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# The Paradoxes of Pentecostalism in Sub-Saharan Africa

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*April 2008*



**Sub-Saharan Africa  
Program**



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This program is supported by:  
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ISBN: 978-2-86592-302-1  
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## Introduction

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“Miracle campaign”, “Special divine healing programme”, “Evening of deliverance and prophecy”: such slogans, covering the walls of Africa’s large cities, bear witness to the growing visibility of Pentecostal movements in sub-Saharan Africa. Pentecostalism’s growth in this continent has provoked an increasing interest over many years. Many observers regard the growth of this Christian movement with suspicion. Known for its demonstrative and expressive religious practices, many commonly accepted “truths” surround the development of Pentecostal Churches and movements: that the phenomenon is entirely new, that it is massive and hence destabilising of other religious forces, that it encloses individuals into new identities, that it is directed from the United States and corresponds to an American model and thus serves the US’s political interests etc. However, over the past fifteen years, both European and African researchers have carried out innovative studies. They allow African Pentecostalism to be inventoried and have underscored the place of sub-Saharan Africa in Globalisation. They highlight the phenomenon’s plural nature, its thousands of different Churches and its complexity. Finally, these studies show the ambivalence of a movement which at the same time both contributes to the creation of new social networks and reinforces individualisation and maintains multiple, sometimes conflicting, relations towards politics.

## **A religion which reveals Africa's ancient and active ties to globalisation**

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Pentecostalism is an expression of evangelical Christianity. Coming from a protestant background, Evangelism is distinguished from more traditional Protestantism by the dominant notions of individual conversion and personal experience (“You are not born Christian, you become Christian”), and the importance attached to proselytising and activities designed to convert (“to save”) the largest number possible of people (for example through open air crusades or television programmes presented by televangelists.) The importance attached to the Holy Spirit distinguishes Pentecostalism from other evangelical Churches. The Spirit is supposed to manifest itself amongst us here and now, particularly through gifts (of healing, prophecy, and so on). The baptism by the Spirit is the outpouring of the Spirit, that is to say the descent of the Spirit on an individual. Miracles are expected; religious practice is emotional and expressive, using the body and the soul. Deliverance is practised – a spectacular process intended to extract the malicious forces possessing an individual.

The precise origins of Pentecostalism are strongly debated; it is nevertheless clear that it first occurred, more or less at the same time, at the very beginning of the Twentieth century in the United States, in a white Church and a black Church. For some, it is important to highlight Pentecostalism's “black” origins; the movement needs to be clearly distinguished from fundamental Christianity, itself uncomfortable with overly suggestive behaviour, and with which Pentecostalism has strained relations.

A century after its first appearance, it is possible to identify different waves of Pentecostalism. In such a way, the historical Pentecostalism of the Churches founded in the first half of the century can be set against a “neo-Pentecostalism”, to borrow a term used by pastors and researchers alike, which uses modern marketing and communication techniques as well as a more individual-centred discourse.

Contrary to what many may think, Pentecostalism has been present in Africa for a long time. The first western missionaries arrived in the continent in the 1910s. Missionaries from the (American) Church of God's Assemblies first arrived in Liberia in 1914 and in Burkina Faso in 1921. British missionaries arrived in Nigeria

and Ghana in the 1930s. Another very early presence is to be found in South Africa starting from 1908. The first Pentecostal communities date from these times, be it local groups linked to western Churches, those which became autonomous Churches or indigenous Churches influenced by Pentecostal missionaries.

An African Evangelical and Pentecostal renewal began to be noticeable in the 1970s, and especially in the 1980s, particularly in the countries where Christianity's presence was older and relatively strong. The revival was due to the spread of new trans-national Christian groups, notably neo-Pentecostal ones, but also numerous local initiatives – indicating a local reinvention of Pentecostalism. First observed in English-speaking countries (Nigeria in West Africa, Kenya in the East, and South Africa), it developed in the countries of Central Africa (in particular the two Congos) and French-speaking West Africa in the 1990s. Its penetration of strongly islamised countries, like Senegal, is more recent still. Pentecostalism's distribution throughout the continent remains uneven; some areas have served as points of anchorage for Pentecostal missionary organisations and/or are places of strong local creation of new movements. In the interior of countries, big cities and urban areas are the favoured locations for new Pentecostal movements, which later spread to secondary cities and rural areas. There are numerous African cities that host such Christian awakenings and are taken over by their religious events. Alongside temples, buildings initially intended for other activities are converted into places of worship: old hangars, abandoned cinemas, and so on. In addition, other public spaces – stadiums, conference halls, crossroads and squares, wasteland – are periodically taken over for evangelical crusades, deliverance sessions, special programmes and so on.

African Pentecostalism is often presented as an imported religion, by its nature exterior to the continent. While it is true that its origins may be exogenous, and that it started to spread thanks to western missionaries, such a view needs to be strongly tempered. Of course, western preachers continue to cross the continent and mobilise large crowds (there are large United States-based worldwide evangelisation programmes active in Africa); American-developed ideologies (such as prosperity theology) spread; international western evangelical non-governmental organizations, such as *World Vision* or *Samaritan Purse*, develop projects in partnership with local Churches and non-governmental organizations. However, Pentecostalism's African development cannot be understood as an Americanisation of local religious life. Such an interpretation overlooks the phenomena of Pentecostalism's local reinvention, and the growing complexity – the inversion even – of Christian currents of exchange. These no longer uniquely flow North-South, but also South-South (see the African success of the large Brazilian Church, the Universal Church of the

Kingdom of God<sup>1</sup>), and South-North, particularly under the influence of diasporas.

As a result of reinterpretation, innovation and the development of autonomous Churches, African Pentecostalism has effectively followed its own path. The spread of Pentecostalism in Africa very quickly lead to the development of diverse local initiatives. Local actors didn't remain passive towards the new religion: African Churches gained autonomy from their missionary founders, dissident Churches were created, African entrepreneurs created their own Churches. Thus, the spread of Pentecostalism can be seen as a continual process of modification and reinvention. Nowadays, this is a mass process: the spread of different varieties of Pentecostalism is in large part due to African pastors and African Churches which drive the religious awakening in the continent's urban centres.

This process can be clearly seen in West Africa<sup>2</sup>. Many such Churches have developed in Nigeria, and since the 80s some have acquired a considerable weight. W. Kumuyi's *Deeper Life Bible Church* arose in 1982 from a prayer group started in 1973 on a Lagos campus. Founded in 1952, the *Redeemed Christian Church of God* underwent a revival and a "pentecostalisation" in the 80s after the arrival of E. Adeboye at its head. Other examples from the 80s include the *Winner's Chapel* or reverend B. Idahosa's *Church of God Mission*, founded in the 70s. Reverend Idahosa would go on to become both a symbol of the new generation of religious entrepreneurs and an important figure at national level. In Ghana M. Otabil's *International Central Gospel Church* (1984) or N. Duncan-William's *Christian Action Faith Ministries* (1979) are typical examples of Pentecostalist renewal – thousands of people attend their services every week<sup>3</sup>. These Churches have universal ambitions, and some are present in dozens of countries in Africa, but also elsewhere in the world. Their expansion follows the migration of their believers, but they also have a task of evangelisation to undertake and so take part in Europe's re-Christianisation. Today, the Ghanaian *Church of Pentecost* is present in France, UK, US, Japan, India and Ukraine<sup>4</sup>.

Pentecostalism in Africa is both a religion anchored in local communities, supported by local actors and a globalised religion. These same local African actors are responsible for more and more initiatives worldwide, reminding us that religion is one of the ways in which the continent participates in a globalised world<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> For more on this Church and its worldwide expansion, especially in Africa, see Corten, Dozon and Pedro Oro (2003).

<sup>2</sup> See Fourchard, Mary and Otayek (2005) and Mayrargue (2004).

<sup>3</sup> For more on the recent evolution of Pentecostalism in this country see Gifford (2004) and Asamoah-Gyadu (2004).

<sup>4</sup> For more on the *Church of Pentecost*, see Sandra Fancello (2006).

<sup>5</sup> For more on Pentecostalism's trans-nationalism, see Corten and Marshall-Fratani (2001).

## A disparate collection of movements

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African Pentecostalism covers a disparate collection of movements: “mega churches”, able to hold thousands, or even tens of thousands, of worshippers, and microscopic ones; foreign Churches from outside of Africa and local organisations; inter-denominational movements which work together with the whole evangelical movement and more closed ones; Churches created during the first wave of Pentecostalism, rather hesitant concerning deliverance, and newer Churches which base the core of their activities around it. Pentecostalism in Africa can thus be really considered to be a diverse religious spectrum. Other characteristics – the absence of a central authority and the fissiparous nature of Churches, leading to the creation of many new Churches – reinforce this impression. Deciding on which Churches belong to this spectrum is another question; Churches that don't go by the name can be classed as Pentecostal. Should afro-Christian Churches be included for the characteristics they share with Pentecostalism, when they are in fact rejected by Pentecostal Churches?

Religious activity consists of routine events (services, bible study, prayer evenings, sessions of deliverance) and special ones (evangelising crusades, mass deliverance programmes). During services, some components like praying out loud and testimonies of conversion or healing are emphasised.

Pentecostalism's success is difficult to evaluate: should only the converted and the baptised be counted, or also the large crowds who come to large events out of curiosity? Even when restricted to practising worshippers, measuring the size of the phenomenon is not straightforward. There are very few indicators that can be used to judge the size of its success, and those that exist are often unreliable. Even when censuses measure declared religious affiliations seriously, they rarely distinguish Pentecostals from Evangelicals, or even from Protestants in general. As for the counts that the Churches perform themselves, they are not always done systematically or rigorously. Evaluation therefore has to be based mainly on observations in the field, which can only give fragmented data. Figures given by specialists from different countries have Pentecostals making up 10% of the population in South Africa and Kenya, and 5% in Burkina Faso and Benin. After Brazil and the US, Nigeria has the world's third largest community of the *Assemblies of God*, with more than a million converts. The *Church of Pentecost*



alone has 800 000 followers in Ghana. The contemporary distribution of Pentecostalism highlights its important African centres – South Africa, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana, the DRC and Congo. However, it is not a dominant religious current in any of these countries. On the other hand, Pentecostalism's penetration in Sahelian countries like Senegal or Niger remains very weak.

Many Africans turn to Pentecostalism as a result of problems they face. By emphasising its claims to solve problems of daily life, as well as existential problems, Pentecostalism seduces populations that are faced by a decreasing quality of life, by the "insecurity of modernity"<sup>6</sup>, by feelings of isolation or a loss of traditional points of reference. At the same time, this religion is one solution among many, sometimes chosen as a last resort after having tried "everything else", and often part of an individual's complex and unfinished religious path.

This success should therefore be looked at carefully – there is no danger of a wave of Pentecostalism or Evangelism flooding the continent. Contemporary processes of religious reconstitution are numerous and long term ones; Pentecostalism, like other religions, is one of many participants in this process that is pluralizing and complicating Africa's religious life.

Benin, with a population of more than 8 million, will serve as an example to illustrate this evolution. This country is known for being the birthplace of Vodun, a set of local religious rituals still widely practised today, which was transported by slaves and transformed, notably through its contact with Catholicism, into Caribbean and Latin American religions like Haitian Vodoo. It is also a place of historical Catholic missionary activity, and the North and East of the country has also been touched strongly by Islam. Benin's religious landscape is a lively and plural one.

The first Pentecostal missions (among others the Assemblies of God and the *Church of Pentecost*) were active in Benin at the end of the 40s and at the beginning of the 50s. To start with these movements were mostly concentrated in rural areas. A few new Churches began to develop up until the 80s; however, the following decade, there was a large increase in the number of Pentecostal Churches, mainly as a result of movements coming from Nigeria and Ghana as well as local initiatives. A survey carried out by a Christian organisation found more than 430 active Christian denominations (including Protestants, independent African Churches and Evangelicals) of which 13 had more than 100 local groups. While between 1972 and 1990, under an authoritarian regime, 900 places of worship were created, in the last decade of the twentieth century, under a democratic regime, over 2500 were created, and church

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<sup>6</sup> In French *modernité insécurisée* – this expression is from Pierre-Joseph Laurent. See Laurent (2003).

creations have continued at a rate over 300 a year. The survey estimated the number of people going every Sunday to an Evangelical or Pentecostal service at 5.8% of the population. The national population census of 2002 reinforces this information – nationally 5.3% of the population declared themselves to be “other Christian” (that is to say neither Catholic nor Protestant), and as much as 7.8% of the population of Cotonou. Obviously the number of followers of this religious current remains small compared to Catholics (27.1%), Muslims (24.4%) or worshippers of traditional religions like Vodun (23.3%), but its progress is worth noting.

As well as the number of Churches and the number of followers, other factors bear witness to Pentecostalism’s progress, such as the creation of dozens of movements, associations and NGOs linked to the religion. Crusades and other sessions of healing have enormous powers of attraction, notably big meetings held over several days at Cotonou that pull in tens of thousands of spectators, like R.Bonnke’s in 1999 or T.L.Osborn’s in 2005 or, increasingly, those of Nigerian, Ghanaian or Ivorian preachers. The adoption of certain practices or discourses by other Christian actors also illustrates the relative breakthrough that Pentecostalism is enjoying. It is, however, a breakthrough that isn’t destabilising the country’s religious landscape and one taking place at the same time as Christianity and Islam are also evolving and undergoing strong transformations.

Two developments deserve to be highlighted among those which have affected African Pentecostalism since the turn of the century: the emphasis on practising deliverance and the adoption of prosperity theology.

Deliverance, where it is practised, takes place either during services, during special activities, or at the end of evangelisation crusades. The aim is to free the person – nearly always a woman – from the forces, spirits and devilish powers responsible for the problems she has. The act is violent: the person must be held strongly, often on the ground, and is urged to evacuate from all the pores of their body the malignant power supposed to be bound within them. Churches that are unwilling to go through such performances suffer from competition from new movements and have to adapt themselves; some reintegrate deliverance, while supervising and controlling the practice<sup>7</sup>.

Prosperity theology was formed in the United States in the 70s. According to this ideology, personal success, especially financial and material success, is valued. Individual success is encouraged and legitimised because it is seen as the result of divine blessings. Richness is a sign that one has been chosen by God. Such a

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<sup>7</sup> This is the case notably of the *Church of Pentecost*, mentioned below. See Fancello (2006).

discourse works both for impoverished populations and for social elites, who find justification for their behaviour<sup>8</sup>. The ideology also legitimises the ostentatious comportment of pastors and external signs of wealth. The dictum that the more one gives (money to one's Church) the more one gets (from God) acts as an important levy on worshippers. Tithes (followers are supposed to give 10% of their income to the church), collections after services and offerings given in thanks for help are all sources of church income. Even if more precise observation tempers the relative success of these payments, a few religious entrepreneurs manage to accumulate vast amounts.

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<sup>8</sup> For Nigerian examples see Marshall-Fratani (2001).

## A community religion or a religion for the individual?

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What happens to individuals after they have started the conversion process, and what happens to their identity? On the one hand, Pentecostalism allows the formation of new spaces for social networks and (re-)creates ideas of community. On the other hand, it is above all an important transformational vector for the individualisation that is taking place in contemporary African society.

The multiplication of places of worship has created new places of socialisation, places where new kinds of social relations can form and where individuals can join social networks. Three kinds of activity allow these social networks to form. Firstly, the purely religious events that take place regularly – Sunday services, prayer evenings, deliverance sessions. This set of rituals and ceremonies gives rise to religious socialising. Frequently newcomers have to introduce themselves to the assembly during the service in order to help integrate them into the group. Everything is arranged to give the impression that, by being taken in and welcomed, they have found a new family. Secondly, more structured and powerful Churches have internal groups aimed towards different categories of worshippers, which also provide spaces for socialising. For example, within the *Church of Pentecost* there are four movements – one for women, one for young people, one for children and one called “Christ’s Witnesses” for evangelising. Each of these four movements has structures down to local level. Members meet for meetings, by also for bible lessons and special celebrations. The women’s movement is an interesting example – it provides a place for women to meet to talk about different themes. Equally, most churches have choirs or musical groups. Finally, places of worship can also be places to associate with other worshippers before and after services. Rejecting all forms of polygamy and emphasising the need to marry a Christian, or better still a member of the same Church, these communities can also be places to meet one’s future spouse. For some young women, joining a Pentecostal Church is a way of escaping forced marriages, especially in rural areas<sup>9</sup>.

Nevertheless, African Pentecostalism is noteworthy for the precariousness of its Churches (as well as many spectacular success

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<sup>9</sup> See Laurent (2003).

stories, lots of Churches collapse), and the instability and mobility of its believers (which makes the work of building a long term community of worshippers difficult for lots of Churches). More than building communities, the new forms of Pentecostalism appearing are, above all, about individualisation.

In African societies, Pentecostalism at the same time both reveals the processes of individualisation and is a factor in them. It is developing in areas, particularly urban ones, where such transformative processes are taking place. This is especially due to isolation and the end of traditional modes of redistribution<sup>10</sup>. At the same time, other religious movements, particularly Muslim ones, are also considered to be factors in the emancipation of individuals and in the construction of new identities<sup>11</sup>. There is obviously a contradiction that needs to be grappled with when considering the role of such often authoritarian and centralised movements as favourable towards the construction of more autonomous individuals. They are based around clearly hierarchical and vertical relationships (especially those between men and women) and they reject any non-conforming behaviour by imposing strict moral codes and norms. Nevertheless, there are many elements that mean that Pentecostalism can be seen as a mode of individualisation<sup>12</sup>.

First, it is worth noting the importance of the paths followed by converts: individuals often come into contact with Pentecostalism after long and complex personal religious journeys, where they have successively searched support from many different religious structures. Often they turn to Pentecostalism to deal with a personal problem (health, fertility, work, money etc.) that they face. Often their approach the Church individually, away from their family. As a result, these movements often contain young people without their parents, or wives without their husbands. Making contact with the church and then converting can be a form of emancipation from a familial and traditional background seen to be burdensome or useless. So, alone, with neighbours or work colleagues, people will go and take part in an open-air crusade or cross the threshold of a place of worship. The step is an individual one, sometimes explicitly calculated as a rupture with the family. It is both the consequence of a forced individualisation and a deliberate act of their own initiative.

Pentecostalism then allows the opportunity to follow up on these ideas. Numerous discourses valorise individual success – a sign of being chosen by God. Symbolic rewards are given to individuals for services rendered; individuals' talents (for example musical ones) can also be rewarded. The attendant socialisation has an individualising effect; equally, like the conversion itself, blessings

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<sup>10</sup> For an analysis of individualisation in Africa, see Marie (1997).

<sup>11</sup> For an example of Muslim activity in Senegal, see Audrain (2004).

<sup>12</sup> This analysis is based upon research conducted on Pentecostal Churches in Benin since the end of the 90s.

received are individual; some services allow individual expression; and there is equal “access” to divine gifts – the Holy Spirit can descend upon any one individual, irrespective of hierarchies.

Finally, the individualisation that Pentecostalism brings can be seen in the very behaviour of believers, who don’t adopt preached discourses automatically and don’t necessarily follow all the prescribed behaviours. They can keep a certain distance from some aspects, or even be critical towards them. This “sorting” of ideas and choice carried out by believers should not be overlooked. What is more, plenty of people who take part in crusades and public displays of deliverance won’t necessarily convert. They are utilitarian – they take what they want from Pentecostalism. Furthermore, Pentecostal Churches are affected by religious mobility: there are those who convert, but also those who give up – a less-studied phenomenon, as it is less spectacular. If they don’t think they have got satisfactory solutions or answers, if their religious experimentation doesn’t have fruitful results, then they carry on seeking elsewhere. The fluid nature of religious allegiance affects Pentecostalism as it affects other religions that are present in these uncertain societies.

So it can be seen that Pentecostalism plays a role in the process of individualisation. It favours more than just the creation of new communities and social networks; it allows individuals to have behaviours detached from their social group that are based on their personal choices. In this sense, it is can really be considered a religion for modern Africa.

## Inevitable politicisation?

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Until the mid-90s, Pentecostal movements did not have much involvement in politics. They kept a low public profile and didn't speak out on national issues, mostly because of a rather negative view of politics (generally seen as corrupt and unwholesome.) This disinterest and concentration on the religious sphere go hand in hand with a declared apolitical stance and a respect for authority, regardless of its nature or its legitimacy. Pentecostal Churches remained passive during political protests and during the transition processes that many African states went through at the beginning of the 90s. This attitude contrasts with that of the Catholic Church and certain Protestant churches, sometimes directly involved in the management and support of democratisation processes<sup>13</sup>.

An important change took place in the 1990s: Pentecostalism began to take a role in the public sphere, participating in its growing confessionalisation. The increased political roles for Christian and Muslim actors made the religious a privileged register of political legitimacy and political expression. Pentecostalism's new visibility in the political arena was due to several factors; political liberalisation and the weakening of state control over democratisation processes (even where they had failed) favoured the development of multiple political alternatives. Religious actors were thus able to develop their activities with a minimum of restrictions and (re)occupy public life. The state's loss of credibility, its reduced margins for manoeuvre, and its abandonment of social services (health, education, etc.) gave them even more space to do so. Aside from this favourable context, new religious actors emerged who accelerated the religion's politicisation. Many had studied at university and there some had understood the need to participate in politics.

Different ideas shaped this reorientation towards politics: an opportunistic motivation (taking advantage of the situation and, eventually, state resources to encourage evangelisation and conversion – although some pastors focus more on their personal success); a desire to restore moral principals to politics (promoting their values and norms); or even a plan to take over the public sphere (in order to dominate it totally to the exclusion of other forces).

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<sup>13</sup> For more on the role played by Churches in democratisation and transition processes, see Gifford (1995) and Constantin and Coulon (1997).

Before looking in more detail at this politicisation and the methods used to do it, it should be noted that certain Pentecostal movements completely kept their distance from politics. Such movements still exert political influence indirectly through their discourses, the symbols that they spread and their internal power structures.

There are two factors that explain the nature of the politicisation of Pentecostal forces – the type and strength of political mobilisation depend on both the religious and the political contexts. Pentecostalism's political dynamics cannot therefore be analysed in isolation from their environment.

Although religion in Africa today is undergoing a process of pluralisation and diversification, and experiencing the emergence of new actors, existing diversity due to the historical spread of religious movements, and the tensions between them, should be in no way underplayed. As a result the milieus where conflict between Christians and Muslims is hostile, or even violent, are more likely to engender the politicisation of religious actors. Politics becomes seen as a way of defending one's positions – Nigeria presents an interesting example of this.

Pentecostal mobilisations are different depending on the political context; they are not the same under democratic, multi-party regimes, or in places suffering from political crises, or war zones. In West Africa, the political use of a Pentecostal discourse is not the same in Benin and in Ivory Coast. In Benin, the 1996 election of Mathieu Kérékou as President, a former Marxist converted to Christianity, led to a "pentecostalisation" of political symbols and discourses, but no hostility towards non-believers and those of different faiths. On the other hand, in Ivory Coast, the Pentecostal pastors in President Gbagbo's entourage who presented him as "the first Christian president", giving the country a "new birth", played a role in the conflict caused by the failed coup d'état of 19<sup>th</sup> September 2002. Their discourses diabolising the opposition and stigmatising non-Christians legitimised the President's actions. The idea of deliverance was applied to the whole country, which became the body from which the devilish powers – "foreigners", "northerners" and "Muslims" – had to be expelled<sup>14</sup>.

There are many kinds of Pentecostal public mobilisation. A first form of "pentecostalisation" of society from below consists of getting involved in areas such as education and health. It is not about influencing those in power, but reinforcing Pentecostalism's presence in society. This kind of activism entails the creation of schools and clinics and health centres either directly by Churches themselves, or by affiliated religious NGOs, or through links with big international Christian NGOs like *Youth With A Mission*. These services respond to

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<sup>14</sup> See Mary (2002).



the needs of the local population, but are also tools for proselytising. Teaching especially allows the training, socialisation and controlling of children, which can be continued into higher education, for example at universities that have been created by several Nigerian Churches.

But Pentecostal actors also try to perform a kind a pentecostalisation from below, with the aim of not necessarily of taking over political power but at least strongly influencing its use. They try to convert political elites by putting in place special conversion programmes, making sure that believers are nominated for important posts, or getting pastors roles as Presidential or ministerial advisors. When Pentecostal believers, or more generally any Christians, stand for election, it's not unusual to see active, overt or more covert, Christian support (like in Nigeria and Zambia). Unlike in Latin America, the frequent bans of religious parties in African countries mean that there is a limitation on the direct participation of Pentecostal actors in elections.

While this process changes political discourses and symbolism, political policies can be changed too. The case of AIDS prevention in Uganda provides a good example of a noticeable change after the intervention of evangelical groups. A forceful campaign in favour of abstinence, lead by religious organisations and supported by the President's born again wife, Janet Museveni, resulted in the abandon of the *ABC* strategy (Abstain, Be faithful, use Condoms), which was replaced by a policy encouraging abstinence only. School manuals developed by the Ministry for Education had to be modified to conform to the evangelical groups' prescriptions – an example of a definite Christianisation of public policy<sup>15</sup>.

There is no single type of Pentecostal politicisation, but an ensemble of different methods. At the same time, not all Pentecostal actors are engaged in such processes and nothing guarantees that believers will follow political reorientations. The inherent uncertainty which surrounds Pentecostalism's development, the fragility of its Churches, the individuality of its followers and the fluid nature of their religious allegiances all combine to make accurate predictions about future political mobilisations almost impossible.

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<sup>15</sup> From research carried out in Uganda by Elise Demange.

## Conclusion

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Nowadays Pentecostalism is one of the factors in the pluralisation and increasing complication of religion in Africa. Its growth should be carefully analysed and placed in historical and political perspective in each country. These are places where the religious landscape is under transformation simultaneously by numerous different actors. Its progress is clear, but it is not a new phenomenon (Pentecostalism has been in Africa for nearly 100 years), a mass phenomenon (there are big difference between and within countries), a uniform phenomenon (Pentecostalism is not monolithic and comes in a wide variety of forms) or the only phenomenon at work (there are other religious forces actively making progress in Africa).

At the same time, Pentecostalism is also the evidence of the active participation of the continent in religious globalisation. It is a modern religion, linked to, and favouring, the emergence of individualisation – an extremely importance contemporary phenomenon in Africa. While it is a factor in the creation of new social networks, it is also, importantly, a factor in individuals' growing autonomy. Its development is notable for individuals' mobility, the fluid nature of their allegiances, and the fragility of structures – for example Churches. It is, therefore, particularly well adapted to the uncertain, sometimes desperate nature of contemporary African societies.

As a result, it is difficult to outline clear perspectives for Pentecostalism's future evolution. In fact, Pentecostalism's future can be detached from neither Africa's religious transformations nor its political ones.

In Africa, religions are competing more and more; the danger of a strengthening of confessional divisions is real, even if religious plurality in itself doesn't necessarily generate conflict. The increasing number of proselytising initiatives aimed at Muslim populations, in Senegal for example, or in strongly Muslim regions of Nigeria, should be followed attentively – especially as Pentecostal actors are rarely engaged in inter-confessional dialogue.

The political implications of Pentecostalism are complicated and ambiguous; one of the keys to its future political involvement rests with the evolution of the countries themselves. Plural, democratic regimes will favour its accommodation and integration. On the other hand, war and conflict will sharpen its discourse and exclusive attitudes, especially when they are used to support one of the political forces in the conflict.

All things considered, the only certainty lies in the fact that Pentecostalism, where it is present, will continue to play multiple, plural roles in orienting the future of African states.

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