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"Ask and you shall be given": Pentecostalism and the economic crisis in Cameroon

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Introduction

This book consists of five published articles and a general introduction. The articles concern recent changes within Pentecostalist and other churches in Southwest Cameroon. A central theme is the transition - in this area in the 1980's - from what I term 'classical' to 'modern' Pentecostalism: that is, from a Gospel of asceticism on the earth in order to gain spiritual riches and blessing in the after-life, to a celebration of accumulation of wealth already in this world. In Cameroon – as elsewhere in Africa -, this fairly abrupt transition coincided with the onset of an economic crisis that is lasting up till the present day and which brought general impoverishment, next to the enrichment of the happy few.

This theme of a switch from asceticism to accumulation touches upon two related themes that emerged during my field-work and are dealt with in the articles below as well. First of all, the theme of what I propose to call the 'pentecostalization' of older and more established churches. In this area, notably the Presbyterians and the Catholics seem, after initial hesitations, prepared to take over some of the Pentecostal rituals, apparently in the hope that they will thus counter the spectacular growth of the Pentecostal movement in the area. A second, related theme that posed itself with some urgency during my field-work concerns the differences between these older churches and the Pentecostal congregations in their political stance. The mainline churches proved to be more prepared - just as elsewhere in Africa – to denounce certain abuses following from the present political situation. This raised the question why the political stance of Pentecostal churches was fairly different.

In this introduction I propose to place these subjects in a broader historical and socio-political context, and also to indicate how the five articles below relate to

each other. Subsequently I will discuss the relevance of current debates on the rapid rise of Pentecostalism in Africa and elsewhere for my research. A central question is here on which aspects these more general debates offer seminal starting points for my research in Southwest Cameroon. Finally I will report on my field-work and the choices I had to make in the course of my study. This introduction will conclude with a rapid overview of the five articles that form the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Explaining the central theme: From asceticism to accumulation

Pentecostalism, as a religion, has many strands. Some of the factors that differ from one group to the other are organizational structure, doctrines, practices and origin. What unites them most is that members believe they are ‘born-again’ Christians. This is based on the biblical conversion experience of being ‘born-again’ through an individual act of repentance and submission. This implies ‘giving your life to Christ’, which is the doctrinal cornerstone of Christianity (Marshall 1992). Another central tenet shared by Pentecostals, is baptism by the Holy Spirit, the sign of which is speaking in tongues or glossolalia, expressed in the verse from the story of the Pentecost in the Acts of the Apostles: ‘And they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the spirit gave them utterances’. Being ‘born-again’ is seen as a cornerstone of Christianity, but Pentecostals believe that members of mainline Christian groups are yet to have this conversion experience in their lives because some of the doctrines and practices of these churches are not in compliance with Christianity. For instance, they have often considered the display of the statues of Mary or Jesus in mainline churches as the worship of idols.

A striking difference in doctrine distinguishing one Pentecostal group from another concerns the economic message. Indeed, my research was mainly inspired by my observation that in the area where I live and work, Southwest Cameroon – just as elsewhere in Africa – a striking transition had taken place from what I would like to call ‘early’ or ‘classical’ Pentecostalism to a more ‘modern’ variant. Early Pentecostalism preached an ascetic doctrine, which stressed perfection, strict moral ethics and biblical inerrancy. The ways of the ‘world’ were considered the ways of sin, so believers were exhorted to shun all unnecessary material and carnal pleasures. Modern Pentecostalism, on the other hand has embraced a gospel of accumulation, which sees the ways of the ‘world’ no longer as the ways of sin. It encourages ‘believers’ to accumulate already here on earth. This difference in economic message is the major distinction between classical and modern Pentecostalism. Elsewhere in Africa as well early Pentecostal churches embraced the ascetic doctrine of classical Pentecostalism,

while the new churches are emphasizing a gospel of accumulation. For instance, David Maxwell (1998) discusses a similar transition within the Zimbabwean Assembly of God, Africa (ZAOGA). While a majority of newer Pentecostal groups are preaching a message of accumulation, a few - for instance, Deeper Life Bible Church Nigeria - maintain asceticism. Deeper Life Bible Church goes to the extent of telling its members not to watch television, drink soft drinks, wear jewellery and refuse contact with non-believers (Ojo 1992). A recent development in African Pentecostalism is that some of the earliest groups in the continent, which adopted the ascetic doctrine of the classical Pentecostalism, have shifted to the new message of accumulation.

In Cameroon, the earliest Pentecostal churches - notably the Apostolic one, which was brought in by a Nigerian (I.O. Oyoyo) in 1948 and Full Gospel Mission, introduced by a German (Reverend Werner Knorr) in 1961 - are examples of groups that have made this shift. Central to my research was the intention to investigate and analyse the Full Gospel Mission (at the moment the biggest in Cameroon) as a special case. A rapid overview of my data on this Church can indicate what changes I am referring to. My findings on this church reveal that this change to a more 'modern' outlook started in 1988, after about 27 years of maintaining a position of complete asceticism. In this case it was also a relatively smooth transition. The decision to shift from complete asceticism to accumulation proved to be crucial to the everyday life of the church since it concerned a doctrinal position in matters of faith. For this reason, only the authorities of the church can sanction such a transition. In 2001, I succeeded in having two interviews with the Missionary Founder of the Church, Reverend Werner Knorr, in his Bamenda residence. My aim was especially to learn more about the position of the church on accumulation. In reply he presented me a document that was supposed to summarize the official position of the Church. The document, entitled *Full Gospel Mission: What does the Bible say? Our position on prosperity* was prepared and signed by the Missionary Founder himself. The document highlights biblical passages defending prosperity and it equally encourages members to accumulate. The Reverend told me that it was prepared in 1988 when the church authorities saw the necessity of putting less emphasis on asceticism, leaving room for a gospel that would allow both the church and its members to prosper. As the reverend was the Missionary Founder of the church and the first Mission Superintendent, playing from the beginning a key role in making the church adopt asceticism, it was clear that - since this document came from him - the church authorities sanctioned the shift from asceticism to prosperity. Striking is that Mission business enterprises were created only after this date. Nowadays the Mission runs enterprises in the areas

of health, education and book selling, but before these were all non-existent. A majority of these enterprises were created only after 1990.

One thing that the document makes clear is that the church does not completely turn its back to asceticism. Though a majority of its members seem to celebrate the idea of accumulation, those who do not support it are allowed to practise asceticism; this is affirmed by other quotes from the Bible. For this reason, it is not a surprise to find some Full Gospel Mission members are still clinging to asceticism. However this concerns mainly some elderly members, and it is likely that in the nearest future when most of them must have died, asceticism within this church will become something of the past. But unlike in the case of Full Gospel Mission, the transition within ZAOGA was not so smooth because it faced resistance from some members of the church, particularly the older generation led by the early pastors of the church.

Collecting data on this transition made me realize that accumulation is a new phenomenon among Pentecostals in Cameroon. It developed mainly after the economic crisis in the country had started - that is, after 1987. Since the economic crisis, there has been an explosion of Pentecostalism in Cameroon and virtually all the new groups cherish this message of accumulation while, as noted, the old generation of Pentecostal churches, which before the crisis had all adopted a gospel of asceticism, have also switched to a gospel of accumulation. The economic crisis affecting the country must have definitely influenced the decision of Full Gospel Mission (just as in the case of the Apostolic Church) to embrace accumulation because these churches use it as a strategy to raise money for their activities. All these churches no longer receive much external financial and material support (as some of them did before the crisis). The message to accumulate is passed on to members through sermons in church and over the radio, through literature, but also through the flashy lifestyles of some of the church leaders. In the case of the Full Gospel Mission membership has been increasing since it adopted this position. Yet, the very fact that this switch to a gospel of accumulation coincided with the onset of a crisis, lasting until now and bringing general impoverishment, raises urgent questions: how it is possible to maintain this emphasis on riches already during lifetime in a situation of economic disarray? How do Pentecostal churches deal with their believers' inevitable disappointment since many of them remain poor? And how can believers maintain their faith in spite of such disappointment?

It is clear that this switch in 'modern' Pentecostalism from asceticism to accumulation is a more general phenomenon. It has been acknowledged by many scholars of Pentecostalism in Latin America and Africa (Gifford 1991, 1998; 2001; Marshall 1992, 2001; Maxwell 1998; Meyer 1998). It is attributed largely to the ongoing widespread and intensive dissemination by various Pentecostal

opinion leaders, working on a global scale, of a gospel of prosperity (Gifford 1991, 1998, 2001). According to this gospel, God has mercifully provided all the needs of humanity in the suffering and death of Christ, and every Christian should now share the victory of Christ over sickness and poverty. A believer has a right to the blessing of health and wealth won by Christ, and he or she can obtain these blessings merely by emphatic confession of sin. This theology teaches that the spiritual and material fortunes of a 'believer' are dependent on faith and on how much he gives spiritually and materially to God or his representative in the world. Though this applies not only to material but also to spiritual giving - and similarly not only to material but also to spiritual prosperity in biblical sense - most groups emphasize the importance of financial prosperity and financial giving here and now. The aspect of spiritual giving and prosperity seems to have been pushed aside because Pentecostal leaders use the emphasis on the financial gift as a springboard to raise money for the church and also for themselves. As Fomum (1988: 42) puts in reference to the gospel, 'you prosper by planting a financial seed in faith, the return on which will meet all your financial needs.' What interests me in this study is not the doctrine and the way it is deduced from biblical meanings, but rather how Pentecostal groups use this meaning in everyday practice. The leaders rely on heavily selected biblical texts emphasizing the importance of tithing (which goes to the pastor and local church). There is a promise that giving in this way will lead to magical prosperity, which is clearly attractive in societies where poverty is rife and there seem to be few ways of escaping it. Sometimes, the tithes of the poor support a pastor in maintaining a highflying lifestyle. This was true of the late archbishop Benson Idahosa in Benin, Nigeria. Gifford (2004) reveals that in some of the new Pentecostal churches in Ghana, members are sometimes urged to borrow money, if necessary, in order to give to the church; they are told that they thus qualify for supernatural monetary blessing.

The prosperity gospel is undoubtedly an American creation. Its historical development is traceable through well-known evangelists like E.W Kenyon, A.A Allen, Oral Roberts, T.L Osborn, Kenneth Hagin, Kenneth Copeland, and others. Its rapid rise and diffusion in the 1970s proved to be conducive to the establishing of true 'empires' of these 'media evangelists.' In the USA during the 1960s and early 1970s when the economy was booming and there were many job opportunities, Pentecostal leaders propagated the gospel as a means for gaining funds for evangelization and to build media empires and Churches in support of their leaders. This proved to be very successful: enormous resources were made available to meet the above objectives (Gifford 1998: 39). Marshall (1992) in her study of the Pentecostals of Nigeria reveals that in Africa, the rise of these movements was deeply influenced by the outreach of American evangelism.

Many Pentecostal pastors in Africa received their training from the Bible Colleges run by the prosperity preachers in America, either studying there full-time or through correspondence. For instance, Benson Idahosa was trained in the Rhema Bible College of Kenneth Hagin in Oklahoma. When he returned to Nigeria, he founded his own Bible school in Benin City; Africans who could not go to the US for training went there. The prosperity gospel thus became widespread in Africa and Latin America. Indeed, even some mainline Churches - for instance, the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon -, have started to follow a similar approach in order to raise money as well, particularly during harvest thanks-giving period.

My choice for a focus on this switch to a prosperity gospel does certainly not imply that I see economic factors as determinant in the recent, rapid spread of Pentecostalism on the African continent. On the contrary, much recent work on African developments (see Meyer 1995 and van Dijk 2000 and 2002) have convincingly shown the limitations of the economic determinism which seemed implied in some earlier studies on Latin America (see, for instance, Cleary and Steward-Gambino 1992 or Brain 1998) and which is hovering also in Gifford's earlier work (for instance in Gifford 1991). Indeed, one of the interesting aspects of my secondary topic of the recent tendency towards 'Pentecostalization' in mainline churches in Southwest Cameroon (already referred to above), is that it highlights precisely how important more spiritual and ritual aspects are- the great enthusiasm that talking in tongues and other ecstatic aspects of Pentecostal services evoke- to understand the popularity of Pentecostalism. Therefore, the switch to a prosperity gospel, and the more involved stance this implied of many Pentecostal churches on economic concerns, can only be seen as one factor behind the continuing proliferation of Pentecostalism in Cameroon. However, it is clear that it is an aspect that attracts great attention among potential converts. Moreover, this quite dramatic switch from asceticism to accumulation seems to mark developments elsewhere as well. In general, Pentecostalism has been studied already in many African countries. However, as yet, there is still little research that explicitly focuses on this switch from asceticism to accumulation, and its specific trajectories and effects in different countries. This study hopes to fill this gap for Cameroon. From the beginning of my field-work my main intention was, therefore, to study how Pentecostals applied this new message of prosperity in the Cameroon context marked by severe economic malaise.

The central questions for my field-work were:

- What accounts for the proliferation of Pentecostalism in Cameroon in the last decade?
- What answers does Pentecostalism (in general and for the different strands in particular) provide to the predicaments of Cameroonians, which the mainline churches have failed to do? In this context I paid attention to both spiritual and material aspects.

Within this broader context, I concentrated upon my specific question:

- How do Pentecostal leaders keep up their economic salvation message in the face of inevitable disappointment? They promise people riches through the gospel of prosperity; however, only very few people get rich through this method, yet the movement still remains attractive to many Cameroonians. How is this possible?

Related topics: Pentecostalization of mainline churches and involvement in politics

During my research two related themes emerged that were closely connected to these central questions. Firstly I soon discovered that members of mainline Christian churches were increasingly influenced by Pentecostal doctrines and practices; in practice this meant that these churches were being ‘pentecostalized.’ This made me develop an interest to know why and how this pentecostalization process of mainline churches was taking place. Another related topic concerned the political context. My study was done at a time Cameroon was undergoing difficult democratic and economic transitions; it still is, up to the present day. Citizens are struggling for genuine democratic reforms as a step to achieve a stable economic situation, but many feel that the government is not willing to promote this. I discovered too that the mainline churches, as part of the civil society, are increasingly putting pressure to bear on the government for realizing genuine democratic reforms. Their members have been affected by the crisis, which invariably implied that the churches too are affected. I therefore developed an interest to know which churches are involved in this struggle and also whether the Pentecostals churches were also among the churches and if not, why not?

Regarding the first related topic, the ‘pentecostalization’ of the mainline churches, it is clear that this development is the outcome of the rise of Pentecostalism over the last decades. Pentecostalism is flourishing because members of the mainline churches keep defecting to these new religious groups for reasons such as the spiritual healing that Pentecostalism claims to provide -, employment opportunities, lively worship services and the aggressive evangelization strategies adopted by Pentecostals in the form of ‘crusades,’ campaign rallies and free distribution of literature and stickers. This development is certainly not unique to Cameroon.

As elsewhere in Africa, some mainline churches have become aware of the influence of Pentecostal churches on their members and are beginning to take precautions by cautiously accommodating some of the practices that have made Pentecostalism attractive. For instance, Gerry ter Haar (1994) shows that the Methodist and Roman Catholic Churches in Ghana are doing this. In the case of the Roman Catholic Church in Ghana, she notes that revival practices were first

introduced in 1971 when a Holy Spirit Sister started a prayer group in Koforidua after returning from the USA. Another group was established in Accra in the same year, and a year later two medical Missionary Sisters, also from the USA, began the movement in Kumasi, which became something of a centre for charismatic renewal. Today many parishes of the Catholic Church in Ghana have prayer groups in which healing is an important element, as indeed it is in many other churches in Ghana. In another study conducted in Ghana, Opokoy Onyinah (undated) maintains that African people in general strongly believe in witchcraft, demons, ancestral curses or diseases. Thus, when feeling threatened by any of these, they will look for spiritual healing. He argues that every church finds it worthwhile to include spiritual healing in its program since failure to do so amounts to losing members to churches that include such activities. This again contributes to the continuous pentecostalization of Christianity in Africa.

While such developments are allowed within some mainline churches, others do not tolerate the changes within their own framework. Within these churches whenever a member or priest tries to introduce Pentecostal practices, he will run into problems with the authorities of the church. For instance, in the Buea Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church, one of its priests started a revival movement in his parish, which attracted many followers. When the bishop realised that the movement, inspired by the expansion of Pentecostalism in the region, had adopted several Pentecostal practices, he banned it. This resulted in serious tensions between the group and the bishop – all the more so since it seemed to be linked to the opposition between ‘autochthons’ and ‘strangers’, in this area a particularly virulent tension. Local South-westerners felt that the bishop (of Northwest Province origin and thus considered to be a ‘stranger’) had reacted that way because the founder of the group was an ‘autochthon’ of the Southwest (Konings 2003). This case offers a telling example of how church authorities may successfully suppress a move to pentecostalize a church. In some cases such tensions end up either in some members defecting to Pentecostal groups where they believe they could have this spiritual fulfilment or in the founding of a new Pentecostal church, where they can continue their activities. For instance, Meyer (1995) notes that the Lord’s Pentecostal Church of Ghana seceded from the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) when one of the leaders, Samuel Yao Amedzro, started a prayer group, which adopted Pentecostal elements within the EPC against the wish of the church authorities. He and other leaders were excommunicated because they resisted. Thereupon they reacted by founding the Lord’s Pentecost church (Meyer 1995).

In Cameroon, there is a gradual process of pentecostalization, which is taking place in the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC). The PCC case, discussed in chapter five below is of particular interest because here changes seem to come

from below. The consequence is that the authorities of the church, who initially resisted were forced to gradually give in to the wish of the ordinary members. Two earlier attempts were made by leading figures of the church to introduce Pentecostal practices, but each met with strong resistance from the church authorities. The first case started in the late 1970s and the second in the early 1990s. Each case ended up in the formation of a new Pentecostal church, with a bulk of adherents being converts from the PCC. The questions this study attempted to answer were why members of the PCC wanted to imitate Pentecostalism and why the authorities, which had resisted earlier attempts did open up to Pentecostal practices more recently. Two factors seem to be of central importance to explain varying degrees and varying pathways of this process of pentecostalization of mainline churches in Southwest Cameroon. The first is the influence of Nigerian Pentecostalism. Most of the Pentecostal groups in Cameroon and Molyko in particular, have their origin from Nigeria. This makes the Pentecostal scene in this part of Cameroon, almost a replica of what happens in Nigeria. Nigerian Pentecostal music is played everywhere in Cameroon; over the radio, in homes, bars, restaurants, markets discotheques and even nightclubs. Cameroonians enjoy it as they sing and dance to its rhythm at funerals, in churches, and at weddings. In Molyko, there is the Revival Gospel Radio Station (an FM radio station run by a pastor of Full Gospel Mission), which specialises in preaching the word of God and playing gospel music, most of these from Nigeria. This station is highly listened to in Buea and its environs because of its moving sermons and Nigerian Pentecostal songs. The station has had an influence on the ongoing singing and dancing of Pentecostal music in, for instance, the Molyko Presbyterian congregation because moving songs in the church are usually first heard played several times for the entertainment of the public over this station.

A second factor is that the economic crisis has made medical healthcare very expensive for the great majority of Cameroonians; this pushes some of them to turn to spiritual healing. Rather than going to Pentecostal groups for this, members of the congregation believe it is better for them to adopt the method in their own congregation. My main conclusion in chapter five is that, learning a lesson from the past, the authorities of the church tolerate a certain pentecostalization from below because they want to avoid further defection to Pentecostal groups.

Regarding the political role of the churches, there is an extensive literature on the involvement of Christian groupings in the struggle over democratization in various countries in Africa (Gifford, ed. 1995) and in Latin America (Cleary and Steward-Gambino, eds. 1992; Stoll, 1990; Chesnut, 1997). The general fight for democratic reforms all over the continent and elsewhere in the Southern

hemisphere is clearly linked to the end of the cold war. In the late 1980's Africans increasingly expressed the feeling that they had been ruled for many years by dictators and that it was time to fight for democratic reforms which would put an end to this. Churches in many African countries are known to have played a significant role in this context. A comparison of such developments in various countries shows striking differences: in most countries, some churches joined forces in fighting for democratic reforms while others aligned with the government to stifle the process. Gifford (1995) reveals that in many Francophone African countries, churches joined other forces in calling for a national conference to address issues affecting the nation. In those countries where dictators gave in, the church played a key role because most of those appointed to chair the conferences were religious leader. For instance, in Benin this role was played by Mgr Isidore de Sousa (archbishop of Cotonou); in Gabon by Mgr Basil Mve Engone (bishop of Oyem); in Togo by Mgr Sanouko Kpodzro (bishop of Atakpame); and in Congo by Mgr Ernest Kombo (bishop of Owando). In some countries, church leaders have exerted considerable influence by issuing pastoral letters, expressing the position of the church on political issues affecting the country. In other countries, some churches were fighting for democratic reforms, while others aligned with the government. For instance, while the mainline churches in Kenya were opposed to the President Moi's regime in the late 1980s and onward, the Redeemed Gospel Church (a Pentecostal church) supported him. This role played by the churches has always brought conflicts between the government and the churches or the outspoken clergies.

In Latin America, where this struggle of churches for democratic reforms started earlier, the Roman Catholic clergies spearheaded it. In those countries priests were interested in ever-increasing proportion in participating in the pastoral decisions of the church, but above all, they wanted the church to break its ties with an unjust order and to fight for the masses, which, in their view, suffered from misery and deprivation. Some priests participated in politics, often in alignment with revolutionary groups. Consequently, some of them were murdered or deported, Christians persecuted, the Roman Catholic press attacked, and ecclesiastical premises searched by the political authorities (Gutierrez, 1977). The Vatican did not always support the priests, and its lack of support at times led to friction between Bishops and representatives of the pope.

In the Cameroonian context, mainline churches such as the Roman Catholic Church (RCC) - and particularly its Anglophone clergies -, and the PCC, which focuses almost exclusively on issues affecting the Anglophones, have been at the forefront of efforts to see a truly democratic society take root in Cameroon. Striking is, however that Pentecostal churches seem to maintain a peripheral position. Chapter six has addressed a few reasons than can explain this contrast.

In Cameroon, unlike elsewhere in Africa - for instance, in Nigeria where most of these churches have their origin - the Pentecostal churches have maintained a peripheral political and social stance. Unlike the mainline churches, they have had only peripheral influence in politics. This is because their leaders tell their followers that churches should primarily be preoccupied with a spiritual agenda, such as prayer, Bible study, preparation for the sacrament, evangelization and individual pastoral counselling. Each group, as a body, involves itself in politics only in defence of its official teaching and interest. However, individual members are not barred from political issues, but they do not involve themselves actively – at least not to the same degree as members of mainline Christian churches. Pentecostals in Cameroon emphasize that they may not belong to or campaign for political parties, and may not form political parties or take part in political demonstrations; they may, however register and vote.

Of course, this apparent difference in political involvement between some mainline churches and most Pentecostalist ones has to be seen in a broader context. Already in her 1985 study of an ‘independent church in South Africa did Jean Comaroff warn that a notion like ‘resistance’ has to have a broad interpretation in this context and that it should not be limited to the formal political arena’s only. It is certainly true for Pentecostalism in Cameroon as well, that many of its aspects - its hyperactive services, the autonomous behaviour of many of the leaders and followers, taking constantly new initiatives- sit uneasily with the established norms of the period of forceful nation-building and one-partyism from the first decade after independence. Indeed, Pentecostalism only started to flower when this highly controlled order was gradually relaxed during the 1980s. In such a perspective, if one takes a broader vision of what constitutes ‘politics’, focussing only on the apparent support of Pentecostalism could be misleading. In other aspects it has implications that are certainly affecting the status quo.

However, in a highly conflictuous political situation, as in Cameroon in the 1990s, the question as to why certain religious leaders did raise their voice within the formal political arena’s, while others refrained from doing so, is certainly an important one. As said, the onset of democratization in the country since 1990 brought great popular unrest. For a time, it seemed that the Biya regime would be toppled by determined opposition, especially from the Anglophone parts of the country (where Pentecostalism was especially spreading). There was also great popular indignation about the way in which the regime succeeded in rigging successive elections and thus holding on to power. The hardships of the continuing economic crisis added to this indignation. In this context, it is striking that it were especially representatives of mainline churches- and notably of the Roman Catholic Church- who openly protested against the regime’s policies.

Below (notably in chapter six) I will further analyse factors that can explain the difference in this aspects with Pentecostalist churches, both leaders and followers.

Context of crisis and central questions

Since the mid-eighties, Cameroon has been going through a serious economic crisis that has left few untouched and retarded progress significantly. Although predictable and indeed foreseen (see Jua, 1991), the crisis seems to have taken government by surprise as very little was done to avert or to prepare for it. The crisis has given rise to compounding poverty, misery and unemployment and ferments fear, doubt, and uncertainty right down to increase in social insecurity. Armed banditry is now commonplace, with bandits operating in broad daylight and often with impunity. More and more young people and whole families even (cf. American lottery organized yearly by the American government for other nationals wishing to migrate to the US) are either dreaming of or migrating to the West to seek greener pastures. With the added advantages of the Internet and cellular phones, Cameroonians in the diaspora daily liaise with relatives and friends at home, coaching them how to avoid the ever-sophisticated immigration hurdles mounted by Western governments.

Causes of the crisis are many, complex and very difficult to define for the ordinary man, or even for academics and other experts (see Tedga, 1990; Jua, 1991; van de Walle, 1993; Konings, 1995, 1996a and b, 1998; Nyamnjoh, 1999). Yet government efforts to control it have for over twenty years yielded little dividend in concrete terms though there is much official rhetoric and contradictory claims of recovery in progress. The 1998 and 1999 classification of Cameroon as the most corrupt country in the world, according to criteria elaborated by Transparency International and the country's application to the Paris Club to be considered a highly indebted poor country in 2000, which eventual led to its admission into the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative in 2006, speak as much for government's failure to redress the economy.

The churches have been worried about the crisis as well The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) and the Roman Catholic Church, in particular, have been making their own spiritual contribution to the fight against it. They have often expressed this during sermons in churches and through pastoral letters. But they have neither succeeded in extracting the concessions they want from government, nor in convincing their members on the practical relevance of their options and strategies (Titi Nwel, 1995; Médard, 1997).

In the same years when the economic crisis took shape, Cameroon has witnessed the proliferation and flourishing of Pentecostal groups, particularly in

the English-speaking provinces. Some of these groups are: The Apostolic Church, Full Gospel Mission, Church of Christ, The Church of God, The True Church of Christ, Assemblies of God, Africa Bible Church, Christian Missionary Fellowship International, Winners' Chapel, The Deeper Life Bible Church, Arm of God Church, New Generation Church, The Celestial Frontiers Millennial Church, United Pentecostal Church, Bethel World Outreach Ministry, Living World Church, Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, Living Faith Worldwide Church and the Cameroon Church of Christ.

The rise and spread of Pentecostalism during this period of the crisis – as in many other parts of Africa coupled with mass defections from the established churches to the new churches – could be interpreted as a public sign of dissatisfaction by Christians with the way the established churches have gone about addressing the spiritual and material needs of their followers. Such increasing disillusionment shows that a surging number of Christians do not consider it enough for the mainline churches simply to make critical statements about the worsening economic situation or condemning the few who live in obscene opulence while the majority wallow in misery and poverty. Thus in the Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, faced with this ineptitude on the part of the mainline churches and the state, healing charismatic churches have mushroomed in Kinshasa and other urban centres (tragic spaces in which one is constantly confronted by misery and hardship) seeking empowerment for their communities through all sorts of innovative ways (Devisch, 1996).

A cursory survey of this situation in Cameroon indicates that most of these Pentecostal churches are brought in from Nigeria through the Anglophone part of the country where they were first established before moving to other parts of the country. For instance, the early Pentecostal churches (notably The Apostolic Church and Full Gospel Mission, to whom I sometimes refer in this book as mainline Pentecostal churches in Cameroon) were brought in from Nigeria in 1948 and 1961 respectively. This Nigerian root has made Pentecostalism in Cameroon to have lots of Nigerian Pentecostalism characteristics. Also almost all the local pioneers or co-pioneers of Pentecostal churches were originally ministers or elders in an established church who were disgruntled with a particular aspect in either the worship or the doctrine of the church to which they belonged before the split. For instance, the Christian Missionary Fellowship International was founded by Zacharias Fomum, a University Don, who was once an elder in one of the mainline churches (the Presbyterian Church) in Yaoundé and incidentally the son of a retired pastor of the church.

Against this background of a flourishing of Pentecostal groupings in a context of ongoing economic crisis this book attempts to provide answers to the following questions:

- 1) What answer has Pentecostalism provided to the material predicaments of Cameroonians? More in particular: how does the new gospel of accumulation and prosperity relate to these everyday predicaments?
- 2) What accounts for the proliferation of Pentecostal groupings and why is there continuous defection of members of the mainline churches to such Pentecostal groups in the country?
- 3) What factor(s) can account for the increasing pentecostalization of the mainline Churches?
- 4) How do the Pentecostal churches relate to the democratization impasse in Cameroon?

Relevance of general debates on Pentecostalism and religious change for this study

The remarkable transformation of global Pentecostalism in the last decades has attracted the attention of many academics. Most scholars seem to argue that this phenomenon should be understood as an aspect of globalization, and of an American dominance, which is cultural as well as economic and political. This section of the Introduction offers an overview of the work of five scholars on Pentecostalism in Africa and the main points they raise. The aim is to highlight their relevance for my study of the changing position of Pentecostalism in Cameroon. These five scholars have been chosen first of all because they are among the leading scholars on Pentecostal studies in Africa. They have carried out studies on different aspects of Pentecostalism in various countries, making it possible for me to compare various aspects of this religious stream to my studies in Cameroon. Focusing on one issue or on one country might make it impossible to outline general aspects and the differences within Pentecostalism. The scholars whose work I chose to discuss are Ruth Marshall-Fratani, Paul Gifford, David Maxwell, Birgit Meyer and Rijk van Dijk.

Ruth Marshall-Fratani

Ruth Marshall-Fratani is an associate scholar at CEMAF, University of Paris 1. She is a political scientist, who has developed an interest in the study of Pentecostalism. She has done extensive research on politics in Ivory Coast and acted as a consultant on violence and conflict in this country and in West Africa in general for the NGO International Crisis Group and the United Nations Organization. In her earlier study of Pentecostalism, her area of focus was Nigeria. Some of her publications on Pentecostalism are *“God is not a democrat”: Pentecostalism and democratization in Nigeria* (1995) and *Mediating the global and local in Nigerian Pentecostalism* (1998). Like my work on Cameroon, her work focussed on how Nigerian Pentecostals relate to politics and also how, with the gospel of prosperity, they have embraced the global economy. She writes less on another topic in my work, the influence Pentecostalism is exerting on mainline Christianity in Cameroon.

One of her publications, which I will discuss here in more detail is her chapter on 'Pentecostalism in Southern Nigeria: An overview', in Gifford, ed., *New Dimensions in African Christianity*, 1992. Her main aim in this chapter is to offer an overview of the proliferation of new Christian groups in the Nigerian city of Lagos (one of the cities where proliferation is most obvious because it is the economic capital and largest city in this country). She examines three issues in this work: the differences between the various groups, their common traits and their political involvement.

a) Distinguishing the groups

Marshall's work emphatically raises the same issue that is central to my study: the recent transition within this movement from an ascetic doctrine to a prosperity gospel. However, she formulates this somewhat differently. She distinguishes two groups: the Holiness Movement and the Pentecostals. Her argument for making this distinction is that Pentecostalism is a heterogeneous movement with marked internal differences in doctrines, practices, the social bases of the various groups and para-group organizations, the varying degrees of denominational affiliation and the way in which Pentecostals relate to the socio-political context of their society. Because of this, she believes it would be wrong to assume that the whole movement forms a homogenous whole. She prefers to use the word 'born-again', as used in the Nigeria context, to refer to this movement, which scholars generally call Pentecostalism. Nigerians call them 'Born-again' because members emphatically refer to themselves as 'born-again' Christians. Biblically, this expression refers to the conversion experience of being 'born again' through an individual act of repentance and submission. That is, 'giving your life to Christ', which is expected of every Christian. Members of these groups claim to have fulfilled this biblical requirement and they continuously accuse outsiders of not being 'born-again.'

The Holiness movement consists in Marshall's view of the early 'born-again' groups, which emphasized asceticism as an economic message. As churches that belong to this group she mentions Faith Tabernacle, the Apostolic Church, Apostolic Faith, the Assemblies of God and the Deeper Life Bible Church. Most of these churches were established as mission churches from the United States of America and Britain from the 1930s to the 1950s. Only the Deeper Life Bible Church was founded by a Nigerian. All these churches embrace a 'holiness' or 'righteousness' theology, which stresses perfection, strict personal ethics and biblical inerrancy. Materialism and carnal pleasures are sin, so 'believers' are expected to shun them. They stress repentance and restitution for past wrong. Believers are not expected to lie, cheat, steal, quarrel, gossip, give or take bribes, smoke, fornicate, beat their spouses, lose their tempers, or deny assistance to

other members in need. Only limited contact is allowed between members of the opposite sex and a strict dressing code for all sexes is enforced. Marital infidelity or divorce is not permitted. Faith healing and miracles are central to the churches that belong to this group to the extent that some even refuse medical treatment. The Deeper Life Bible Church goes to the extent of telling its members to abstain from watching the television, drinking even soft drinks, wearing jewellery and having contact with unbelievers.

The 'Pentecostal' group is made up of the younger 'born-again' churches, which came into being from the 1970s to the 1980s. This group embraces the doctrine of prosperity, which allows its members to accumulate. The doctrines of this group were influenced by literature on prosperity by preachers from the United States of America. Moreover, some of the Nigerian pastors of this group, for instance Benson Idahosa, were trained in the United States of America in Bible schools run by the pioneer prosperity pastors of the country – such as the Rhema Bible College run by Kenneth Hagin in Oklahoma. Some 'Pentecostals' had been members of the Holiness movement before the coming in of 'Pentecostal' doctrines. Christ Chapel, founded by a Nigerian, Pastor Tunde Joda, is among the first churches of the Pentecostal group in Lagos and it is the most popular. Membership is drawn from among prominent business people, university students and lecturers and even pops stars. Members have the tendency to wear Western dresses, listen to Western style gospel music and consume Western religious literature. This, Marshall argues, highlights how deeply notions of 'modernity' have been 'internalized' by this group. The church leaders strive to create international connections that will enable them accumulate. The more they travel and acquire luxury items, the more members see this as a sign of goodness of God to his faithful followers. Members tend to give much money to the church with the hope of receiving more in return.

b) Common traits among all the groups

Marshall emphasizes also that although there are these differences, the 'born-again' see themselves as a special and sacred community whose identity and unity should be aggressively promoted to those who are outside. They have been fostering this identity, working in unison. She examines the factors, which made members believe that they should be united. She argues that the constant economic and political pressure brought to bear on the urban dwellers in Nigeria has necessitated the need for unity. The pressure made members believe that by working together they can evolve strategies be they doctrinal, economic or social that can enable them to overcome economic hardship and poverty. For instance, on the doctrinal front, both asceticism and prosperity doctrines are meant to provide a solution for economic difficulties; in the everyday social context.

Being a needy member of such a group guarantees that one will always be assisted by other members or the church. Churches provide institutional support, both formally and informally, in areas such as healthcare, education and family life to their members. To consolidate this unity, the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN) was formed in the late 1980s. PFN is the national umbrella association that brings together all 'born-again' groups in Nigeria. It speaks on behalf of all the groups and it defends their interest when the need arises. It lays strong emphasis on unity among members. Since its foundation, it has resolved a number of differences within the community.

c) Political involvement

Marshall shows that the 'born-again' in Nigeria, are outspoken on political issues. They believe that by taking part in politics, they are able to eliminate, through an election, the 'enemy' who rules the country. The enemy here most often refers to non-Christians. Apart from being active during elections, they have protested political decisions that do not favour them. For instance, during the period of military rule, and the admission of Nigeria into the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1985, they joined other Christian groups in fighting against what they called the 'Islamization of the country.' They have always been outspoken on the religious crisis pitting the Christians against the Moslems in North Nigeria. Marshall gives a detailed analysis of this relationship between Nigerian Pentecostalism and Politics in her article, "'God is not a Democrat" Pentecostalism and Democratization in Nigeria', in Gifford, ed., *The Christian Churches and the Democratization of Africa*, 1998.

What is the relevance of these insights to my study of developments in Cameroon? Certain issues raised by Marshall about Nigerian Pentecostalism hardly correspond to my own work - even though most Pentecostal groups in Cameroon have their origin from Nigeria. The first issue is her distinction between 'Holiness' groups and 'Pentecostals'. The difference she gives lies in the economic messages of the groups: while the former is ascetic, the later is accumulative. In Cameroon, there is no exclusively 'ascetic' group left and the general name for all these believers is 'born-again' as it is the case in Nigeria. While the new groups came in already with an accumulative message, the older ascetic churches as well have gradually switched to accumulation. Marshall mentions the Deeper Life Bible Church as one of the 'holiness' groups but in Cameroon this church, which was founded by a Nigerian and is still managed from its international headquarters in Lagos, is not ascetic. It has its own business enterprises in the form of schools in Cameroon, just like other churches. I have elaborated on how schools, as well as other institutions run by churches in Cameroon have to be seen as business enterprises, for instance because of the

high fees paid (see chapter four). Moreover members of the Deeper Life Bible Church do watch TV, dress like other Pentecostals and equally engage in business ventures in a bid to accumulate. In view of all this it is very likely that in Nigeria as well this church might no longer be ascetic. Marshall did her studies more than fourteen years ago and it is possible that the church subsequently switched to accumulation. The accumulative practices, which she attributes to the Pentecostals in Nigeria, are very similar to those in Cameroon - for instance, dressing gorgeously and owning expensive cars, travelling out in a bid to accumulate and involvement in businesses.

The second issue concerns the unity among Pentecostals in Nigeria, especially in their involvement in politics. Here again there are striking differences with the situation in Cameroon. Pentecostals in Cameroon do not have the kind of unity, which exists among those of Nigeria. They have no umbrella association like the PFN. Each church does its own things, independent of the others. But they have all in common that they do not involve themselves in politics and have never done so, unlike the mainline churches that have consistently been outspoken on issues of politics in sermons, pastoral letters and also took part in talks aimed at resolving a political impasse.

Paul Gifford

Paul Gifford teaches in the Department for the Study of Religions at the Centre of African Studies in the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. A professor in African Christianity, his research interest is in recent developments in African Christianity and the socio-political role of religion in Africa. He has done extensive research on these topics with particular focus on countries such as Liberia, Ghana, Cameroon, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. He was the first academic to realize the influence of the 'Born-again' movement in Africa. He has written an impressive series of books and articles on the subject, among which are *Religious Rights in Southern Africa* (1988), *Christianity and Politics in Doe's Liberia* (1993), *Ghana's charismatic churches* (1994), *The complex provenance of some elements of African Pentecostal theology* (2001) and *Ghana's new Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalising African Economy* (2004b). In the above works, Gifford looked at two broad issues which recur also in my work. The first is the involvement of these churches in politics. Unlike Marshall, who mainly concentrated on the political role of Pentecostal churches, Gifford (like myself) looked at both mainline churches and Pentecostalism in their role in politics. Another issue that is central in Gifford's work and my own is the switch to a prosperity gospel. In his 2001 publication, Gifford uses Crowder's work among the Yoruba of Nigeria to argue that though this prosperity doctrine may be an American creation, it is not

something really new to Africans since in African traditional religion the members' prosperity is central as well. This implies that it had been part of African culture, which on this point converged with the Christian doctrine on prosperity. However, just like Marshall, Gifford did not touch the third topic of my work, the 'pentecostalization' of mainline Christian churches. .

Gifford's pioneering role, and the sheer volume of his publications, meant that academics on new Christian movements in Africa have tended to see these through his eyes. Because of his mastery of the topic and the extensive research he had already conducted on the theme, the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) - a body consisting of most mainline Christian churches in Africa, but not the Roman Catholic Church – asked him in 1990 to coordinate a project to study these new churches. In the context of this project Gifford undertook various activities. First it involved extensive travel on the part of the coordinator, in an effort to build up a general picture of the phenomenon. He presented this general picture during an AACC symposium on the theme 'Africa beyond 2000: Problems and Promises for Missions' held in Mombassa Kenya, in November 1991. The second element was to discuss with church leaders across the continent, in an effort to raise awareness of the issues involved. The third element was to talk to scholars in seminaries and religious studies departments of universities, in an attempt to interest them in doing more detailed studies of the phenomenon and even to encourage students to write research papers on new movements in their own region. The AACC project ended in 1992 and various studies carried out by academics under the sponsorship of the project, were edited and put together by Gifford in a volume entitled 'New Dimensions in African Christianity'. This volume discusses the phenomenon in Nigeria, Liberia, Malawi, Kinshasa and Mozambique.

I already pointed out that Gifford had a special interest in the public face of African Christianity in its interface with socio-political issues. . Apart from his works cited above on Churches and politics, there are others: for instance, he edited *Christian Churches and the Democratization of Africa*, 1995, in which he made a contribution on Liberia entitled "'Directed by the hands of God'": The role of Liberian Christianity during the civil war', in 1998, he published *African Christianity: Its Public Role* in which he analysed the political role churches have been playing in Ghana, Cameroon, Zambia and Uganda. I will focus on one of his works on churches and politics: his 1995 work on Christianity in Liberia during the civil war. In this work, Gifford aimed at analysing the efforts by the various churches in the country to bring peace during the civil war. He first gives a historical presentation of the role churches or church leaders played during the Liberian civil war. He shows that though churches were interested in reaching peace and despite all sorts of activities - involvement in peace talks, issuing

pastoral letters, interviews and sermons - they never made any positive contribution in this direction. They rather relied on the faith gospel stressing that Liberia was a Christian country, which, like Israel of old, was being punished by God for failing to live up to its calling. That is, they believed God was behind everything that was happening in the country. In this emphatically biblical view, God has his own time and his own reasons for doing what he does and it is him who decrees any suffering there is on this earth. Gifford concludes that this position made the various churches a constituent part of the structures of oppression, corruption and mismanagement that characterised the Doe's administration. He argues that churches did not want to be viewed as being against the state; neither could they be pictured as parallel to the state; rather they must be seen as part and parcel of the state apparatus. Ideologically Christianity was used to sanction or explain all kinds of dubious realities, and it supplied the categories and rhetoric to justify various events and structures.

Three years after the publication of this work, Gifford released another book on churches and politics entitled *African Christianity: Its public role*. In this book he made a comparative analysis of the role of Christianity on political issues in Cameroon, Zambia, Ghana and Uganda. For some of the countries he stressed the support given to the government by Christian bodies: for instance, in the case of Pentecostal support to the Chiluba administration in Zambia. For others, however, he stresses Church opposition to the state - - for instance, by referring to the Roman Catholic Church's opposition to the government in Cameroon.

Gifford's work on churches and politics has a direct relationship with my study since one of my central objectives was also to see how Christian Churches relate to politics in Cameroon. My study suggests that the mainline churches in Cameroon are more confrontational with the state than those in Liberia -at least if one accepts Gifford's accusation that the latter were a constituent part of the structures of oppression, corruption and mismanagement that characterised the Doe's administration. However, as said, Gifford acknowledged that this was less the case elsewhere. In the other countries he studied mainline churches did get involved in political debates, criticise government action that might not be good for the citizens and issue pastoral letters, which often brought conflicts between them and the state. As opposed to the Churches in Liberia, which were interested in reaching peace during the war asking for this in sermons and in issuing pastoral letters, but paradoxically believed in a supernatural solution to the problem, the mainline churches in Cameroon believe that bad government policies are often at the centre of socio-political problems; indeed, they emphasize most powerfully that as such, only the state, through good policies, can solve the problems. This is why they keep on confronting the state on socio-political issues. However, Pentecostal churches in Cameroon could be likened to

the mainline Churches in Liberia in that they do not confront the state on socio-political problems. However they differ again from the churches in Liberia in the sense that they completely abstain from any involvement in political debates or activities.

David Maxwell

David Maxwell is a Senior Lecturer in History at Keele University, England. His research focus is on the history of African Christianity. Most of his writings are based on Southern Africa, where he spent almost five years, living and working in Zimbabwe, South Africa and Mozambique. He has written monographs on missionary encounters in Zimbabwe and the emergence of more autonomous trans-national African Christian movements within Southern Africa. His approach is one of a social historian interested in the complex relations between African traditional religion and Christianity seen in a broader social context. Dominant themes in his works are the relation of Christianity to economic and political change, and its role in the creation of identities of class, gender, generation and ethnicity. Some of his works are *Christians and Chiefs in Zimbabwe: A social history of the Hwesa people 1870-1990* (1999); *African gifts of the spirit: Fundamentalism and the rise of the born-again movement in Africa* (2002); and *'Survival, Revival and Resistance': Continuity and change in Zimbabwe's post-war religion and politics* (2005). One of his works, which I will discuss here in more detail, is "'Delivered from the Spirit of Poverty?'" Pentecostalism, Prosperity and Modernity in Zimbabwe', in *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28, 3. 1998. In this article, Maxwell presents a particular version of the gospel of prosperity propounded by the Zimbabwe Assembly of God, Africa (ZAOGA), an indigenous Zimbabwean Pentecostal church, which claims to be the largest church in the country. He shows that, while the church's leadership draws inspiration from various American versions of the gospel of prosperity to legitimize accumulation, they have exploited predominantly Zimbabwean concerns to shape their own particular version of the gospel. He explains the prevalence of the doctrine not in terms of whether it is wrong or right, but as a means of enabling Pentecostals to make the best of rapid social change. He argues that for some members of the church, it has engendered social mobility. For others, it has provided a code of conduct, which guards them from falling into poverty and destitution. For all it has provided a pattern for coming to terms with, and benefiting from dominant modern values and institutions.

Maxwell notes that ZAOGA was founded in 1967 by some Zimbabwean Pentecostals led by Ezekiel Guti (archbishop of the church), who in 1967 were expelled from the Pentecostal Assemblies (introduced in Zimbabwe by Canadians) following a struggle with these missionaries. Initially ZOAGA

continued to implement the ascetic doctrine of the older Pentecostal churches but in the 1990s it shifted to the prosperity gospel. The church leaders took this decision when they realized that thus membership would increase and there was the need to explore ways of making political capital out of this.

ZOAGA refined its new gospel of prosperity through two interrelated teachings, which became central to the church's identity. These concern the issues of 'talent' and the 'spirit of poverty.' On the talent issue, each three years every talent worker (business person) has to pledge how much (s)he will earn over the coming six months and what percentage of this will be given to the church.. This gospel was being introduced at a time the cost of living was rising in Zimbabwe due to a Structural Adjustment Programme that was imposed on the country by the World Bank. Maxwell reveals that Zimbabweans, particularly women, responded to the economic difficulties by developing various means of self-reliance, which greatly improved their economic lives. The church leaders then exploited this financial success of its members through instituting this doctrine.

Every time this is about to take place, Guti will decree which new project the church has to undertake so that people should raise much money for it through talents. When the pledges are made, special church services of encouragement are organised and most people willingly work for this. At the end of the 'talent'-period, the money is collected with much celebration. By announcing ostentatiously how much every person has earned within this period and the amount paid to the church, others are encouraged to give more.

Maxwell argues that people willingly work for it not just because they expect much in return, but also because they believe that the money will be cleansed no matter by what means it has been earned. Money is given sacred blessing and rather than looking at it as a 'dark satanic force' - as the older Pentecostal groups did - ZOAGA members seek to transform it for the sake of the kingdom of God. Moreover, the doctrine has instilled hard work into the members' habits, as each will work hard to fulfil her (or less often his) pledge.

The 'spirit of poverty' doctrine, on the other hand, fundamentally entails a wide-ranging assault on African tradition. According to the doctrine, Africans stay poor, not because of structural injustice, but because of a spirit of poverty. Even though they may be 'born-again', only their souls have been redeemed. The explanation for this is that the ancestral spirit, with its evil influence, still remains in their blood. Ancestors never led a good life while on earth because they were violent, indolent, drunkards, and polygamists, and also because they venerated ancestors and practised witchcraft. Guti never stops emphasizing that these vices are still in the blood of Africans. Any failures in life, as well as the precarious state of the country in general are attributed to this. The inability to accumulate,

but also that fact that one's car always breaks down, barrenness, celibacy, problems in marital homes, divorce, and many other mishaps are attributed to this spirit. Misfortune is passed on from one generation to the next via demonic ancestral spirit. Deliverance, according to the teaching, is the only way to get rid of this spirit. It is received in two ways. The first is through giving. Members are taught that blessing comes through giving in the service of God. Apart from talent giving, members of ZAOGA pay tithes, which is seen as a biblical prescription. They equally make 'love offerings', 'free-will offerings' and 'special gifts.' A love offering is a tax levied on an assembly during the visit of an overseer or an itinerating pastor. It is given to the visitor to supplement his salary. Free-will offerings are collected for things such as assisting orphans, organising crusades, funerals, purchase of choir gowns and acquisition of musical equipments. The special gift or tribute goes to Archbishop Guti during Christmas and on his birthday. The making of these gifts is therefore a precondition for 'deliverance.' The doctrine of the 'spirit of poverty' is most often expounded during the 'talent' period and 'deliverance' is performed on affected members to enable them to work successfully towards fulfilling their 'talent' pledges.

Maxwell argues that especially the doctrine of the 'spirit of poverty' is appealing to members because it claims to provide a solution to their daily problems. The success of the two doctrines hinges on two interrelated sets of reasons. First they are effectively 'marketed' by those with a keen perception of popular aspirations. Secondly, they work in idioms familiar and accessible to a wide range of Zimbabweans. Accumulation has become the formal doctrine of the church and it is preached with regularity. It is encouraged at all levels. Young pastors are encouraged to use their first 'love offerings' to purchase expensive dresses, shoes, ties and so on, so that they can look smart, like a successful entrepreneur. Members of the church believe that if they heed to the gospel, they will be able to accumulate in their turn in order to meet up with realities of modernity. This belief obviously explains why members willingly work so hard to get money to pay to the church.

Maxwell notes that some of the older pastors, who joined the church in the 1960s and 1970s did not support the shift from asceticism to the prosperity gospel. They believed more on the traditional ascetic doctrines. They equally argue that the 'spirit of poverty' teaching suggests that Christ had done 'an imperfect job of redemption'. Some of them, including members of the church, were also not pleased with the personality cult built around Guti, which often merges or confuses his identity with that of Jesus Christ. Maxwell shows also that when the church took the decision to embrace accumulation, it equally decided to be involved in political issues as a strategy for gathering money from

the state and politicians. Politicians from the ruling party were often invited to church functions and the church's leaders supported government positions on major political issues. All this in a bid to extract money from the politicians and the state.

An issue raised in this study, which directly relates to my own work, is the shift from the gospel of asceticism to that of prosperity. Like ZAOGA, mainline Pentecostal churches in Cameroon, (for instance, the Full Gospel Mission, at least in the beginning) adopted asceticism as an economic message but have now switched to accumulation. It is also interesting to point out that the shift in both churches took place at a time Cameroon and Zimbabwe were undergoing an economic crisis brought about by the Structural Adjustment Programs imposed by the World Bank with its attendant hardship for the citizens. This suggests that the prosperity doctrine in Africa works best in a situation of economic hardship. While the churches use it to accumulate, members believe that by giving to the church, a supernatural solution will be provided to their economic woes. A difference is, however, that in ZOAGA's case the transition was far from smooth: it faced opposition from its early pastors and some other members who were not comfortable with the personality cult built around Archbishop Guti. In contrast, within the Full Gospel Mission the transition seems to have taken place much more smoothly. Maxwell however, does not indicate how this opposition within ZOAGA worked out - that is, whether the dissatisfied group left the church or decided to continue its opposition from within. My own study reveals similar situations of doctrinal crisis within one of the mainline churches in Cameroon (the PCC); here the crisis ended with the founding of new churches by members who had doctrinal positions that were opposed to those of the church.

Another point in Maxwell's work, which relates to mine, concerns the political role of the churches. As already indicated, Pentecostal churches in Cameroon do not take part in politics and do not try to extract money from the state or politicians. This marks a clear difference with ZAOGA. Moreover, the position of Cameroon mainline churches differs from that of ZAOGA in that they do not accept the government's position on any socio-political issue if they are convinced that the government is wrong.

Birgit Meyer

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Satanic riches in Christian Ghana (1995); “*Make a complete break with the past*”: *Memory and post-colonial modernity in Ghanaian Pentecostal discourse* (1998); and *Ghanaian cinema and ‘Africa Heritage’* (1999). What my work has in common with hers is that both cover missionary churches and the effects of their contact with Pentecostalism. We differ in that she has elaborated extensively on the use of the media as a tool of Pentecostal evangelism – an aspect which is less important in my study of the dissemination of Pentecostal ideologies in Cameroon. On the other hand, Meyer pays less attention to the political role of the churches, a topic which loomed large in my research. Two of her works will be discussed here in detail. The first is “*Translating the devil*”: *An African appropriation of Pietist Protestantism: The case of the Peki Ewe in Southern Ghana, 1847-1992*. This work, based on her earlier Ph.D thesis, shows how Africans, in a dialectical interplay of alienation and appropriation, made the Christianity of Western missionaries their own, and how this appropriation is being realized in the past and present. The work focuses on the activities of the *Norddeutsche Mission* (MNG - a nineteenth-century German Pietist Mission society) among the Peki, who are part of the Ewe ethnic group, of South-eastern Ghana and Southern Togo.

Meyer notes that the MNG was the first Western missionary group to be established among the Peki in 1847. It carried out its activities undisturbed until the First World War when it was eventually forced to withdraw as a result of the German’s responsibility for the outbreak of the war. It was replaced by the Ewe Presbyterian Church, (a missionary church but still controlled by MNG), which was later called Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC). The EPC however got its independence from the mother church in 1922 and from then its affairs were run mainly by African pastors and teachers, many of whom originated from Peki. The new church maintained monopoly on Protestantism among the people until 1930 when independent churches started emerging. The effect of this on EPC was that it lost many of its members to the new churches. In 1961, as a result of a conflict over prayer healing, a secession occurred in the congregation of the EPC in Peki Blengo, which resulted in the formation of an independent ‘spiritual’ church called Agbelengor (later called The Lord’s Pentecostal Church). In a bid to avoid the loss of more members, the EPC began to Africanise its liturgy. However, towards the end of the 1970s it also accepted a pentecostally-oriented prayer group within the church. These attempts to Africanize the liturgy did not please most local EPC pastors. Especially the pentecostally-oriented prayer group strongly objected to this. These conflicts ended up splitting the church into two EP Churches, the EPC and the EPC ‘of Ghana’, which each claim to be the rightful successor of the MNG.

Meyer has divided this work into two broad parts. The first part runs from when the MNG entered Peki (1847) to 1957. In this part, she makes a detailed study of the practices and activities of the MNG in Peki before it had to leave. She also dwells on the developments that led to the conflict over the spiritual healing group in the Peki Blengo congregation of the EPC and to the formation of the Lord's Pentecostal Church. The second part of the work deals with the conflicting doctrines and practices that made the church split into three independent groups: The Lord's Pentecostal Church, the EPC and the EPC 'of Ghana'. My interest in this book concerns especially this second part because it relates directly to my work on the pentecostalization of mainline Christianity and, more in general, the factors accounting for the upsurge of Pentecostalism in Cameroon. I will therefore focus on this part of the work, with emphasis on issues that relate to or differ from my own work in Cameroon. I shall start by presenting each group and the events and problems that led to its splitting off from the EPC.

a) The formation of the Lord's Pentecostal Church

The Lord's Pentecostal Church started as a prayer group founded by Samuel Yao Amedzro within the EPC congregation in Peki Blengo. The founder of the group, claimed to have been successfully healed from a severe illness in 1958 - after several unsuccessful attempts of curing himself through all sorts of other conventional and supernatural methods -, by a 'prayer group' within the EPC in a nearby village. Before being healed Amedzro had been living a reckless life, indulging in all kinds of social vices like drinking, smoking and dancing; he had had several wives and ridiculed his mother for her loud prayers. He got converted after this healing and after several visions of an angel telling him to 'go and work for the Lord', he changed his name to John Sam Amedzro, which marked his new identity as a convert.

When he returned to Blengo, he founded the *Tekrom Prayer group* within the local EPC congregation. The group attracted even members of the Methodist church (the other Christian group in the area) because it was believed to cure the sick through prayer, exorcise evil spirit and to perform other miracles. It developed certain practices, which were strikingly different from those of the EPC and Methodist church. These included drumming, clapping and dancing, tithing, glossolalia, prayer healing, taking off shoes when entering the prayer hall and fasting every Thursday morning. It was also associated with some taboos; for instance, menstruating women were forbidden from attending meetings and sexual intercourse was not allowed on the night before the Sunday service. Sick people were not allowed to go to a hospital or take medicine, but were to rely on prayer alone. It highlighted, both in its discourse and its rituals, the question of the evil spirit. Its leaders took the existence of the evil spirit as seriously as that of the Holy Spirit, and branded traditional religion as the realm of Satan. Meyer

argues that the tackling of issues involving evil spirit was the major source of its attractiveness, because other churches neglected it.

These differences and the attractiveness of the group caused the EPC and Methodist authorities, but also other Christians, to be hostile to the Tekrom Prayer group. The EPC (the most affected because the great majority of the group's members came from this church) took some measures to deter its members from joining the group. One of the measures was that it stopped conducting Christian *rites of passage*, for instance baptism or burial, to anyone who belonged to the prayer group. But this did not stop the group from growing as it started performing these rituals to its members. Angered by this, the EPC synod took a decision to excommunicate members of the group who continued taking part in its activities. The EPC was not happy to loose members but at the same time, it was bent at maintaining its authority over any group that operated within the church. By this it expected the group to obey the decision of the synod. The group refused and in 1961, it decisively split from the EPC to form the Lord's Church-Agbelengor. In 1985, the name of the church was changed to Lord's Pentecostal Church.

Among the factors, Meyer argues, that accounted for the attractiveness of the Lord's Pentecostal Church was its ability to address issues of witchcraft or satanic forces, which the EPC did not. Another factor was the poor economic situation of the country, which prompted an ever-increasing number of people to search for ways out of their troubles. This was to enable them to maintain or achieve the prosperity that they had until then taken for granted.

b) Formation of the EPC

Meyer emphasizes that around the same time that the Lord's Pentecostal Church split off, other independent churches, most of them pentecostally-inclined, emerged. The result was that the EPC was loosing members to these churches. In order to stop the exodus of members, the EPC authorities decided to bring some fundamental changes in its services. These included introducing some elements of African cultures, such as the use of traditional drums, new songs with African tunes replacing the old hymnbook with translations of European hymns, and dancing during the offertory.

Some members of the church were not happy with the decision to Africanise the church. These members formed various prayer groups in many congregations of the church. These groups had Pentecostal tendencies. In a bid to avoid loosing more members, the church instructed the groups to rely on prayer alone and to do away with taboos and objects such as candles and incense, which they believed in. Rather than joining other churches, members of the prayer groups preferred to remain with the EPC in order to bring change. One of their main aims was putting a stop to the Africanization of the church. To them Africanization was incompatible with Christianity. Therefore they tried in 1991 to have another

Moderator of the church elected who, they thought, would stop the Africanization theology. But they did not succeed in this and therefore they decided to split off from the EPC and to form the EPC 'of Ghana' in 1991.

Meyer argues that this phenomenon of independent churches emerging with doctrines that strikingly differed from those of the mission Churches, shows Africans' refusal to accept a continuing domination of the colonised through an effort to stop the suppression and alienation brought about by Western influences in general and by Christianity in particular.

There are two main issues in this work, which are related to my work. One is the issue of spiritual healing as a strong force of attraction to Pentecostalism and the other is the pentecostalization of a mainline church.

On the first point, my research findings in Cameroon reveal that a good number of people join Pentecostal groups because they want to be healed or because they believe to have been spiritually healed already. Many testified to me about this. Unable to treat themselves through more conventional methods, they had gone to Pentecostal churches which claim to heal people spiritually. Similarly, Meyer shows that the founder of the Lord's Pentecostal Church, Samuel Yao Amedzo, had been healed spiritually after trying in vain other methods. After this healing, he not only joined the Pentecostal movement, but went as far as to form a prayer-healing group that became so attractive that it grew into an independent Pentecostal church. Another related point Meyer brings up is the impact of the economic depression in Ghana at the time, which contributed to people turning to Pentecostalism as a way out of their troubles. I make the same argument for Cameroon. Pentecostalism started flourishing in Cameroon when the country was already experiencing a severe economic crisis. Through its prosperity gospel it provided an economic message which apparently appealed especially to the poor. Meyer's work graphically illustrates the attractiveness of this accumulation message among the Pentecostals in Peki.

On the second point, a similar situation of pentecostalization of mainline churches is recorded in my own work in Cameroon. In Cameroon, especially the Presbyterian Church, offers striking examples of such pentecostalizing tendencies. Meyer's works, just as my data, show that this pentecostalization did not follow from a decision of the Church authorities, but that it was rather promoted from inside the church. Just as within the EPC in Ghana, it occurred also in the PCC in Cameroon more than once and under different leadership. The PCC leadership twice opposed such a movement from within and in both cases this resulted in the dissatisfied group splitting off and forming its own church (see below chapter five).

The second work of Meyer to be discussed here in more detail is 'Commodities and Power of Prayer: Pentecostal Attitude Towards Consumption

in Contemporary Ghana', in: *Development and Change* 29, 1998. Her main aim in this article is to show how through ritual of prayer, Ghanaian Pentecostals believe they purify modern consumption, which helps them to handle globalization and consumption of foreign commodities so that there is no more danger of being harmed by the commodities. In this article, she highlights the great desire of the people for Western goods and the problematic (fetishistic) properties of these goods, which might be resolved by prayers to de-fetishize them. .

In this article, using again the example of Peki, Meyer traces the beginning of the consumption of foreign goods in Ghana from the early Pietist missionaries and slave trade periods. During this period, the people had the opportunity of coming in contact with Western goods, brought in by these foreigners. People rapidly developed an interest in these goods, which replaced the locally made goods. Meyer argues that they especially developed an interest in them because these goods symbolized 'civilization'. Consumption of the goods was seen as a mark of modernity and consuming them helped people to construct a new, modern identity. Although early missionaries regarded these Western goods as a necessary ingredient of a Christian lifestyle, they were concerned about people's overwhelming enthusiasm. . The missionaries rather maintained an ascetic position on consumption and for this reason they did not like the interest that the 'natives' developed in these goods. Yet, with time, the influx of Western goods increased rapidly as a result of the cultivation of cocoa, which enabled farmers to acquire money to buy them.

Meyer shows that when Pentecostalism came in, it rather adopted a different position on consumption, which made it attractive. It adopted the prosperity doctrine as its economic message, which made people understand that consumption of the goods was not a sin. She reveals that this message became pronounced from the 1980s when Ghana started having economic difficulties marked by severe starvation. These economic difficulties made Pentecostalism popular because it claimed to provide a solution to the economic hardship. Building on the older ascetic ideas of the missionaries, Pentecostal preachers emphasized that, indeed, these material things by themselves were dangerous to man because the 'devil' uses them to push people away from God. However, they added that through prayer, the devil's hold on these goods can be broken. In this way, Pentecostalism encouraged accumulation but it urged also members to pray over all the material things they had so as to pull out the influence of the 'devil' on them. The implication here is that the 'devil' has control over every material thing unless it is purified through prayer. The belief is that commodities as they are found in the market are truly fetishes; the problem is that most people are not aware of this and regard them as harmless. This evil force in commodities

needs to be stripped off before they could be consumed. In this way, fashionable things like watches, cars, dresses, electronics etc, which the ‘devil’ can use to derail people from God, can be purified and therefore made usable to ‘believers’ with no problem.

Meyer argues that by doing this, Pentecostalism has turned ‘believers’ into vessels of the Holy Spirit, who are capable of fighting the ‘devil’ and his demons through prayer. This has empowered them to transform commodities into mere objects and it has also provided them with the ritual to understand the magicalities of modernity. Meyer contends that this practice is so successful because it takes as a point of departure both the desire to have access to the world and existing fears about the nature of the global market and people’s connections with it.

This study on Ghanaian Pentecostals shows a clear relationship with my material on Cameroon, in the sense that both Ghanaian and Cameroonian Pentecostals embrace the gospel of prosperity. Just like in Ghana, this gospel has enabled them to embrace the consumption of Western commodities and globalization because the two go hand-in-hand. Noteworthy is also the timing when Pentecostals started to opt for the prosperity gospel. Just like with the ZAOGA and Pentecostalism in Cameroon, the message was introduced in Ghana at the time the country was facing severe economic difficulties. A difference is, however, that in Cameroon Pentecostals seem to be less preoccupied by the need to pray over new commodities because they are supposed to be charged with an evil force. Cameroonian Pentecostals do pray for certain things before they are used - for instance, a new car or house. However, the reason for this is not that they believe there is an ‘evil’ spirit already in the commodity, which needs to be exorcised before it is ready for use; they rather pray that God will protect the object while being used. The Full Gospel Mission Cameroon, which I studied especially, encourages members to pray for property, including those already in use; moreover, members did not seem to take this very seriously. .

Rijk van Dijk

Rijk van Dijk, an anthropologist, is a researcher at the African Studies Centre Leiden. He carried out research on Pentecostalism in Malawi, Ghana, and most recently Botswana. For Ghana where he did most of his work, his research focus has been on the growth of Pentecostalism in this country and its relationship with the Ghanaian diaspora, particularly in the Netherlands. Some of van Dijk’s works are *From Camp to encompassment: Discourses of transsubjectivity in the Ghanaian Pentecostal diaspora* (1997); *Time and transcultural technologies of the self in the Ghanaian Pentecostal diaspora* (2001); and *Religion, Reciprocity*

and Restructuring Family Responsibility in the Ghanaian Pentecostal Diaspora (2002).

I will discuss two of his other works in more detail. The first is *Christian Fundamentalism in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Case of Pentecostalism*, an occasional paper of the Centre of African Studies, University of Copenhagen, February 2000. While this and other work by van Dijk focuses on the growth of Pentecostalism in Ghana in relationship with the Ghanaian diaspora, my work was rather concentrated on Pentecostalism in Cameroon, its relationship with the economic crisis and politics.

The main aim of van Dijk's paper was to address the issues of the growth and spread of charismatic Pentecostal churches as a fundamentalist turn in African Christianity, their basic features and their essential ideological parameters. Of particular interest for him was the Pentecostals' fascination with modern styles of and appetites for consumption, with new technologies and with achieving a dominant place in the modern sectors of everyday life. Drawing from studies on Ghana and Malawi, his main argument in the article is that this Pentecostal ideology appears to be profoundly inspired by an anti-nostalgic paradigm, a politics of time in which 'tradition' and the 'past' are turned into suspect, if not immoral, sources of political and social power.

To buttress his points, van Dijk has categorised Christian groups under four headings. This categorisation is based on history of each group and its ideological appeal in an African context. These categories are, Missionary Mainline Churches, Missionary Pentecostal Churches, African Independent Churches and the new wave of Pentecostal churches.

Van Dijk notes that before the introduction of missionary churches by the whites, Africans strongly believed in the influence of spirits, ancestors, witches and evil powers and that ritual protection and purification were considered essential in everyday life. When white missionaries came, they could not accommodate these aspects and they told Africans that these forces should be ignored because they did not even exist. By implication, the missionaries could not offer any form of worship, protection and purification that could deal with the effects of these forces, which are real to Africans. Van Dijk argues that this position of turning a blind eye to these forces was in this sense a conversion to modernity in that it demonized so-called 'traditional beliefs'.

The next group he distinguishes - African Independent Churches -, emerged from the missionary churches in the first decades of the 20th century and started addressing such issues. They made the African believe that these hidden forces were real and that Christianity could counteract them. These churches that were founded and led by Africans understood very well the African view of the universe and the forces, which control it; indeed, they built their ideologies

around this. The central elements of these new churches were healing and protection against these forces. They combined healing, protection and purification – as said, traditional African practices, - with elements of Christianity and Christian worship. This made the churches to be more attractive to many Africans than the missionary churches. In the emerging cities of the 1930s and 1940s such as Accra and those of the Copper belt in South Africa, many of these churches existed attracting many town dwellers that had migrated from rural areas to work in the cities. Hence van Dijk argues that the rapid growth of the new African Independent Churches could be explained in terms of their capacity to address the working of the hidden forces that were real to many Africans.

The next wave of churches (Pentecostal) came after colonization. These were not created by white missionaries nor did they emerge from earlier churches; they rather developed out of the influence of black American churches. A characteristic of this new wave is that it combines some features of earlier Pentecostal churches such as speaking in tongues, religious ecstasy, prayer healing, with other elements that are so appealing to the youth. In general, this form of Pentecostalism manifests itself strongly among the youth; moreover, they are township based. They usually have a charismatic leader and make use of modern means of communication: video, radio and magazines.

The author shows that in Ghana, Pentecostal churches of this group have adopted the prosperity gospel, which is so appealing to the youth as their economic message. Famous churches in Ghana, which are of this category, are the International Central Gospel Church of Mensa Otabil and Action Faith Ministries of Nicholas Duncan-William. They tell their followers that Christianity is about prosperity and not poverty. They equally tell them to abstain from traditional practices because they are barriers to development and progress. This implies that they should break all ties with the past and embrace a new religious ideology of modernism. Sometime they perform deliverance on their members in a bid to rescue them from the entanglements of this evil past. As he puts it:

Sometimes people are requested to fill out extensive questionnaires which deal with each and every aspect of a person's past in terms of involvement with traditional healing, shrines, traditional rituals of any sort (initiation, birthing etc), spiritual protection and illness etc. etc. In other words, the fascination with the modern, with modern consumption and the use and possession of modern items is addressed by these Pentecostal churches in the deliverance hours they offer on a grand scale

In Ghana, the Pentecostal groups under this category engage themselves with issues of poverty and progress; but in Malawi, the young born-again preachers, whom the author classifies also under this category, address rather issues of gerontocratic power structures in their society in an attempt to cut themselves off

from tradition. Here, the young preachers do not affiliate with any church but spread their ideology of repudiating the past to everyone. Their born-again ideology revolves around opposing the authority of older people head-on, whom they argue are the authors of tradition. They ridicule the older generation at their meetings or rallies and deplore any inclination to copy their behaviour as far as religious practice is concerned. To them there is no room for any negotiation with the evil past, which is still part of the older generation. The group has a large following in Malawi because of this ideology.

The author underlines the strength of the gerontocratic power structure in the country, as it was reinforced by the former dictator Kamuzu Banda. This structure highly contributed to the emergence of this group. Van Dijk emphasizes that this gerontocratic structure, which was displeasing to the youth, enhanced the emergence of these preachers and the born-again ideology since it helped them to assert the influence of the youth in the society and to undermine the system. He concludes that these new groups are succeeding especially in town because there people no longer want to return to tradition. They rather want to embrace what is modern. Indeed, at present these preachers have paradoxically developed into agents of change, progress and development.

Van Dijk's study could be related to my work in that most Pentecostals in Cameroon have adopted this theology of breaking ties with tradition and are eager to embrace 'modernism'. My data show also that they do not take part in cultural activities and meetings where people contribute money for the development of their various localities. They refuse to attend these because they believe tradition is evil, also in this context. Van Dijk emphasizes as well the adoption of the prosperity gospel in Ghana by the new wave of Pentecostal churches as opposed to the ascetic gospel of early Pentecostal churches – just as in Cameroon. The breaking of ties with the past and the adoption of the gospel of prosperity, as I have argued, enabled religious leaders in Cameroon also to engage in accumulative practices, which was never the case before.

Another point van Dijk brings up, which also played a part in my work on the flourishing of Pentecostalism in Cameroon, is spiritual healing. Many people have joined Pentecostal churches because, in Cameroon as well, these claim to provide spiritual healing while people have increasing difficulties in getting access to medical care due to their financial problems.

The second work of van Dijk I want to discuss is "Beyond the Rivers of Ethiopia": Pentecostal Pan-Africanism and Ghanaian identities in transnational domain', in eds., van Binsbergen and van Dijk, *Situating Globality: African Agency in the Appropriation of Global Culture*, 2004.

Van Dijk's main aim in this contribution is to show why a new kind of pentecostally-inspired Pan-Africanist ideology (liberation theology) propagated

by Reverend Mensa Otabil in his work entitled 'Beyond the Rivers of Ethiopia', is not gaining ground among all the Ghanaian Pentecostals, notably not in the diaspora in the Netherlands. He argues that the staunch identity politics of the Dutch and their immigration policy has left little room for the assertive proclamation of 'Africaness'.

The first part of this text entitled 'Pan-Africanism and Pentecostal transnationalism' stresses the pivotal role Ghana, over the years, has been playing in fostering Pan-Africanism; it explains also why Ghanaian leaders have been attaching so much importance to Ghanaians in the diaspora. Van Dijk notes that Ghana's first President Kwame Nkrumah (a frontline Pan-Africanist), showed a lot of interest in maintaining ties with the Africans in diaspora in a bid to spread Pan-Africanist ideals and also to keep the memory of the slave trade alive for generations to come. When Jerry Rawlings took over power in 1981, he tried to continue propagating the ideals of Pan-Africanism. For instance, it was the policy of the state to increase the general public's awareness of its cultural heritage as a strategy of enhancing national cohesion. It was also Rawlings' policy to maintain ties with Ghanaians in the diaspora in order to get them involved in domestic affairs. The current president, John Kufuor, acknowledges that the country relies strongly on those in the diaspora for its survival because the amount of money remitted home by those in diaspora has recently become the third largest source of income to the country after gold and cocoa. Van Dijk reveals that over the past two or three decades, Ghana has become a country of large-scale emigration, a form of mobility which in the beginning was focused on places where black communities of former descendants of the Slave Coast already existed; later, in the 1970s, Ghanaians increasingly moved to other countries for job opportunities because of the economic recession the country was facing. The first country they emigrated to for economic reason was Nigeria (Nigeria had a booming economy because of oil) but when Nigeria too started facing an economic recession in the early 1980s, many Ghanaians were expelled from the country and since then, attention has shifted to emigration to Western countries, particularly the United States of America, The United Kingdom, Germany and The Netherlands. Van Dijk notes that over 12 percent of Ghanaians presently live in the diaspora, a percentage, which no leader can afford to neglect. The migration to Western countries was accompanied by a new form of charismatic Pentecostalism (this new form is already discussed in his above work), which was inspired by similar kinds of movements they had come across in Nigeria. As indicated in the previous work, such churches include Mensa Otabil's International Central Gospel Church and Duncan William's Christian Action Faith Ministries, which were founded in the late 1970s. They attracted many people, especially young people from the urban middle class in search of

success and prosperity in life. In the diaspora, other such movements have been founded and some of them set up branches in Ghana, just as some of those founded in that country set up branches in the West.

In the next part of the text van Dijk summarizes the content of the Pan-African message of Mensa Otabil. He first presents the personality of Otabil and the influence he wields in the society because of his outspokenness on political issues, his Pan-Africanist and Pentecostal ideologies, which are presented in form of literature, sermons and on the public media. Van Dijk notes that Otabil, a flamboyant person, is by far the most influential, renowned and outspoken of all the new wave Pentecostal leaders in Ghana. His criticisms of the ills of the society (believed to be caused by the state), as well as his Pan-African sentiments have made him to be like the moral watchdog of the society. His political criticisms, Pan-African sentiments and Pentecostal ideologies combined, have given him some popularity among Ghanaians in Africa as well as in the diaspora. Moreover he provides other vital services to his followers, for instance, through his University and 'Solution Centre', where people go for spiritual healing and deliverance – which in practice are meant to enable the affected to succeed materially and spiritually.

Concerning Otabil's Pan-Africanist ideology, as expressed in his book *Beyond the Rivers of Ethiopia* (1992), van Dijk notes that they are very much inspired by Senghor's negritude. They proclaim the worldwide redemption of the black race not by a return to a traditional African heritage, but by an African appropriation of the Bible and the gospel. Otabil teaches that whites have distorted the Bible and its messages to the extent that Africans seem to believe they are a cursed race, which must always be dependent on the white race or beggars. But through the appropriation of the gospel, Africans and descendants of the black race in all parts of the world can look for prowess and pride in being black and having played such a crucial role in saving mankind in Biblical and present times. In the book, Otabil rejects mental 'slavery' and proclaims a 'breaking' of attitudes that do not confirm this quest of self-esteem, initiative and entrepreneurship. Otabil reveals that when he was called into the ministry, one of the things the Lord wanted him to do was to liberate his people from such mental slavery and to lift up the image of the black race through preaching the gospel. Van Dijk stresses that another strategy Otabil has used in spreading the message is establishing the *Pan-African 'Believers' conference*, which is an annual meeting of representatives of African and Afro-American Christian communities and Churches. In 1998, the author attended one of the conferences himself, which had as its theme 'Lift Up Your Head, Africa.' In his opening speech, Otabil expressed his Pan-African ideologies by criticizing African Leaders, including President Rawlings for putting Africans under the yoke of neo-colonialism by

subjecting them to the hard conditions imposed by world financial institutions in the name of structural adjustment programs.

Van Dijk notes that Otabil's message has been very appealing in Ghana and other parts of Africa, and also among some Ghanaians communities in diaspora and for African-American communities. But he argues that in other countries overseas – notably, the Netherlands – the message has not been appealing because of the stringent Dutch immigration policy. His argument is based on the assumptions of freedom to take initiative, develop entrepreneurial ability, travel around the world or live in any part of the world for economic reasons, which are entrenched in Otabil's message. In the case of the Netherlands, van Dijk argues that with the recent stringent immigration policies of the state, it has been really difficult for emigrants to enter the country. Moreover those already living in the Netherlands do not actually have the freedom to circulate. They are strictly controlled and could easily be expelled, in case of committing a crime or being discovered as an illegal emigrant. Emigrants or aspiring emigrants are therefore more concerned with occupying themselves in things that can enable them to overcome these hurdles on their way to success rather than relying on a message that will not solve their problems. He notes that among the Pentecostals in the Netherlands, people are taught that deliverance and 'breaking ties with the past' are the only solutions to the problems. This, he believes, accounts largely for the success of some of these churches in the Netherlands because they are pre-occupied with precisely these practices. Many people go there for deliverance in a bid to succeed.

As evidence that the message has not been appealing to Ghanaian Pentecostals in The Netherlands, van Dijk indicates that Otabil's Church is among the smallest Ghanaian Pentecostal Churches in The Netherlands and that the various magazines related to his activities (such as *Greener Pastures* or the University related magazine *Pathfinder*) do not circulate widely in The Netherlands, nor his tapes or his video recordings.

Van Dijk's argument that 'deliverance' and 'breaking ties with the past' have made Pentecostalism so appealing in Ghana, as already revealed, is also true for Cameroon. My work reveals that Cameroonian Pentecostals equally opt for deliverance whenever things are not going the way they want; they equally emphasize breaking ties with the evil past. Another issue which van Dijk raises, is less applicable to my data on Pentecostal leaders in Cameroon – that is, Otabil's sensitivity to political injustices. As indicated, only mainline church leaders have been outspoken on these injustices in Cameroon. Moreover, the leaders of these mainline churches are interested in liberating Cameroonians not so much appealing to Pan-Africanism as invoked by Otabil, but rather from a political regime which in Cameroon is widely believed to have refused genuine

democratic reforms. Otabil's Pan-Africa message has had no influence among Pentecostals in Cameroon. Moreover, his literature is not known among Pentecostals in Cameroon. My findings show that many international Pentecostal leaders have been visiting Cameroon, but Otabil is not among them. .

The above overview of the works of the five authors shows that they all concur that modern Pentecostalism has embraced the gospel of prosperity as opposed to the ascetic doctrine of classical Pentecostalism. While Gifford argues strongly that the gospel of prosperity had been embedded in traditional African religion and was simply reinforced over the last decades by the American version, the other scholars – using case studies from three different countries (Nigeria, Zimbabwe and Ghana) – rather show how this gospel is disseminated and put to use in the various countries. Each of the studies emphasize that the classical doctrine before the coming of the prosperity gospel was for 'believers' to shun materialism and all carnal pleasures as a pre-condition for entering the kingdom of God; and that only later there was a shift to prosperity. While Maxwell talks of the 'talent' and 'spirit of poverty' teachings being used by ZAOGA leaders of Zimbabwe to bring the message across, Meyer elaborated on the cleansing rituals strategy being applied in Ghana to encourage accumulation while van Dijk highlighted its prevalence among a new wave of Pentecostal churches in Ghana. While Maxwell, Gifford and Marshall hold that Pentecostal pastors encouraged the message largely because of the benefit they would derive from it, Meyer is more interested in how accumulation of modern goods could be purified in order to make them harmless.

In general, it is clear that many leaders have enriched themselves through the new gospel of prosperity; in some cases, this has generated conflicts between them and the members. The outcome of the new message to members and the leaders is that they have to get involved in businesses at local levels, in a bid to accumulate. Van Dijk notes that in addition to this they try to create international networks in order to travel abroad to make money. All authors agree that Pentecostals are now eager to embrace modern fashions in their lifestyles. By engaging in such new pursuits, all authors concur, Pentecostals are projecting a new vision of the world, responding in particular to processes and promises of 'modernity' and 'modernization'. Even the young born-again preachers of Malawi who, as van Dijk shows, do not emphasize the prosperity doctrine, preach a related doctrine, in the sense that it is equally aiming at embracing modernity through breaking ties with the past.

Another issue which some of the authors highlight is that Pentecostals, like mainline Christianity, are willing to become involved in political debates in their various countries. Some of them do render their support to the ruling government for their own interest. Others rather support the opposition while others maintain

a neutral but objective position. Gifford has revealed how in Zambia, Pentecostals groups rendered their support to the Chiluba's administration despite popular opposition simply because he was a Pentecostal. Maxwell's studies among ZAOGA show that the leaders have continuously supported government position on any issue in a bid to extract money from the state and politicians. For Nigeria in contrast, Marshall notes that when the Pentecostals realised they had become a force strong enough to be reckoned with, they formed the PFN, which had as one of its objectives to make the voice of the Pentecostals known on political issues. Indeed, PFN began to denounce the ills of the government. For instance, PFN strongly condemned the decision of the Babangida administration to incorporate Nigeria into the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC); moreover it accused the government of being at the forefront of a series of religious riots that took place in the north, which led to the destruction of churches by Moslems.

Of the five authors, only Gifford in his writings on Liberia dwelled lengthily on mainline Christian churches and their role in politics. He argued that the churches did not play a positive role in bringing the civil war in the country to an end. In contrast, my work reveals that mainline churches played a big role in the democratization process in Cameroon.

Concerning the political role of Pentecostal churches, there is a clear contrast between, on the one hand, the conclusions by Maxwell on Zimbabwe and Gifford on Zambia where these churches support the regime and, on the other, Marshall on Nigeria and van Dijk on Ghana where Pentecostal leaders are rather criticizing the government. My work on Cameroon shows a different trend. It suggests that it is not everywhere that Pentecostals are concerned with political issues affecting their country. In Cameroon, they do not get involved in political debates. While the mainline churches have been making their voices clear on political issues through pastoral letters, sermons and press interviews, the Pentecostals have continuously maintained a silent position

An important common trend in all these cases – Cameroon included – is the switch by 'modern' Pentecostalism to a gospel of prosperity and accumulation.. In the case of Cameroon, earlier groups, which had adopted the ascetic doctrine, shifted to an emphasis on prosperity apparently with little or no resistance from members. But this was different in the case of ZAOGA in Zimbabwe as described by Maxwell. For Cameroon, it is quite clear that this switch came exactly at the same moment as the onset of a serious economic crisis. The scholars quoted above emphasized a similar trend in the other countries. This suggests that a switch to a gospel of prosperity becomes almost inevitable to a Pentecostal group, if it aims at pushing forward in a situation of economic crisis. While these churches in Cameroon have used it as a strategy of raising money,

members believe also genuinely that through it, they can overcome financial difficulties.

Practice is, of course, different. Not every 'believer' is becoming prosperous. They may believe that they 'know the technicalities' of doing so, but unfortunately my findings reveal that many remain poor, just like most other Cameroonians. The argument raised by most of those who did not achieve the expected prosperity was that the 'devil' was the one blocking their way. They explained that the 'devil' is always at work to make God's children suffer so that they turn away from God and follow him. Despite their actual poverty, most of my informants, however, remained optimistic hoping that they will eventually achieve the prosperity because God can always rescue his children from the hands of the 'devil'. By implication, they hold that there is a kind of war between God and the 'devil' over 'believers'. While God wants them to be prosperous, the 'devil' prefers that they suffer; however God is always victorious and this gives hope. Yet there were also others who argued that God sometime makes his followers suffer in a bid to test their faith. The argument here is that a faithful believer will never turn away from God, even in time of difficulty.

This issue of members remaining poor despite the gospel of salvation – and of how Pentecostal churches are dealing with inevitable disappointment – has not been addressed by any of the scholars quoted above. In the countries where these authors worked many Pentecostals remain poor even though they heed the new message. But these authors do not go deeper into the question as to why these 'believers' continue to accept the message, despite continuous disappointment. For me, gaining more clarity in this apparent paradox was one of the main challenges during my field-work. In chapter three I try to formulate an explanation, along the lines sketched above.

Techniques of data collection

Starting from the objectives of my study, I distinguished four major fields on which I had to collect data. These were Pentecostalism, economic crisis, pentecostalization of mainline Christian churches and democratization. Because of the specificity of each problem and the field situation, the anthropological methods employed varied. It is for this reason that I had to employ various anthropological methods in order to achieve my objectives. The methods employed were participant observation, interviews, newspaper sources, government documents, and historical and scholarly sources. Field-work for the study was carried out in three phases: phase one (October 2001-July 2002), phase two (April 2003-March 2004), phase three (July 2004-June 2006).

Collecting data on Pentecostalism in Cameroon proved very tricky for some obvious reasons. The first is that the field is still very virgin in Cameroon in terms of research. There is very little literature on Pentecostalism in Cameroon when compared to countries such as Nigeria, Uganda, Liberia, Ghana, Zimbabwe and South Africa. With this paucity in secondary data, I was forced to rely extensively on primary data. Secondly, field research on Pentecostalism can be frustrating, if not properly handled, to a researcher who does not belong to the movement. Most often informants are reluctant to co-operate because they would want the researcher to be part of them – that is, convert to Pentecostalism, as a pre-condition for their co-operation. Another reason is that they are often suspicious of the intention of the researcher. Most often they tend to believe that the work is intended to criticise them (and it is true that they are often criticised by outsiders as they too criticise them) or that the researcher could be an agent of someone who intends to use the information against the movement. The first question most of them asked me when I approached them for information was ‘Are you a believer or born-again?’ Though I dreaded being asked this question because I was not a Pentecostal, I managed to give an answer that could please the person to a certain degree. I never tried to hide that I was member of the Presbyterian Church and that I intended to remain so. Yet, I would emphasize also that I strongly sympathized with many of the doctrines and practices of Pentecostalism. I would add also that I often found, when comparing the Pentecostals with Christians of mainline churches, that former do not only know the teachings of the Bible better, but they equally make a greater effort of putting them into practice.

These were some of the problems I faced when I just got to the field. However, these problems were shortly minimised after, through the intervention of a colleague in the University of Buea who is an influential figure in Full Gospel Mission, I got an authorization letter from the Mission Superintendent (highest official of the church) at its national headquarters in Douala on October 9, 2001. Though my colleague intervened on my behalf, the Mission Superintendent still gave me a condition before I could be allowed to carry out research on his church. This was for me to promise that I was to make a copy of the research publication available to the church for appraisal; eventually it would be kept in the mission library. I made the promise and I was then issued the authorization letter. With this letter in hand, I could easily penetrate everywhere I went for information. This letter from Full Gospel mission was particularly important because most of the work was focused on this church and I needed it most, to be able to obtain information especially in other parts of the country where I would be a complete stranger. Until then I had mainly worked in Buea, where I live and where I know some local officials of the church. With regard to

the other Pentecostal churches, I tried to make local rapport with some of them and it paid up. For instance, the Buea regional pastor of Deeper Life Bible Church was very comprehensive because he was my student in the University of Buea, while for the Apostolic Church it helped that a colleague of mine in the University was an elder of the church; she knew very well the purpose of my work and linked me up with the local pastor.

The major methods I used in collecting data on Pentecostalism were participant observation and interviews. To facilitate the work, I made use of a research assistant, who was an anthropology graduate of the University of Buea. Participant observation combines participation in the lives of the people under study with maintenance of a professional distance that allows adequate observation and recording of data. It is actually immersion in a culture. Ideally the researcher lives and works in the community for six months to a year or more, learning the language and seeing patterns of behaviour over time. Long-term residence helps the researcher internalize the basic beliefs, fears, hopes and expectations of the people under study (Spradley 1980, Fetterman 1989). This was the first ethnographic method I decided to embark on. In making use of this method, I was regular at gatherings that brought Pentecostal members together, for instance, attending Sunday worship services, rallies, crusades, house fellowship meetings and evangelistic campaigns in Buea, observing, understanding and analysing the unwritten 'rules' that govern their interactions. This helped me establish a rapport with them to such an extent that they went about their activities as usual even when I showed up. In Buea, I alternated between the various church groups. For instance, I made a Sunday program including all the groups but giving preference to Molyko Full Gospel Mission because much of the research was to be focused on this church. While observing, I had a notebook to get down some points that could easily slip off my mind; a camera with which I took photographs of events such as spiritual healing and deliverance and a small sensitive tape recorder which even in my pocket would record events such as sermons, testimonies and announcements from a distance without anybody knowing this so as not to attract unnecessary attention (though, of course, I would always ask the persons concerned their permission if I wanted to use their text – all of them were happy that their words would also be put on paper).

During this preliminary stage of participant observation, I had the opportunity of coming close to many members of Pentecostal groups who subsequently were interested in assisting me whenever the need arose. And indeed some of them later became very useful to me. For instance, through them I was able to interview as many people as I wanted. An advantage I derived from beginning the work with participant observation was that it provided me a guide on how I

could go about with the subsequent methods of collecting data. For instance, I was able to select from the group, whom I wanted to interview and on what aspect. Also some of the questions posed during interviews themselves emanated from the reviewing and analysis of information derived from this preliminary phase.

Apart from training an eye for observation, I realised that it was necessary for me to develop an ear for interviewing. Interviews eventually became my most important method because they helped explain and put together into a larger context what I was seeing and experiencing. In Buea, time and venue for interview were made at the convenience of the informants. Most of them took place in the residence of the informant during non-working periods. However some of them – especially those outside Buea – took place without any pre-arrangement because of difficulties of communication. For instance I had a lengthy interview with the missionary founder of the church, Reverend Werner Knorr, who is based in Bamenda without any appointment because I did not have his contact number. Fortunately he was in town the day I went to his home and with the authorization letter from the Mission Superintendent, he opened up to me. The interview, which took place in his parlour, gave me much insight into the church's shift from asceticism to prosperity. I equally had the opportunity of obtaining a copy of a paper on the mission's position on prosperity, which he prepared from him.

I will not claim that all went smoothly with interviews because some of the members, after making appointments for interviews, disappointed me. Reasons ranged from not remembering to other more pressing commitments. Some of the interviews were tape-recorded while others were not. It had been my wish for all interviews to be recorded but some informants turned down the idea of recording their voices. They did not want it because they were either sceptical on the intention of the research or did not just want their voices to be tape-recorded. In such a case, I was compelled to use my notebook in putting down the essentials.

On the pentecostalization of mainline Christian churches, I relied on participant observation, interviews and documented sources. Since for this line of research the Molyko congregation of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon became the central case study, I had to rely strongly on participant observation in this church. I am a practicing Presbyterian and I have been an active member of this congregation for over 13 years. Over this length of time, I have had a very keen interest in observing the pentecostalization process that has been going on in the church. Though Fetterman (1989) argues that in ethnographic research, sometimes a familiar setting is too familiar and the researcher takes events for granted, leaving important data unnoticed and unrecorded, in my own case of the Molyko congregation where it could rightly be argued that I was working on my

own culture, I tried to minimise this as much as possible and with the long period of time, I could easily recollect, for correction, data that I had taken for granted. Apart from participating in the regular Sunday services, I attended mid-week prayer sessions and followed some of the activities of the house-to-house evangelization team whenever they were in action. As one who is so close to many officials of the church, including the pastor, I sometimes persuaded them to allow me to take part in certain meetings where I knew I could collect some information on the pentecostalization issue in the church. For instance, I was a participant observer in a meeting that took a decision to suspend the Christian Youth Fellowship (CYF) group for its Pentecostal practices.

In addition to participant observation of the Molyko congregation, I made use of interviews to gain more insight in the pentecostalization of the church. I had to interview some of the actors of the earlier pentecostalization crisis of the late 1970s and early 1990s (see chapter five) to know what they could tell me about the early problems. For instance, Reverend Bame Bame in Yaounde, Reverends Elangwe and Muyo of Kumba. In the Molyko Church I interviewed the pastors, elders, some members of the Christian Youth Fellowship group and the congregation. The interviews were recorded on tapes.

I also made use of documentary sources. There were a few documented sources on the early pentecostalization crisis of the church. One of it was an eyewitness account of the events and another was a document on the church's position on evangelization when the problem in the Bastos church was at its peak. In the archives of the PCC in Buea, I also had some useful documents on the crisis. For instance, official letters that were read in various churches on the issue and the one suspending the 'revival' group in Bastos and their leaders.

On churches and democratization, data was collected mainly through interviews (including media interviews of clergies), newspaper articles, pastoral letters and a few published materials. To understand the position of the PCC on democratization, I interviewed the Communication Secretary of the church. In addition to that, there were a number of occasions on which, I followed up interviews granted by the Moderator to journalists of local and national radio stations on some pertinent political debates. Whenever I missed any of the interviews, I went to the local station in Buea to have it recorded for me. The same applied to the Roman Catholic Church and Pentecostal groups. Catholic newspapers, (*L'Effort Camerounaise* and *Cameroon Panorama*), *the Post*, *The Herald* and *Le Messager* gave me valuable information on various moves taken by the church to foster democracy in Cameroon. These papers granted interviews to some clergies of the church, particularly Cardinal Tumi, on various political issues affecting the nation. They equally carried some pastoral letters on political issues for which I could not lay my hands on the originals. Pastoral letters (most

had to do with political debates) were a particularly helpful source of information because at the end of every Episcopal conference, the bishops issued a letter, which was well publicised. Due to the regularity (sometimes twice a year) with which they were meeting and issuing the letters, it was possible for me to analyse the evolving church's position on politics. On Pentecostalism, I interviewed some of their leaders (for instance the district pastor of Buea) and members; I equally followed up some of their sermons and reactions, particularly, in 2004, prior to the presidential election of that year when mainline churches were very concerned about the election while Pentecostals showed no concern at all.

Data on churches and the economic crisis was collected mainly through interviews, historical sources, scholarly sources and newspapers. For this topic my study focussed on the Roman Catholic Church and the Full Gospel Mission. To have a proper understanding of what the Full Gospel Mission was doing, I had to make use of the data that I had collected on its ongoing economic message, which I have argued is a direct reaction to the economic crisis. In addition, I made use of interviews to know how members were actually responding to the message. Through this method, I was, for instance, able to get information on the functioning of the training and loan scheme programme of the women of Full Gospel Mission Buea from its leader and some beneficiaries of the schemes. The same applied to the Roman Catholic Women Association of the Buea Diocese, which has a similar scheme. For the Roman Catholic Mission, additional information was collected through annual reports that were written by its president.

To have a proper understanding of the effects of the economic crisis on the Roman Catholic Church in particular, it became imperative for me to make a historical analysis of the situation because only through this approach could one understand the gravity of the effects on the church. It is for this reason that I made use of historical documents, particularly on Catholic education, which I realised was the most affected. These were obtained from the archives of the Catholic Information Centre, Buea and the educational secretary of the diocese who, in addition, was interviewed.

Outline of the book and overview of the chapters

The answers to the questions this study aims to tackle are provided in five different but related studies that revolve around Pentecostalism and the economic crisis in Cameroon. The studies were carried out between 2001 and 2006. Some of them had already been partly published in scholarly publications within specific settings, in which certain problems, certain concepts or certain approaches, were to be stressed rather than others in compliance with the

editorial guidelines of the volume. Some of the articles published in this book have however been expanded with more case studies so as to further enrich the texts, especially in ethnographical respect. The presentation that follows gives an overview of each study and also indicates how each article fits as a chapter in the overall plan of the book.

New Pentecostalism in the Wake of the Economic Crisis in Cameroon is the first study that is presented. It constitutes **chapter two** of the book. It provides a brisk walk through the intellectual landscape that would provide answers to what Pentecostalism provides as an economic message, what accounts for its proliferation and the continuous defection of members of mainline churches to these groups. This chapter discusses the reasons for the proliferation or explosion of Pentecostalism in Cameroon and it argues that the economic crisis affecting the country has played a great role in this. It shows that new Pentecostal groups are coming in with a gospel of prosperity as opposed to the ascetic doctrine of the mainline Pentecostal groups. This message seems to be appealing to the populace as a solution to the economic crisis. The chapter also shows that the mainline Pentecostal groups are moving away as well from asceticism to the gospel of prosperity so as to be equally attractive. The merit of this chapter is that it gives a general picture of the issues raised above though with much emphasis on answering the first two questions. The chapter that follows narrows this argument to one specific Pentecostal church.

From Asceticism to a Gospel of Prosperity: Case of Full Gospel Mission Cameroon is the next study presented. It constitutes **chapter three** of the book. The chapter, which further provides answers to why Pentecostalism is flourishing and the continuous defection of members of mainline churches to Pentecostal groups, uses one of the mainline Pentecostal churches (Full Gospel Mission), as an example to show that mainline Pentecostal churches are gradually moving away from asceticism to the prosperity gospel so as to be equally attractive and also to raise money for its activities. Looking at the Full Gospel Mission as an example, and showing how the process took place within it, supports the argument that mainline Pentecostal groups are ever more moving towards the prosperity gospel. Membership in this group is shown to have increased within the last decade and the church is expanding to all parts of the country and beyond. Switching to a new doctrinal position is a crucial decision in the life of a church which can either unite or divide it. It was important therefore to use one of the churches as a case study to see if the transition had been smooth or not and why. This church originally emphasized asceticism as an economic message, but has gradually adopted the prosperity gospel during the period of the economic crisis in Cameroon. It has manifested this by engaging itself in business ventures to raise money for its activities. These businesses, apart from providing money to

the church, have created employment opportunities, which have made the church to be attractive to the unemployed. It encourages its members to engage in business ventures and it tells them that the secret of business success lies in heeding to the gospel of prosperity. Members have responded by getting into businesses.

A comparative analysis of the reactions of the Roman Catholic Church and Full Gospel Mission to the economic crisis in Cameroon is the next chapter. It constitutes **chapter four** of the book. The chapter, which deals further with the economic crisis and religious groups' reactions to it aimed at seeing whether the reactions of the Pentecostals (taking Full Gospel Mission as a case study) to the crisis are different from that of the mainline churches (taking the RCC as a case study). Confronting the answer that is provided by Pentecostalism to the material predicaments of Cameroonians with the reactions of mainline Christian churches (who never emphasized asceticism as an economic message) seemed to be an essential step for my study. Leaving this untouched might create the impression that mainline Christianity is folding its hands to the economic predicaments of its members. In support of Nash's statement that '*if a people are poor therefore the church is and must be a church of the poor*' (Nash 1984), the two churches are pre-occupied with reducing poverty among its members. Given that each is becoming self-financing, contributions from members make up a sizeable source of income. Unfortunately the crisis has handicapped many people in providing financial support to the churches and this explains why each church, in order to succeed, tries to alleviate poverty among its members. This has created a reciprocal relationship in which the church overcomes the crisis by alleviating poverty among members who in turn provide the necessary finances for running the church. The success of the church would therefore be determined by the ability and degree to which it reduces poverty among its members. The higher the number of members alleviated from poverty, the more the financial assistance provided to the church and vice-versa. Each has establishments, which employ its members. In addition, each has adopted a training program policy wherein members are trained to be self-employed. For instance, the chapter shows that the women's department of each of the churches is engaged in training women in making certain things that may enable them to become self-employed during this period of economic recession.

You must be Born-again: The Pentecostalization of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon is **chapter five** of the book. This chapter, using the PCC as an example, provides answers to why there is a process of continuous pentecostalization of mainline churches. It reveals the influence of Pentecostalism on modern Christianity in Cameroon. I discuss the pentecostalization of mainline churches using one of them as case study in order to illustrate how this process

has taken place and also to confirm a central idea in this study. Just as in the case of Pentecostalism shifting from a gospel of asceticism to that of prosperity, this is a development, which can either divide the church or unite it. It is important to see if this development takes place smoothly or is resisted by any faction of the church and why. If it is introduced from above, how do the members receive it and if it is the reverse, how do the authorities receive it? This chapter provides answers to these questions by focussing on changing reactions within the PCC on the introduction of Pentecostal-like rituals.

Christian Churches and the Democratization Conundrum in Cameroon constitutes **chapter six** of the book. This chapter deals with the role played by Pentecostal groups in relation to the ongoing democratization process in Cameroon. The general opinion in Cameroon, also within religious groups – just as among a large number of scholars studying the country – holds that bad governance is at the root of the economic crisis in the country. For this reason, the cry is that democratic institutions, which would usher in good leaders, should be put in place, if Cameroon has to overcome the crisis. Some Christian churches in the country are increasingly articulating a social and political discourse, which they believe is in line with the special Christian vocation to preserve the inalienable rights of humanity by bringing pressure to bear on a regime that has been accused of refusing to embark on genuine political reforms. The chapter examines the examples of the Roman Catholic Church and the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon in the whole struggle. It also aims to look at the relation of the Pentecostal churches to this regime and their reactions towards the ways in which this regime is blocking the democratic process - a policy that has led to the persistence of the economic crisis. Having examined what the churches are doing to combat the effects of the crisis for their followers in the preceding chapters, it was imperative to know through this additional study what the various churches say and do about the causes of the crisis that is affecting their members. Simply looking for remedies without examining the causes was to me like giving drugs to a patient without telling him what to avoid in order not to contract the illness again.