders so influential that they are just as 'mainstream,' or 'established' as Anglicans or Catholics" (Maxwell 2006b: 403-04).

Nigeria should be included too (Hackett 1996, 1998; Marshall 1993; Marshall-Fratani 1998, 2001; Ojo 1988a, 1988b; Smith 2001; Ukah 2003), and born-again's also appear in Tanzania (Dilger 2007), Malawi (Englund 2000, 2001, 2003; van Rijk 1992), Botswana (Parratt 1995), and in the Francophone states of Congo-Brazzaville (Dorier-Apprill 2001), Burkina Faso (Laurent 2001), Benin (Mayrargue 2001), and Cote d'Ivoire (Newell 2005). Ter Haar and van Rijk have also studied these PCCs among Ghanaian émigrés in the Netherlands and Botswana (Ter Haar 1995; van Rijk 1997, 2001, 2003,

2004). Indeed, most of the recent literature on African Christianity centers on these PCCs.

There are several differences between the old Pentecostal churches, established between 1905 and 1940, and the born-again PCCs, first established in the late 1970s. Both of these share strict codes of personal ethics, and a belief in the imminent second coming. They also both share in the "gifts of the spirit": baptism in the Holy Spirit, glossolalia (speaking in tongues), prophecy, exorcism, and healing. But while the old Pentecostals are strictly denominational, the new PCCs tend to participate in non-denominational networks of like-minded Christians who either host or join massive workshops and crusades that feature international Pentecostal superstars from America, Germany (e.g., Gifford 1987), Ghana, Nigeria, Kenya, the Congo, Zimbabwe, and the Bahamas (Anderson 2005). Moreover, the Anglophonic countries of Africa are also connected with churches in Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Hong Kong (Hackett 1996). South Africa has become the African base for Brazil's Universal Church of the Kingdom of God (Freston 2001, 2005). These PCCs constitute a transnational religious movement, and many of the African ones have "international," "universal," or "world" in their names.¹

The old and new Pentecostal churches also display disparate attitudes toward wealth and social class. Whereas the old Pentecostals disdained worldliness and wealth, and encouraged their members to be satisfied with what they had, the PCCs preach the "faith" or "prosperity gospel," which teaches that God blesses the faithful with material prosperity (e.g., Maxwell 1998). It was a variant of this doctrine which led former

¹ For brief, general reviews of the African Pentecostal Charismatic churches, see Gifford 2001, Maxwell 2006c, or Meyer 2004a.

President Frederick Chiluba – against significant opposition, especially from the Catholics – to declare Zambia a Christian nation, to have this declaration appended to the constitution, and to resurrect Zambia's diplomatic ties with Israel. These efforts, however, did not bestow any of the anticipated blessings on Zambia (Gifford 1998: 197-219; Phiri 2003).

The prosperity gospel helps explain why these PCCs typically consist of youthful pastors and congregants. PCC members aspire to and dress for middle class status. This same variety of the Protestant Ethic might also explain why so many of these PCCs have ties to the Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship International.

The PCCs also share what Paul Gifford calls "deliverance theology," the notion that the Holy Spirit can deliver the true believer from whatever demon blocks his or her progress in life. Such demons may be personalized ones, like ancestor spirits who once committed their unwitting descendants to unholy pacts with evil forces. Thus born-again are encouraged to "make a complete break with the past," and cut their ties with their homes and the burdensome expectations of needy relatives (Meyer 1998a). There is a distinct anti-gerontocratic pattern here when ambitious, youthful born-again cut their ties to elderly relatives.

But these blocking demons might also be impersonal ones, like the demons of childlessness, divorce, sleep, sadness, and poverty (Gifford 1998: 98, 2001: 67; Maxwell 1998). Thus it was, in June 2003, that a London-based Ghanaian evangelist was brought home to lead an all-night prayer vigil to deliver Ghana Airways from the evils besetting it – even though the actual evils were outraged passengers (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005).

Though I have not encountered it elsewhere, Matthews Ojo describes "restitution" as a major doctrine among Nigerian PCCs. Restitution means that the committed convert "must, as far as possible, make amends for one's past sins, mistakes, and every sort of unchristian act" (Ojo 1998a: 184). In its simplest form, restitution encourages former pupils or employees to return or offer compensation to their former teachers, principals, or bosses for whatever they may have destroyed or stolen. In its more complicated form, though, restitution requires a polygynous man to divorce all but his first wife, and for a divorced and remarried man to divorce all his later wives and go back to his first. Ojo regards this second form of restitution as an impractical and even short-sighted ideology.

The last distinguishing feature of the PCCs is their focus on the electronic and printed media. The structural adjustment programs imposed upon African countries in the 1980s resulted in a proliferation of new, private television and FM radio stations, many of which feature hours of religious broadcasting (De Witte 2003). Local PCC worship services and programs, including worship bands and lively congregational singing, now occupy the same airwaves alongside those of American televangelists. Audio and videotapes (and probably DVDs) of previous sermons, talks, and services are offered for sale at these churches, along with the books and audiovisual products of the transnational superstars. Religion is literally a booming business in Africa's PCCs (Hackett 1998; Ukah 2003).

While some once denounced Africa's PCCs as tools of America's Religious Right (Maxwell 2006a: 11-12), only the Brazilian Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, now in South Africa, appears to be a foreign transplant. The rest are domestic products inspired and sometimes assisted by their American counterparts. The PCCs in Nigeria

and South Africa were begun, in the 1960s and 1970s, respectfully, by interdenominational campus Bible study groups (Ojo 1988a, 1988b; Anderson 2005: 68). Others were narrowly local, homegrown affairs. Such was certainly the case with the Lord's Pentecostal Church among the Ewe of southeastern Ghana.

The Ewe of the Ghana-Togo border region were first visited by German Pietist missionaries in 1847. The missionaries considered Ewe religion as little more than diabolical heathenism. Thus when they preached about the Devil, they called him *Abosam*, the Akan word for witchcraft and witch familiars. Ewe converts agreed that their religion was little more than witchcraft, and Ewe Christianity became the studied repudiation of diabolical beliefs and practices. Such was not the view of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana, which replaced the Germans after World War I. So when the Evangelical Presbyterian Church of Ghana began indigenizing its worship services around 1960, the lower ranking members who took evil spirits seriously and rejected African tradition started a congregation that became the Lord's Pentecostal Church. In 1991, the young adults within the Presbyterians' Bible Study and Prayer Fellowship also broke away and joined a new Ghanaian Pentecostalist Presbyterian church. Here, purely at the local level, both the lower ranking adults and younger Ewe Christians broke with the mainstream church which refused to take diabolical witchcraft seriously (Meyer 1992, 1999b).

The Pentecostal Ewe have embraced a modernity which, contrary to Max Weber, fosters a reenchantment of the world.

It is therefore worthwhile to consider that Pentecostalism's popularity in Africa may to some extent be due to the fact that it offers a ritual space and an imaginary language to deal with demons which are cast

out in the process of modernity's constitution, but which continue to haunt people the more they progress (Meyer 1999b: 215-16).

In other words, believers repudiate a past which continues to haunt their minds.

David Maxwell worries that the recent scholarly fashion for the PCCs might lead to the neglect of the contemporary mission churches. "Catholicism," he says, "remains as vital as Born-again Christianity." But the vitality of the mission churches is also manifest in the significant work they do in advocacy and human rights, and in that, given their general efficiency and trustworthiness, the historic mission churches are now international donors' preferred channel for foreign aid. "The missionary movement is not over. It has simply taken on new forms." (Maxwell 2006c: 391-92).

Pentecostal Charismatic Churches, AIDS, and Gender

Though my research found few studies of AIDS, sex, and gender issues, those which I uncovered are worth some discussion. The intensity of the AIDS epidemic in Eastern and Southern Africa is legendary, yet the literature on this disease's religious dimensions is surprisingly thin. C. Bawa Yamba describes the similarities the Goba of southern Zambia perceive between witchcraft and AIDS, and the socially disruptive chain of executions that began when a witchfinder was brought in to smell out the witches causing AIDS (Yamba 1997; also see Douglas 1999). In a similar vein, Behrend tells how the Catholic charismatics of western Uganda's Uganda Martyrs Guild have reawakened old witchcraft anxieties by hunting witches to combat HIV/AIDS (Behrend 2007).

Jo Sadgrove and Robert C. Garner have both investigated the influence of church affiliation on sexuality and, by implication, HIV/AIDS prevention. Sadgrove looked at

the self-reported sexual behavior among twenty-five upscale Pentecostal students at Makerere University in Uganda. All were members of Kampala Pentecostal Church, an Anglophonic church in the center of town. The church's pastors were skeptical of the "prosperity gospel" and "deliverance theology." Instead, their preaching emphasized "personal and social values and the responsibility of Christians to represent and live out their faith" against the empty promises of materialism (Sadgrove 2007: 127). Preaching on sexual behavior was minimal, but promoted abstinence and condemned the use of condoms (Sadgrove 2007: 126-27, 120-21).

The campus culture at Makerere, by contrast, emphasizes transactional sex, and co-eds in particular are famous for using sex to extract money and other gifts from their marks – especially older sugar daddies. Still, only three of Sadgrove's twelve female informants admitted to this practice while being born-again. However, over half of the twenty-five students suggested that born-again women use sex to obtain favors, but usually target men from outside their church. Eleven of the twenty-five informants – four females and seven males – admitted to having been or being involved in sexual relations since becoming born-again. Condom use was variable. Six used them sometimes, two used them always, three did not use them because of the church prohibition, and one had abandoned them because their use might imply mistrust of her partner (Sadgrove 2007: 127-28).

There is a social cachet to being born-again in Uganda. It is a brand worth protecting, for it expands one's social network, improves one's job prospects (as in Ghana, where born-again are supposedly more trustworthy), and it provides an identity and sense of belonging. These students all participate in Wednesday night prayer and

talk cells. But while sex is discussed, these discussions never stray from the party line: don't smoke, don't drink, don't have extramarital sex, don't judge others, and turn the other cheek. Born-again students have an image to maintain, and "'it's not bad to lie as we're lying to maintain the image'" (Sadgrove 2007: 132). Thus the masking behavior that goes on among born-again peers makes it difficult to know if what students say has very much to do with what they do.

They do not even know what their peers are actually doing.

Robert C. Garner looked at the self-reported measures of extra- and premarital sex among five categories of church members in Edendale (Kwazulu, Natal), South Africa. Although the born-again Pentecostals had the second lowest rate of support for condom use, they had the highest reported rates of abstention from pre- or extramarital sex: 61% versus 36% for the AIC Apostolics, 29% for the mainline church members, 19% for the AIC Zionists, and 13% for the members of no church. If true, this means that born-again Pentecostals should have lower HIV/AIDS rates, and should experience higher socioeconomic mobility (Garner 2000b). Yet in view of Sadgrove's work at Makerere, one has to wonder whether the reported rates of pre- and extramarital sex are accurate reflections of what these born-again are actually doing.

Stephanie Newell and Rekopantswe Mate both examine women's place in the PCCs. Newell looked at marriage guidance pamphlets and their readers in Ghana and Nigeria, whereas Mate looked at the women's organizations affiliated with Zimbabwe's Family of God and the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God in Africa, also studied by David Maxwell (2006a).

Newell (2005) found differing interpretations of wifely submission (Ephesians 5: 22-24) by male and female authors. The males take a literal reading of Paul's notion of submission, and tend to blame wives for their husbands' infidelities. Only two of the fifty-five how-to pamphlets purchased between 1995 and 2003 were written by women, both Nigerian. And while the women she interviewed at religious bookshops were annoyed with Newell's suggestion that the male authors took an androcentric view of Scripture, many did agree that men were to blame for most marriage problems. By contrast, the female pamphleteers denied husbands' ultimate authority in the household, and discussed submission as a mutual connectedness between loving husbands and wives (Newell 2005).

As Newell's work suggests, Mate found that the two Zimbabwean Pentecostal women's organizations both advocate wifely submission to their husbands, and blame wives for their husbands' extramarital affairs. These organizations claim that women are confused by any talk of equal rights, and mistakenly think that the same equality that applies at the workplace also applies at home (Mate 2002: 554). Contraception and sharing domestic work with men are ungodly. Wives are to be housekeepers, mothers, helpmates, and sexual partners. Both organizations emphasize a domesticity for women which repackages patriarchy as Christian faith.

One may conclude that if indeed "born again" Churches are to help adherents to cope with modernity, their version of modernity calls for stricter controls on women using religious ideology. For gender relations they envision a modernity where women are subordinate to men (Mate 2002: 566).

The PCCs are a powerful force onto themselves, but they also have an unexpectedly powerful influence on popular culture. The video-film industry seems to have begun in Ghana and Nigeria in the late 1980s. Ghana produces an average of fifty films a year (Meyer 1999a: 93); Nigeria is said to produce one thousand (Ukah 2003: 203). Given the transcontinental networking that goes on within the PCC movement, such films are probably distributed throughout Anglophonic Africa, and presumably have sparked similar experiments in other countries. Taped on a VHS or Betacam camera, these video films are inexpensive to make, numerous, omnipresent and inexpensive to view. They are shown in cinemas, video theaters, television, or on home video systems. Moreover, they allow people to see their own culture from a God's eye perspective, on which allows them to penetrate the dark secrets of the never ending war between good and evil (Meyer 1999a, 2003).

Though the video-film industry is a secular one – the Ghanaian industry is actually owned by a Malaysian firm, and one of its most prominent directors is a Muslim – its products are targeted to the popular, hence Pentecostal, audience. These films are the medium and mediators of modernity, and allow their "audiences the possibility of experiencing themselves as morally sound judges in a world replete with wickedness and fraud." All that audiences demand is an "insistence on the truth dimension of film" – nothing too artificial or unrealistic – "and on the importance of a sound moral message" (Meyer 2003: 25-26). Truth must triumph and evil be punished.

Meyer (1999a, 2003, 2004b) and Ukah (2003) summarize the plots of several video-films. A typical film of this sort begins with a "typical" middle class family with all the appurtenances of modernity: beautiful clothes, beautiful house, and beautiful

car(s). It all falls apart when the overly ambitious husband makes a diabolical deal with an inhuman spirit who demands the sacrifice of his wife or child. The husband becomes incredibly wealthy and powerful, but eventually realizes that he is in way over his head and his life has become hell on earth. Something then inspires him to repent, and the power of the Holy Spirit allows him to exorcise his demon and to resume the life of a modern Christian man. These are, in essence, films for reflecting upon the attractions and dangers of contemporary life.

Though both men and women watch these video-films, both Meyer (1999a: 101, 2003:24) and Ukah (2003: 223) agree that it is the women who decide which films to see. Many of these films celebrate the dutiful Christian housewife and mother, and women seem to regard these films as "a civilizing device which might teach their boyfriends or husbands the virtue of fidelity and other aspects of good partnership" (Meyer 2003: 24).

The films thus take a stance against the secret use of juju [malevolent charms] in particular, and African religious traditions in general, and propagate a morally sound version of modernity which is to be established in the confines of the nuclear family home and to be defended against all odds. In short, the films show that the modern nuclear family is quite an impossible, yet strongly desirable, project (Meyer 1999a: 111).

Conclusion

In sum, Christian conversion in Africa has typically been a syncretic process rather than an exclusive and irreversible event. The earlier muddle over the African Independent Churches has been resolved. While originally envisioned as evolutionary halfway houses between "traditional" religion and "mainstream" mission Christianity,

they are now recognized to be African Pentecostal churches which developed in response to the early twentieth century Pentecostal missionaries from Europe and North America.

Much of popular African Christianity since the 1980s takes the form of Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity (PCC). These born-again Christians are now as numerous as "mainstream" mission Christians. While their beliefs in the "prosperity gospel" and "deliverance theology" were inspired by born-again in Europe and America, they are basically domestic products which began with interdenominational campus Bible study groups. PCC members are typically younger than the older African Pentecostals, and they aspire to and dress for middle class status. They are more than willing to "make a complete break with the past," even when this means cutting themselves off from their poor and elderly relatives, and ancestor spirits are regarded as diabolical demons.

Pentecostal Charismatic Christians are supposed to repudiate premarital or extramarital sex. If they actually do so, they should be immune to the HIV and AIDS epidemic, and thereby enjoy greater socioeconomic mobility than others. PCC women are supposed to be housekeepers, wifely helpmates, and sexual partners to their husbands. This emphasis on domesticity and wifely submission leads critics to equate PCC with traditional patriarchy.

So pervasive is PCC that its views pervade popular culture. This is most obviously true in the secular video-film industry of Nigeria and Ghana, and presumably elsewhere as well. Such films celebrate the faithful Christian housewife and mother as the guardian of the modern nuclear family home. It is women who decide which films they will view with their partners, and the women seem to regard these films as valuable instructional devices for their boyfriends or husbands on what true partnership really

means. To this end, the popular video-film industry helps temporize the patriarchal flavor of Pentecostal Charismatic Christianity.

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