

GLOBAL PENTECOSTALISM:  
A EUROPEAN PERSPECTIVE

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## INTRODUCTION

The expanding wealth of information on global Pentecostalism in the twenty-first century appears limitless. Typing the words “global Pentecostalism” in the Google search engine produces eighty pages of entries. The European Research Network on Global Pentecostalism has recently developed a search engine for Pentecostal / charismatic studies, encompassing several thousand websites that can be filtered for primary and secondary sources as well as weighed according to relevance.<sup>1</sup>

Early this year, I had the privilege to attend the Global Conference on Pentecostalism in Heidelberg, Germany. The two-day conference afforded me the opportunity to gain an extensive overview of the multi-layered academic research focus occurring in this fruitful area of study. Approximately ninety participants from eight European countries and the United States came to Heidelberg and vigorously interacted with various presentations in the academic disciplines including cultural anthropology, sociology, religious studies, gender studies, and theology. The consensus of the conference participants was positive, realizing the benefits of interdisciplinary studies bring a unique and helpful perspective to the study of global Pentecostalism.

The Heidelberg Conference was the third and last in a series of three European meetings pertaining to theoretical and methodological approaches in the study of global Pentecostalism. Sometime in 2009, an interdisciplinary study guide will be published (as a result of these three conferences) as a helpful addition to the wealth of material on global

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<sup>1</sup> “GloPent Search Engine on Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements,” *European Research Network on Global Pentecostalism*, <http://www.glopent.net/study-resources/research-engine/> (accessed 17 March 2008).

Pentecostalism. Most of the contributors at the Heidelberg conference are European, and their insight on this topic is enlightening.

The goal of this research paper is to interact and critically analyze the various topics discussed at the Heidelberg Conference as they relate to a better understanding of the study of global Pentecostalism. Other sources will be consulted, and hopefully these readings will create a synthesis in reaching an appropriate understanding of the subject at hand. It is encouraging to know I am part of a greater global Pentecostal community which allows me to pursue this study and will assist me to better understand the scope of my involvement in missiological practice.

## PART ONE

### THE WORLD OF PENTECOSTALISM

#### Toward a Definition of Pentecostalism

Allan Anderson's work in recent years has repeatedly addressed the question of how to define Pentecostalism. At the Heidelberg Conference, Anderson gave an excellent overview of the social-scientific, historical, and theological approaches to the definition of Pentecostalism, advocating an inclusive definition, which centers on movements with an emphasis on the experience of the Spirit and the exercise of spiritual gifts.<sup>2</sup>

Pentecostalism has quickly become a non-western, Majority World movement. With its offer of the power of the Spirit to all regardless of education, language, race, class or gender, it became a mission movement that subverted the conventions the time. Its methods were not so dependent upon western specialists and trained clergy and the transmission of western forms of Christian leadership and liturgy.<sup>3</sup>

Anderson admits in his own extensive research he has been strongly influenced by twenty years of Pentecostal social activism ministry in Southern Africa. He also admits Walter Hollenweger's writings have shaped his perspective on understanding Pentecostalism more than those of any other scholar.

Because of my personal experiences, the boundaries between truth and confession are difficult to separate. A researcher must in any case take the experiences recounted by others as they are and offer an interpretation of them. The paradigms we use to do research fundamentally affect what and how we write.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Allan Anderson, "Varieties, Typologies and Definitions in the Study of Global Pentecostalism," (paper presented at the International and Interdisciplinary Conference for the Study of Global Pentecostalism, Heidelberg, Germany, February, 2008), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 3.

Anderson proceeds to discuss the great complexities of describing religious movements and classifying them in over-simplistic terms. In actuality, such categories can only be preliminary or tentative and hopefully, one will be better equipped to comprehend the issues being raised. Even the term “Pentecostalism” has many flaws and drawbacks; yet simply stated Pentecostalism refers to those churches emphasizing the ministry and work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>5</sup>

With the passing of a century, the historical roots are not as easily recognizable. Yet Harvey Cox observes that “the great strength of the pentecostal impulse” lies in “its power to combine, its aptitude for the language, the music and cultural artifacts, the religious tropes ... of the setting in which it lives”.<sup>6</sup>

Anderson goes to great lengths in his attempt to paint a larger picture of Pentecostalism than would first meet the eye.

Pentecostalism is not a movement that has a distinct beginning in America or anywhere else, nor it is a movement based on a particular theology – it is instead a series of movements that emerged after several year and several different formative ideas and events. Pentecostalism is a polynucleated and variegated phenomenon, best seen from its pneumatological center as a number of historically related movements where the emphasis is on the experience of the Spirit and the exercise of spiritual gifts.<sup>7</sup>

Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen takes a somewhat different stance, as he formulates a definition based on the “diversities” of Pentecostalism:

One should probably speak of Pentecostalisms (plural). The diversity arises in two dimensions: the cultural and the theologico-ecumenical. Pentecostalism, unlike any other contemporary religious movement, Christian or non-Christian, is spread across most cultures, linguistic barriers, and social locations. Related to this is the theological and ecumenical diversity, which simply means that there are several more-or-less distinct Pentecostalisms – not only with the emerging three-tiered scholarly typology of “Classical Pentecostalism,” “Charismatic Movements,” and “Neo-Charismatics” – but also within Pentecostal movements themselves.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>8</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, “Pentecostal Pneumatologies in the Matrix of Contemporary Theologies of the Spirit” (paper presented at the International and Interdisciplinary Conference for the Study of Global Pentecostalism, Heidelberg, Germany, February, 2008), 3.

Kärkkäinen is convinced that in the Two-Thirds-World, Pentecostal experience and practice are much more important for these believers than establishing institutional and dogmatic statements of faith.<sup>9</sup> Frank Macchia observes there is a rich potential in the varieties of Pentecostal theologies that erupts from different church struggles and cultural contexts. Outside of Pentecostalism there needs to be ecumenical discussion of such issues as the Godhead (for example, between trinitarian and Oneness Pentecostals), sanctification, healing, tongues, and eschatology.<sup>10</sup>

Anderson estimates that only about one quarter of all Pentecostal charismatics are “classical” Pentecostals (150 million) in the world with a connection to the events of Asuza street, yet for this to happen only one century is quite remarkable indeed.<sup>11</sup> Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen points out that Pentecostalism in the twenty-first century is for all practical purposes a Third World phenomenon. Even with significant growth in North America, less than twenty-five percent of Pentecostals today seen globally are white and this percentage continues to decline each year.<sup>12</sup>

### Roots of Pentecostalism

Anderson supports Michael Bergunder’s assertion that Pentecostalism was not fully established until it became part of a global network, which does explain its historical beginnings.

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>10</sup> Frank D. Macchia, “The Struggle for Global Witness: Shifting Paradigms in Pentecostal Theology,” in *Globalization of Pentecostalism: a Religion Made to Travel*, ed. Murray W. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus, and Doug Petersen (Carlisle, U.K.: Regnum Books International, 1999), 25.

<sup>11</sup> Anderson, 5.

<sup>12</sup> Kärkkäinen, 4.

It (Pentecostalism) was indeed a global movement from the beginning; but the danger of situating Pentecostalism in missionary networks alone is that one may end up pointing back to North America (especially Azusa Street) links to the exclusion of others.<sup>13</sup>

Anderson is on a mission to clarify that global Pentecostalism is not rooted in the American Azusa Street revival occurrence. For example, the Welsh Revival (1904-1905) and the Mutkti Mission revival in India (1905-1907) preceded Asuza Street, as well did several other regional revivals in North America. This implies that one must trace diachronic links in early Pentecostalism.<sup>14</sup>

Unless we distance ourselves from a western-centered theory of Pentecostal identity, we will fail to represent Pentecostalism adequately in academic discourse. Although the memory of the national workers is now frustratingly difficult and in some cases impossible to retrieve, we must attempt to correct the biases of historical approaches of the past.<sup>15</sup>

For Anderson, the emphasis on the power of the Holy Spirit to equip and empower ordinary believers for evangelism and service without academic training, became the distinguishing hallmark of Pentecostalism. This emphasis in early Pentecostalism, as compared to other missionary movements before it, would become dependent upon national workers. Anderson calls for a postcolonial survey of Pentecostal literature that should lead to a better formulation of the movement's historical development.<sup>16</sup> Obviously, this kind of research is painstaking and requires much patience, as very little seems to be written about the contribution from local national workers. As a case in point, Jörg Haustein's ongoing research to trace the origins of Pentecostalism in Ethiopia has many challenges. For example, there are oral narratives that credit a preacher named Chacha Omahe from Kenya for first bringing the "Pentecostal fire" to Ethiopia in the 1960s. Haustein has discovered other reports about the beginning of

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<sup>13</sup> Anderson, 9.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.



Pentecostalism in Ethiopia that do not mention Chacha Omahe. Is it mere legend that sees Chacha Omahe as the “igniting match” for Pentecostal revival in Ethiopia?<sup>17</sup> Another researcher at the Heidelberg Conference, Moritz Fischer, is investigating the historical and missiological development of FEPACO, a Pentecostal movement in the Republic of the Congo. FEPACO, in its development, had strong ties to the American missionary evangelist T. L. Osborn.<sup>18</sup> The challenge for researchers like Haustein, Fischer, and others is to develop historical and missiological methodologies, which distinguish between narrative fiction and actual occurrences, not totally dependent or limited to Western historical documentation.

### Globalization

It is imperative for students of missiology to properly understand the implications of globalization in its very broad and general sense. Scholars in various fields have tried to define, and are still defining the significance of globalization in the particular and often unique ways influencing their areas of study.

Globalization matters because it fundamentally changes the contexts in which we minister, the way people in cultures perceive each other, how people think, and the means available to reach them. We cannot dismiss the effects of globalization on ourselves as communicators of the gospel message.<sup>19</sup>

Michael Pocock has broken-down globalization into four components.

- Migration

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Jörg Haustein, “Geschichte(n) schreiben. Zur Rekonstruktion von Geschichtsdiskursen der äthiopischen Pfingstbewegung” (paper presented at the International and Interdisciplinary Conference for the Study of Global Pentecostalism, Heidelberg, Germany, February 2008), 2.

<sup>18</sup> Moritz Fischer, “Auswahl/Abgrenzung des Forschungsgegenstandes und Formulierung Erkenntnisleitender Fragestellungen” (paper presented at the International and Interdisciplinary Conference for the Study of Global Pentecostalism, Heidelberg, Germany, February 2008), 1.

- Air Travel
- The Internet
- The Free Market Economic System<sup>20</sup>

These components continue to push the process of globalization forward even in the twenty-first century. There is little debate that these four forces are especially at work as one observes the development and genesis of global Pentecostalism found in all continents of the world.

Währisch-Oblau's writing in the context of migrant Pentecostalism in Europe states the understanding of "expatriateness" is based on a positive notion of globalization. True identity is discovered and found in that one is able to move and adapt.<sup>21</sup> Classical missionary biographies are expressions of today's expatriate narratives.

Both play on the motif of "heroic strangerhood," approaching their host culture "as an abstract matrix of otherness" in which to develop a personal mission: The missionary brings the Gospel, the development worker development, and the businessman the joys of consumption.<sup>22</sup>

Pentecostals today, as well as in the past, feel at ease traveling the world quoting verbatim the mandate of the risen Christ to take the message from Jerusalem then to Judea, then to Samaria, and finally reaching all ends of the world. David Bosch notes that Pentecost gave the first disciples boldness; "only through the power of the Spirit is the risen Christ who is active in the world. On the day of Pentecost, Christ, through the Spirit, throws open the doors and thrusts the disciples out into the world."<sup>23</sup> The door is still wide-open as an estimated 400 million

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<sup>19</sup> Douglas C. McConnell, "Changing Demographics: The Impact of Migration." in *The Changing Face of World Missions: Engaging Contemporary Issues and Trends*, ed. Michael Pocock, Gailyn Van Rhee, and C. Douglas McConnell (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005), 24.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Claudia Währisch-Oblau, "Migrants with a Mission" (paper presented at the International and Interdisciplinary Conference for the Study of Global Pentecostalism, Heidelberg, Germany, February 2008), 3.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> David Jacobus Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1991), 40.

to 600 million believers with Pentecostal forms of Holy Spirit expression are spread across the globe as active witnesses to the saving power of the gospel.

### Global Pentecostalism

Michael Bergunder has previously explained to understand the Pentecostal paradox as a religious movement in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, categories of mystical spirituality and mythical world views must be established derived from the history of world religions. Bergunder has attempted to show their usefulness as categories for understanding Pentecostalism. He then explores the sociological/anthropological perspective of Pentecostalism, before he affirms by using these tools, Pentecostals have a unique ability to interact with modernity and post-modernity as effective social strategies are developed.<sup>24</sup>

At the Heidelberg conference, Bergunder embarked on analyzing Pentecostalism from a cultural and postcolonial studies perspective, and presented a programmatic outline of the implications of postcolonial theory for the understanding of Pentecostalism as a global discursive network.<sup>25</sup>

Birgit Meyer, in the African context, also considers the relationship between globalization and Pentecostalism, arguing against a narrow use of the Weberian thesis in relation to Protestantism and the rise of capitalism. Instead she advocates a closer investigation of Pentecostalism as a global and post-modern religion, by turning to central study foci, such as the

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<sup>24</sup> Michael Bergunder, "The Pentecostal Paradox: A Popular Religious Movement in Africa, Asia, and Latin America," *European Pentecostal / Charismatic Research Association*, Press Release, (July 17, 1999), <http://www.pctii.org/news/99epcra.html> (accessed 18 March 2008).

<sup>25</sup> Michael Bergunder, "Navigating Discursive Networks," (paper presented at the International and Interdisciplinary Conference for the Study of Global Pentecostalism, Heidelberg, Germany, February 2008), 1.

Pentecostal imagery of the world, its conceptualization of space and time, its materiality, use of media, aesthetics, and style.<sup>26</sup>

Wes Richards compares cross-nationally the growth of Pentecostalism in Korea, Argentina, and Nigeria and concludes that Pentecostals have a genius for indigenization.<sup>27</sup> Richards takes issue with Browner, Gifford, and others who have previously concluded the global expansion of Pentecostalism is largely due to a propagation of an “American Gospel.” For Richards, the opposite is true: Indigenization and the rise of highly effective indigenous ministries, without western help or sanction, explain best the significant overall growth of Pentecostalism. Richards’ presents extensive data in the study of Argentina, Korea, and Nigeria, which gives validity to his thesis.

Not only are the American origins of Pentecostalism suspect, but today, indigenous Pentecostal churches in the Third World have also become much more than “partners” of US missionaries and ministries. They are the biggest players numerically and indigenous ministries have been the key in the rise of Pentecostalism in the case histories.<sup>28</sup>

Richards point to Argentina as one example, with the ministry of Carlos Annacondia supplanted the older missionary gospel with a new culturally package of beliefs and a “repertoire of collective action appropriate to the Argentine public sector. It is quite appropriate here that Richards cites sociologists David Martin who states: “What we have is an indigenous enthusiastic Protestantism rooted in the hopes of millions of Latin American poor.”<sup>29</sup> Richard lists twelve contributing factors of growth in Argentina, Korea, and Nigeria where Pentecostalism has probably grown more rapidly than any other countries in the world during the past thirty years. It is striking to observe the development in each of these three countries, as Pentecostalism and

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<sup>26</sup> Birgit Meyer, “Pentecostalism and Globalization” (paper presented at the International and Interdisciplinary Conference for the Study of Global Pentecostalism, Heidelberg, Germany, February 2008), 19.

<sup>27</sup> Wes Richards, “An Examination of Common Factors in the Growth of Global Pentecostalism: Observed in South Korea, Nigeria, and Argentina,” *Journal of Asian Missions* 7, no. 1 (2005): 89.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

charismatic expressions of worship have made great strides forward. Richard's description for the causes of Pentecostal expansion is somewhat reminiscent of the characteristics of growing churches put forth by C. Peter Wagner and others in the 1980s.

- Creation of Viable Alternative Communities
- Greatest impact among Urban Poor
- Offering a Hope-based message
- Narrative Style
- Supernatural worldview and "Power Encounters"
- Highly Committed to Pray
- Welcoming and following strong leaders
- Empowerment of Women
- Mobilization for Evangelism and Mission
- Widespread use of Mass Media
- Flourishing in times of Crisis
- Movement of Transformation<sup>30</sup>

David Bosch comments on Pentecostalism by referring to the twentieth century as the era of the Spirit. It appears he is uneasy trying to take issue with Pentecostals or charismatics and at the same time does not want to defend their position either.

In this new dispensation we strive, after the total wealth of heaven and unceasing ecstasy now. So one encounters in these circles claims about the occurrence of miraculous events and the exhilaration of an unbroken chain of mountaintop experiences.<sup>31</sup>

Bosch finds elements of validity in such a notion, but missiologically something more must be said. Bosch takes the approach of Jürgen Moltmann that the era of the Spirit is the era of the Church, which implies that the Church in the power of the Spirit is itself part of the message it explains.<sup>32</sup> It is impossible to grasp that Bosch at the peak of his work in writing *Transforming Mission* makes only this one reference to Pentecostalism in spite of the fact he is familiar with its expansive growth in Southern Africa during the later part of the twentieth century.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 89-105.

<sup>31</sup> Bosch, 516.

## African Pentecostalism

The swelling numbers of Christians in Africa almost boggles the mind. As one recent report claimed, the East African country of Kenya has almost as many Evangelicals as all of Europe, which is good news indeed for Africa and bad news for Europe. Thirteen million Evangelicals live in Kenya out of a total population of thirty-four million. It is estimated there are only seventeen million Evangelicals in Europe.<sup>33</sup>

According to Philip Jenkins, the independent churches in Africa should be considered under the flexible label of Pentecostal. Many independents would rather avoid the term Pentecostal as it implies a reliance on American missionary activity rather than spontaneous local growth. Jenkins believes the term “independents” is accurate, as the independents are truly nobody’s puppet on a string.<sup>34</sup>

Birgit Meyer notes the African Independent Churches during the 1960s were the central research focus for anthropologists, as these churches not only formed fascinating research locations, but they also provided major sites for more general theoretical reflection and innovation in anthropology.<sup>35</sup> In the 1980s, the shift of focus for many anthropologists changed to the Pentecostal / charismatic churches which became more attractive for African scholars and secular Western researchers alike:

because they seemed to offer a more “authentic,” Africanized version of Christianity than do the presumably Western-oriented mainline churches, current Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches (PCCs) appear to derive their mass appeal at least partly from propagating a

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 517.

<sup>33</sup> “In Kenia fast so viele Evangelikale wie in Europa.” *Das christlichen Nachrichten Portal Newsletter*, [http://www.idea.de/index.php?id=355&tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=62760&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=368&cHash=d8b16ca8ae](http://www.idea.de/index.php?id=355&tx_ttnews[tt_news]=62760&tx_ttnews[backPid]=368&cHash=d8b16ca8ae) (accessed 19 March 2008).

<sup>34</sup> Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*. (Revised Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 69.

<sup>35</sup> Birgit Meyer, “Christianity in Africa: From African Independent to Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches,” *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 33 (2004): 447.

“complete break with the past.” Dissociating themselves from both mainline churches and African Independent, or as they call them, “Spiritual” Churches, the new PCCs promise to link up their born-again believers with global circuits.<sup>36</sup>

Meyer states the most insightful scholarship on Pentecostalism develops when a successful translation of ‘internal’ into ‘external’ occurs, taking as a point of reference what people actually believe and experience.

The strength of this approach is that, rather than imposing a neutral analytical language, it stays close to Pentecostalism’s own vocabulary and does not solely explain its success by referring to non-religious factor.<sup>37</sup>

Linda van de Kamp, an anthropologist from the University of Amsterdam, has been conducting extension research on the transnational influences of Brazilian Pentecostalism in Mozambique. This project is part of a comparative study in four continents about conversion careers and culture politics in Pentecostalism. In many parts of Africa, Pentecostalism has become the most popular form of Christianity and has acquired an unprecedented influence on postcolonial societal formations.<sup>38</sup> Van de Kamp seeks to examine the processes of conversion in the post-war situation of nation-building in Mozambique. In the aftermath of the civil war, which ended in 1992, and in the midst of a structural adjustment program introduced a few years earlier, Pentecostalism has found a fertile ground, particularly in the larger urban centers. The Mozambican government started a policy of re-emphasizing pre-socialist cultural elements. Pentecostal churches increasingly contest such policies. The Pentecostals produce a cultural policy that opposes the state's emphasis on local cultural traditions by using e.g. elements of Brazilian cultural styles in music, songs, attire, and symbolism. These elements are important in the appeal these churches have for the emergent middle classes. Pentecostal churches and

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 448.

<sup>37</sup> Meyer, “Pentecostalism and Globalization,” 6.

preachers of Brazilian origin have become influential, and provide Pentecostalism in Mozambique with a transnational dimension that is oriented on South-South relations.<sup>39</sup>

Van de Kamp has found that many Mozambican women are fascinated by Brazilian Pentecostal pastors and they appear as a type of role models. Brazilian soap operas about love and relationships are referred to often in the sermons of Brazilian pastors who lead local congregations in Mozambique. This extensive study is being funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research.<sup>40</sup>

### Migration and Pentecostalism in Europe

McConnell points out the migration of vibrant Christians from Africa or the Caribbean can and will have a ~~very~~ positive effect on the post-Christian countries of Europe. It is remarkable that migrant Christians from other parts of the world have a much clearer understanding of what church planters are trying to accomplish in post-Christian Europe as opposed to those Christians who have lived their entire lives in their own country.<sup>41</sup> Migrant Christians themselves are often more willing to join in church planting efforts than those Christians who are native to their own country.

The south is moving north to Europe. It is estimated between ten and twenty million illegal immigrants live in Western Europe, originating from Africa and Asia.<sup>42</sup> In this migration, there are high numbers of Pentecostal Christians coming especially from Africa to Europe. Most African Pentecostal churches being planted are nearly as successful as the London

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<sup>38</sup> Linda Van de Kamp, "Exploring the Transnational Dimension of Brazilian Pentecostal Churches in Mozambique," (paper presented at the International and Interdisciplinary Conference for the Study of Global Pentecostalism, Heidelberg, Germany, February 2008), 1.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> McConnell, 25.

<sup>42</sup> Jenkins, 97.



Kingsway International Christian Center (KICC) founded by Pastor Mathew Ashimolowo with three-hundred people in 1992. Today KICC has an attendance of over five thousand who gather in their Miracle Centre, which is twice the size of St. Paul's Cathedral. Pastor Ashimolowo also has several satellite churches in Great Britain. KICC claims to be the largest church started in Great Britain since 1861 and has a television ministry going out to Europe as well as several countries in Africa. Half of London's church parishioners are made up of blacks who have migrated from Africa and the Caribbean.<sup>43</sup>

At the Heidelberg Conference, attention was given to the development and expansion of African Pentecostal churches in Europe. Richard Burgess, Kim Knibbe, and Anna Quaas, researchers in the GloPent/NORFACE research project "Transnational Nigerian Pentecostal Churches, Networks and Believers in Three Northern Countries: Migrant Churches as a Potential and Potent Social Force," gave an overview of their work and preliminary findings in the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Germany. Due to migration and mission endeavors, international Pentecostal churches in Germany are increasingly winning influence. In the last few decades, many new churches cropped up in Nigeria. These churches intend to spread out and likewise evangelize European society. Anna Quaas' focus is on the German setting.

This research project examines the Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG) in the German migration context. It concentrates on its connection to the Nigerian mother church and its history, organizational structure and religious life in Germany. Furthermore its theological identity and concept of reverse mission are studied. The research analyses the RCCG within a broader network of Nigerian initiated churches in Germany (such as the Christ Apostolic Church and the Mountain of Fire and Miracles) and investigates the way it negotiates German society.<sup>44</sup>

Richard Burgess is directing the project in Great Britain where there are an estimated 250 RCCG parishes. Burgess notes it is important to study the rapid growth and

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.,98.

development of these Nigerian churches when mainstream Christianity and even some of the older black majority churches in Britain are declining.<sup>45</sup> The research question being asked in all three projects is: How do transnational Pentecostal churches, networks and believers from Nigeria operate in public space in Germany, Britain, and the Netherlands? Second, to what extent are they representatives of religion as a re-emerging social force? Preliminary findings in Great Britain indicate that only a few pastors were sent out directly from Nigeria to plant churches; whereas, most pastors were already in the country for economic, educational, or social reasons. Burgess concludes his preliminary findings by stating:

Nigerian initiated churches in Britain need to relate the gospel to two contexts if they are to cater for both migrant and host communities. It seems that the flexibility of their Pentecostal spirituality is insufficient to break down the cultural barrier between African and white British society.<sup>46</sup>

Kim Knibbe directing the project in the Netherlands reports ~~that~~ the RCCG began with one small parish in The Hague, and within ten years nineteen other churches were established throughout the Netherlands. Even though the RCCG evangelizes Africans and Dutch alike, ~~yet~~ they have not been successful in reaching the Dutch community. The church's vision for reaching Nigeria and Europe is very bold.

- To make Heaven
- To take as many people as possible with us.
- To have a member of RCCG in every family.
- To accomplish No. 1 above, holiness will be our lifestyle.
- To accomplish Numbers 2 and 3 above, we will plant churches within five (5) minutes walking distance in every city and town of developing countries and within five (5) minutes driving distance in every city and town of developed countries.

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<sup>44</sup> Anna Quaas, "Transnational Nigerian Pentecostal churches, networks and believers in three Northern Countries," <http://theologie.uni-hd.de/rm/Forschung/fs-pfingstbewegung/norface-en> (accessed 20 March 2008).

<sup>45</sup> Richard Burgess, Kim Knibbe, Anna Quaas. "Transnational Nigerian Pentecostal Churches, Networks and Believers in three Northern Countries: Preliminary Findings," (paper presented at the International and Interdisciplinary Conference for the Study of Global Pentecostalism, Heidelberg, Germany, February 2008), 1.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

- We will pursue these objectives until every Nation in the world is reached for.<sup>47</sup>

According to Knibbe, the RCCG in the Netherlands has grown rapidly as they recruit their leaders and members among international university students and expatriate workers with universities and transnational companies such as Shell. “They are a church, it seems, of mainly “upper class” Africans in diaspora. This was emphasized by the pastor of the Amsterdam Jesus House for all Nations: “we came here as landlord, not as tenants!”<sup>48</sup> The leaders of the RCCG realize they must take appropriate action and develop new methodologies if they are going to reach the Dutch population with the gospel. As this transnational research study continues, Knibbe will be determining if a new emphasis will bring more Dutch into their churches.

Anderson refers to Andre’ Droogers broad definition of transnational Pentecostalism that is helpful in understanding how Pentecostals perceive their involvement in the global community.

1 The central emphasis on the experience of the Spirit, accompanied by ecstatic manifestations like speaking in tongues.

2 The “born again” or conversion experience that accompanies acceptance into a Pentecostal community.

3 The dualistic worldview that distinguishes between the “world” and the “church,” the “devil” and the “divine,” “sickness” and “health.”<sup>49</sup>

At the Heidelberg Conference, Claudia Währisch-Oblau presented the results of her recently completed Ph.D. dissertation, titled *Migrants with a Mission*. Währisch-Oblau has been working for several years as the coordinator of the “Program Cooperation between German and Foreign Language Churches” in the Lutheran Synod of the State North Rhine-Westphalia.

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<sup>47</sup> Kim Knibbe, “Mission as a process of producing the local: The RCCG in the Netherlands,” (paper presented at the International and Interdisciplinary Conference for the Study of Global Pentecostalism, Heidelberg, Germany, February 2008), 1.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>49</sup> Anderson, 7.

Pentecostal / charismatic migrant churches in Germany are usually described by their leaders as being international and missional, with a focus of evangelizing the surrounding community and not necessarily a “home away from home” for various ethnic groups. Währisch-Oblau sets out to study these claims in their conceptual roots and determine if they are realized as she interviewed over one-hundred migrant pastors.<sup>50</sup>

They have a task here (in Europe), which is to win new and lost souls for Jesus Christ. If you want, you may call this “mission reversed,” for those to whom Christ was once preached have now come back to the areas from which the original preachers set off, to preach Christ in all His goodness to all inhabitants of these areas.’ This is how the former Frankfurt pastor and now primate of the Nigerian Church of the Lord (Aladura), Rufus Ositelu, describes the mission of migrant churches in the European context. With this, Ositelu speaks for hundreds or even thousands of African, Asian and Latin American Pentecostal and Charismatic migrant churches which do not see themselves so much as ‘diaspora churches,’ as a ‘home away from home’ for their members; but rather as part of the outreach movement of the *missio Dei*. That their churches came into being due to migration is just accidental; it does not define them. The real reason for their presence in Europe (or North America, or Russia) is God’s mission.<sup>51</sup>

Währisch-Oblau has discovered that many African pastors see their mission to restore the German church to its glorious past, which would make Germany into a Christian nation once again. One African pastor stated that if Germany would experience revival, the Lord would return in two years or less. For Währisch-Oblau, it is quite striking that Pentecostal / charismatic migrant pastors who are looked upon by German society as marginalized and powerless, instead view themselves as being greatly empowered, which is expressed in their spirituality, they practice and preach.<sup>52</sup> These pastors believe through the power of the Holy Spirit change on the social and material level will take place.

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<sup>50</sup> Währisch-Oblau, 1.

<sup>51</sup> Claudia Währisch-Oblau, “‘We Shall be Fruitful in this Land:’ Pentecostal and Charismatic New Mission Churches in Europe,” in *Fruitful in this Land. Pluralism, Dialogue and Healing in Migrant Pentecostalism*, ed. André Droogers, Cornelis van der Laan, and Wout van Laar, (Uitgeverij Boekencentrum: WMC Publications, 2006).

<sup>52</sup> Währisch-Oblau, “Migrants with a Mission,” 7.

My research so far shows that Pentecostal / charismatic migrant church leaders construct their migration biographies as stories of divine calling, often in connection with special spiritual experiences like dreams, auditions, or visions. The outward reasons that drove them from their countries are accidental, while the inner, 'real,' reason for their migration is that they are ambassadors who have something to give to their host society, missionaries who have been entrusted with a message people in Germany need to hear.<sup>53</sup>

In a very critical manner, Währisch-Oblau takes issue with her own German Lutheran Church that has only begun recently to look at the self-image of many migrant pastors. For the Lutheran Church as a whole, migrants are simply defined "as clients of their social and political outreach, and treat migrant communities as 'diaspora' groups".<sup>54</sup> "(Lutheran) church documents on the integration of migrants almost completely ignore the existence of migrant churches, defining integration as a political and civil process that needs to be dealt with under ethics rather than under ecclesiology."<sup>55</sup> Here one clearly sees the ever looming presence of a German State Protestant Church that communicates "superiority" in theological reflection and practice in relationship to other forms of Protestant Christianity, especially Pentecostal / charismatic expressions.

On the other hand, in Germany, in recent years, the Federation of Pentecostal Churches (BFP) has actively integrated international congregations into their fellowship. To date, there are approximately 130 international congregations which make up the BFP's *Arbeitsgemeinschaft internationaler Gemeinden* (AIG).<sup>56</sup> Dr. Palmer Appiah-Gyan originally from Ghana, is chairman of the AIG within the BFP and pastors an international church in Freiburg. As of 2007, the chairman of AIG is automatically a member of the BFP Präsidium,

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<sup>53</sup> Claudia Währisch-Oblau, "Religious Self-Images and Spiritual Practice, Identity and Integration of Pentecostal-Charismatic Migrant Church Leaders in Western Germany," <http://www.glopent.net/iak-pfingstbewegung/Members/CWO/projektbeschreibung-migrants-with-a-mission> (accessed 18 March 2008).

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> "Arbeitsgemeinschaft internationaler Gemeinden (AIG)," *Bund Freikirchler Pfingstgemeinden* Web site, available from <http://www.bfp.de/index.php?id=131> (accessed 21 March 2008).

which is its national ruling body.<sup>57</sup> Each district within the BFP has assigned one of their pastors to coordinate and foster the integration of international churches at the district level. Währisch-Oblau stated to the author, during the Heidelberg Conference, how she applauds BFP efforts to actively welcome international churches into its fellowship.

The author recalls an Assemblies of God World Missions meeting with European missionaries in 2004 where it was implied that Pentecostals migrating from Africa will be a key factor in reaching Europeans with the gospel. According to the research above and through the author's own observation, this has not yet become the case. The overwhelming majority of African Pentecostal churches in Europe are reaching other Africans who are living in the diaspora. Most Africans pastors and their churches have not been able to breach the cultural gap that exists between the two cultures. Hopefully, in the future, more efforts will be put forth to culturally prepare a growing African Pentecostal population in Europe to reach their communities with the claims of Christ.

## PART TWO

### SOCIAL SCIENCE AND PENTECOSTALISM

#### Sociology and Pentecostalism

Anderson explains how several of the earliest sociological studies of Pentecostalism were viciously polemic and one-sided. Many early scholars viewed Pentecostals as religious fanatics who were psychologically unstable, neurotic, and deprived. Others saw Pentecostalism as simply a refuge for the unprivileged poor which allowed emotional religious experience as a substitute for social struggle within society.<sup>58</sup>

Later studies have been more sympathetic. Sociologist David Martin makes a distinction between the charismatic movement and Pentecostalism, which he says is “an indigenous enthusiastic Protestantism,” and extension of Methodism that cannot be regarded as an “imported package,” because of its “multi-cultural transfers.”<sup>59</sup>

David Martin is also critical of his own colleagues’ bias who tend to view religion, specifically Pentecostalism as deviant and not long lasting whereas politics is approached as something higher and better and more enduring.<sup>60</sup>

As a result there are excellent books on ‘power’ in Latin America with barely any serious reference to religion. Presumably, power is seen as manifest in events and religion appears uneventful. That way our very topic is sequestered among the marginalia. Of course, the marginalization of religion can come about in an entirely unproblematic way simply because a writer’s interests are centred elsewhere.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> Anderson, 6.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> David Martin, “Undermining the Old Paradigms: Rescripting Pentecostal Accounts.” *Pentecostal Studies* 5, no. 1 (2006): 19.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

Martin calls for social scientists to listen carefully to what Pentecostals and other religious people say without trying to interpret the metaphors of meaning through one's own scholastic value system. Utilizing this approach will aid social scientists to gain more insight into the "inner world" of Pentecostalism, as they become participant "insider" observers. Daniel Chiquete's, at the Heidelberg Conference, also called for social scientists to take the "insider" perspective on their research among Latin American Pentecostals. "Insider" research is much more helpful to the "outsider's" understanding of the internal workings of the study group being investigated.<sup>62</sup> Birgit Meyer sees great validity in the "insider" approach to social scientific research.

Insightful scholarship on Pentecostalism is based on a successful translation of 'internal' into 'external' perspectives, taking as a point of departure what people believe and experience. The strength of this approach is that, rather than imposing a neutral analytical language, it stays close to Pentecostalism's own vocabulary and does not solely explain its success by referring to non-religious factors.<sup>63</sup>

This more friendly approach to researching Pentecostalism is a great benefit to social scientists and Pentecostal scholars alike, as each group respectively tries to understand the sheer magnitude and implications of a global movement whose influence continues to increase, especially in the Southern Hemisphere.

### Anthropology and Pentecostalism

Ronald Bueno emphasizes the importance of listening to the margins when developing a history of Pentecostal experience and identities. For Bueno, Pentecostal experiences should be examined and understood as specific historical formations within unequal relations of power,

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<sup>62</sup> Daniel Chiquete, "Das Insider/Outsider-Problem in Forschungen zur Pfingstbewegung," (paper presented at the International and Interdisciplinary Conference for the Study of Global Pentecostalism, Heidelberg, Germany, February 2008),1.

<sup>63</sup> Meyer, "Pentecostalism and Globalization," 6.



That is, studies of Pentecostalism should focus upon how local congregations, movements and individual experiences constitute and shape global processes; how global worship styles, liturgical practices and moral codes are integrated, rejected or adapted by localities; how mobile evangelists, pastors and lay persons assimilate to or transform new and old localities; how ethnicity, gender, class and other historically constructed social forms shape Pentecostal experiences and their institutionalization at specific moments in time and space.<sup>64</sup>

Bueno argues that local and global settings should not merely be assumed, but rather should be seen as a means to understand devices to contextualize global processes within local relationships and institutions. Local geographic expansions and the globalization of Pentecostalism must be investigated and synthesized within specific historical localities.<sup>65</sup>

Anderson has come up with a new terminus to further describe how one might view global Pentecostalism from an anthropological perspective.

We could also borrow from social scientists and argue that the identity of Pentecostalism could be found in its “glocalization” – that combination of a global meta-culture with a certain local particularity. The Pentecostal meta-culture transcends locality and denominational loyalty and displays striking similarities in different parts of the world.<sup>66</sup>

Birgit Meyer as a cultural anthropologist has done extensive research focusing on various forms of Pentecostal expression in rural and urban Ghana. Meyer investigates the inner workings of various local people groups as they respond positively or negatively to Pentecostal forms of expression. Meyer, who conducts her research locally, always takes into account a global perspective. Recently, she has given special attention to the “media shows” which she describes as ritual events in larger Pentecostal church worship settings in Ghana.<sup>67</sup> Utilizing visual media creates a Pentecostal imagery, which in itself for Meyer is very impressive and these events are presented and displayed, in the local church setting. At the Heidelberg

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<sup>64</sup> Ronald D. Bueno, “Listening to the Margins: Re-historizing Pentecostal Experience and Identities,” in *Globalization of Pentecostalism: a Religion Made to Travel*, ed. Murray W. Dempster, Byron D. Klaus, and Doug Petersen ( Carlisle, U.K.: Regnum Books International, 1999), 270.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 271.

<sup>66</sup> Anderson, 10.

Conference, Meyer enthusiastically takes the audience on a journey that is in line with Pentecostal worship expression. There were moments during her presentation when this author was wondering if she had converted to Pentecostalism. Meyer's extensive anthropological work is a case in point, which clearly shows the benefits of the "insider" perspective, bringing about positive research results.

### Gender Issues in Pentecostalism

As an anthropologist, Elizabeth Brusco surveys recent contributions to gender studies with regard to Pentecostal/charismatic churches, inquiring about adequacy in representing the female majority in worldwide Pentecostalism. At the Heidelberg Conference, Brusco called for a move beyond the marginalization hypothesis by allowing women both value and agency, thus envisioning their conversion as a linked set of processes that renegotiate gender and family relationships as well as personal identity.<sup>68</sup> As such, women in Pentecostalism are also a challenge to Western feminism, since the transformations they induce, often center around the home, and not so much the public arena.

The devaluation of women's social and cultural roles by scholars of religion is evident in the application of "the marginality thesis" to explain women's attraction to Pentecostalism. In this model, women are drawn to Pentecostalism for the same reason other "marginal" people are: Because it simply affords them an opportunity expression and status not available to them in mainstream society.<sup>69</sup>

Brusco refers to a Web site in her home state of Washington put up by a fundamentalist Baptist church, listing the ministry accomplishments of many outstanding Pentecostal women like Aimee Semple McPherson and Maria Woodworth-Etter. Brusco finds

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<sup>67</sup> Meyer, "Pentecostalism and Globalization," 9-10.

<sup>68</sup> Elizabeth Brusco, "Repression or Liberation? Gender and Power in Pentecostal/Charismatic Movements," (paper presented at the International and Interdisciplinary Conference for the Study of Global Pentecostalism, Heidelberg, Germany, February 2008), 3.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

this to be quite impressive until she read further in the Web site, which then lambastes the women and men who supported these women in ministry as being unscriptural for allowing them to usurp male authority.<sup>70</sup> Obviously this approach to viewing women's role in the church causes Pentecostal feminists to draw the battle lines.

Brusco refers to Bernice Martin who has raised "the Pentecost Gender Paradox" along with other scholars: Why do women convert to Pentecostalism more than men when Pentecostal doctrine seems to be evidently oppressive toward women? Why are women first to convert, and then they bring in their husbands and sons later?<sup>71</sup> These questions and others for Brusco are resolved much easier locally than globally. Her main point of reference is Latin America as she has done extensive study on gender relative to Colombian Pentecostalism. In this context, Brusco concludes that Pentecostal conversion does touch the home of many of the poor and disinherited. When the husband works, no longer wasting limited family finances on drink and other deviant activity, then the quality of life for women, as well as the family unit improves. In Latin America, Pentecostal women are contributing more ~~and more~~ to the influence and the leadership of their own local churches.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.,4.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.,10.

## CONCLUSION

The overriding emphasis of The Heidelberg Conference brought home once again how diverse and immense the study of global Pentecostalism has become. Global Pentecostalism as a movement is probably more diverse than any other stream of Christianity, simply because its various forms of expression are tied very closely to local contexts and in these contexts is where it has developed and taken shape.<sup>73</sup> Lutheranism is connected to a theology that generally had its roots and development for several hundred years in Germany. Catholicism developed culturally and theologically in a Latin speaking context, through centuries of Roman dominance which gave it shape and strong tradition. Pentecostalism, on the other hand, has sprung up and developed globally within the short time-span of one century and there is no one dominating country or theological perspective as a previous point of reference. It is the expansive growth of Pentecostalism in such a short period of time that fascinates so many of the scholars previously cited in this paper.

At the Heidelberg Conference, I met several different German anthropologists researching African Pentecostalism, who knew nothing about Pentecostalism in Germany. These individuals were quite fascinated to discover some of the “nuts of bolts” about a movement in their own country that incidentally was explained to them by an American. The lively interaction between the participants attending the Heidelberg Conference was just as valuable as attending the scheduled sessions. For example, I was able to encourage one researcher to contact the

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<sup>73</sup> Allan Anderson, “When Is a Pentecostal Not a Pentecostal? When She's a Charismatic! Responding To Irvin, López Rodríguez and Waldrop,” Abstract, *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 16, no. 1, (2007): 58.

Flower Pentecostal Heritage Center in Springfield, Missouri, relative to his work about Pentecostalism in the Republic of the Congo. Another researcher expressed interest to read my paper on the topic of *Missionary Church Planting in Germany*. It was quite remarkable in Heidelberg how many of the participants came from a Pentecostal or charismatic background. At times, it felt like one was attending a Pentecostal academic camp meeting.

I strongly concur with Anderson's assessment question that what "Pentecostal" and "Charismatic" is, will continue to be debated for many years to come. The answer to this all encompassing question will remain academically somewhat ambiguous and at times hard to get a handle on.<sup>74</sup> Is this not the true genius of a fascinating movement that has touched so many lives in all parts of the world in such a short period of time? I would answer definitely yes, let the questions continue to be raised.

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

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