

Pentecostal Improvement Strategies: A Comparative Reading on African and South American Pentecostalism

Draft Version

Author: Jens Köhrsen, Centre for Religion, Economy and Politics, University of Basel

Quote as: Koehrsen, Jens. 2015. "Pentecostal Improvement Strategies. A Comparative Reading on African and South American Pentecostalism" Pp. 49–64 in *Studien zur interkulturellen Geschichte des Christentums*, volume 161, Pastures of plenty. Tracing religiouscapes of prosperity gospel in Africa and beyond, edited by A. Heuser. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang Edition.

Abstract

The aim of this contribution is to explore the regional differences of religious life improvement strategies in African and South American Pentecostalism. Religious life improvement strategies can be defined as practices conducted within a religious environment that may (intentionally or not) contribute to the improvement of everyday life. Pentecostalism provides life improvement strategies to individuals seeking betterment by applying both secular and non-secular means that can help to advance quality of life and diminish suffering. For instance, Pentecostalism is thought to lead to new behavioral patterns among converts: costly and self-destructing practices such as drug and alcohol abuse, gambling, and domestic violence are suppressed allowing adherents to dedicate themselves to a more determined and healthy lifestyle. In order to determine potential differences in the life improvement strategies of African and South American Pentecostalism, the article provides a comparative reading of academic studies on Pentecostal life improvement strategies in sub-Saharan Africa and South America. The analysis shows that both strands of research, the “African” and “South American”, name a variety of Pentecostal life improvement strategies. Although the range of strategies is the same, the emphases are different. While the South American strand stresses the impact of Pentecostalism on the self-discipline and the emotional and psychological wellbeing of its followers, the African strand emphasizes social outreach programs, prosperity gospel as well as the “breaking with the past” that new members experience. In each region, the configuration of Pentecostal life-improvement strategies appears to depend partly on the socio-cultural setting. However, it remains to be examined whether the differences in the academic literature correspond to empirical differences or are based on different research foci. As such, there is a need for more comparative research on Pentecostalism. This research can contribute to our understanding of contextual differences of Pentecostalism and the factors that cause these differences.

Introduction

For many individuals, religion constitutes a useful resource to improve their life. Often, individuals become affiliated with religious congregations as a result of discontentment with their current life. Pentecostalism in particular is notorious for attracting people, searching for a solution to a specific difficulty or looking for a general change in their life. Hardships such as disease and health deficiencies, abuse, family trouble, alcoholism, drug-dependency, poverty, unemployment, lack of direction in one's life, and depression are problems that are frequently mentioned by those converting to Pentecostalism. Pentecostalism appears to provide life improvement strategies for those seeking general betterment or at least alleviation from current suffering.

Religious life improvement strategies can be defined as practices conducted within a religious environment that may (intentionally or not) contribute to the improvement of everyday life. By applying both secular and non-secular means within a religious environment, these life improvement strategies can help to advance quality of life and diminish pain and suffering. This possibility is exemplified in the famous catch-phrase of the Brazilian Pentecostal denomination, *Universal Church of God*: "Stop suffering!"

The religious improvement strategies of Pentecostalism have attracted scholarly attention. From the 1960s there has emerged a strand of academic research that studies the impact of Pentecostalism on living conditions. The underlying hypothesis is that Pentecostalism contributes to the improvement of the living conditions and well-being of its adherents and potentially leads to more encompassing social changes.¹ Scholars promoting this assumption highlight the manifold ways in which Pentecostalism can contribute to the improvement of its adherents' quality of life. For instance, it has been frequently indicated that Pentecostalism influences the self-discipline of its followers. Converts are expected to reject alcohol, drugs, violence, and extra-marital sex and become reliable and hard-working. In so doing, they experience a break with the past and potentially transform their lives. Pentecostalism is also thought to give hope in difficult situations, boost the self-esteem of its followers, and encourage them to become pro-active entrepreneurs. Furthermore, social outreach programs, education, as well as mutual material and psychological help among church members may improve the situation of Pentecostals. As such, a wide variety of techniques are employed to improve the well-being and living conditions of Pentecostals.

However, Pentecostalism is not a uniform religion. The specific cultural patterns and techniques that are employed will depend, among other factors, on the socio-geographic space and cultural environment. It follows, therefore, that Pentecostal life improvement techniques are likely to vary according to the regional and cultural context in which they are embedded.

¹ Cf. Freeman, Dena. *Pentecostalism and Development*, edited by Dena Freeman. Grudzien, 2012; Martin, David. *Pentecostalism: The world their parish*. Religion in the modern world. Oxford: Blackwell, 2000; Schäfer, Heinrich. *Protestantismo y crisis social en América Central*. San José: Departamento Ecu­ménico de Investigaciones, 1992; Schäfer, Heinrich. "¡Oh Señor de los Cielos, danos poder en la tierra! El fundamentalismo y los carismas: La reconquista del campo de acción en América Latina." *Revista Latinoamericana De Teología* 15: 61–78. 1998; Willems, Emilio. *Followers of the New Faith: Culture Change and the Rise of Protestantism in Brazil and Chile*. Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 1967.

The aim of this contribution is to explore the regional and socio-cultural differences of Pentecostal life improvement strategies in the cases of sub-Saharan Africa and South America. In order to determine potential differences in the life improvement strategies of African and South American Pentecostalism, I intend to provide a comparative reading of academic studies on Pentecostal life improvement strategies in sub-Saharan Africa and South America. It is impossible to address the whole debate on South American and/or African Pentecostalism within the scope of this study; instead, I will focus upon the strand of contributions that explore Pentecostal life improvement strategies and how they compare within these regions, allowing for provisional conclusions.

The first two sections outline particularities of South American and African Pentecostal techniques for life improvement, especially those that appear to be comparatively pronounced in the academic literature. After a description of the two regions, I draw a direct comparison between them in the fourth section, which highlights the similarities and differences mirrored in the literature on life improvement strategies in Africa and South America. The last section of the article presents the main conclusions and an outlook regarding the relationship between Pentecostalism and development in these areas.

Pentecostal Life Improvement Strategies in South America

Pentecostalism arrived with Missionaries from Northern America and Europe into South America at the beginning of the twentieth century. In Argentina, for instance, the first Pentecostals landed in 1909.² Despite its early arrival, the spread of Pentecostalism was slow until the 1950s. The earliest mass growth occurred in Brazil and Chile from the 1950's onwards, whereas the expansion of Pentecostalism in Argentina took place relatively late, in the 1980's and 1990's.³ The mass expansion of Pentecostalism occurred in the context of economic liberalization and rising social inequalities and was spurred by the evolution of new styles of Pentecostalism. Religious innovations such as spiritual warfare and prosperity gospel as well as the use of mass-media spread through Latin American Pentecostalism. New churches based on these innovations emerged and grew rapidly, while many of the existing

² Cf. Wynarczyk, Hilario, Pablo Semán, and Mercedes de Majo. *Panorama Actual del Campo Evangélico en Argentina: Un Estudio Sociológico*. Buenos Aires, 1995, 7-10; Saracco, José N. *Argentine Pentecostalism its History and Theology*. Birmingham, 1989, 299; Semán, Pablo. "Argentine." In *Les nouveaux conquérants de la foi: L'église universelle du royaume de dieu, Brésil*, edited by André Corten, Jean-Pierre Dozon, and Ari P. Oro. Paris: Karthala, 2003, 161.

³ Aubrée, Marion. "Pentecôtisme / Néo-Pentecôtisme." In *Dictionnaire des faits religieux*, edited by Régine Azria and Danièle Hervieu-Léger, 878. Quadrige. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2010 ; Bastian, Jean-Pierre. "La Mutación Del Protestantismo Latinoamericano: Una Perspectiva socio-histórica." In *Protestantismo Y Cultura en América Latina: Aportes Y Proyecciones*, edited by Tomás Gutiérrez, 115. Quito: CEHILA, 1994. Chesnut, Andrew R. *Born Again in Brazil: The Pentecostal Boom and the Pathogens of Poverty*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers UT, 1997, 39; Cleary, Edward L., and Timothy J. Steigenga. "Resurgent voices: Indians, Politics, and Religion in Latin America." In *Resurgent Voices in Latin America: Indigenous Peoples, Political Mobilization, and Religious Change*, edited by Edward L. Cleary and Timothy J. Steigenga, 12. New Brunswick, NJ, London: Rutgers UT, 2004; Freston, Paul. "Pentecostalism in Latin America: Characteristics and Controversies." *Social Compass* 45 (3, 1998): 335–58; Jenkins, Philip. *The next Christendom: The rise of global Christianity*. Oxford, New York: Oxford UT, 2007, 37. See: Martin, David. *Tongues of fire: The explosion of Protestantism in Latin America*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1990, 49.

churches employed the concepts of spiritual warfare and/or prosperity gospel to varying degrees.⁴

These innovations of Pentecostalism have not been free from dispute. Many Pentecostals – as well as scholars of religion – regard the concepts of prosperity gospel and/or spiritual warfare critically. The idea of prosperity gospel in particular causes controversies among Pentecostals in South America.⁵ However, stimulated by these innovations, Pentecostalism spreads with different magnitudes among South America's nations. The differences in its expansion result in varying proportions of Pentecostals: today, Brazil and Chile have the highest proportion of Pentecostals in South America with an estimated 24% of their population being Pentecostal, whereas in Argentina, 7,9% of the population are estimated to be Pentecostal.⁶

Nevertheless, the spreading of Pentecostalism has not taken place at the same pace in all segments of South America's population. It primarily occurs among its lower class sectors. Though today the movement seems to have gained slightly more appeal within the middle classes, Pentecostalism continues to be a principally lower class movement.⁷

Due to its success among the lower classes, academics have described the conversion to Pentecostalism as a way of dealing with poverty-related problems.⁸ Most individuals appear to affiliate with Pentecostal churches due to specific problems in their daily life. Hardships which stimulate individuals to frequent Pentecostal churches are, for instance, illness and disease, family conflicts, drug addiction, financial debts, lawsuits and the experience of injustice, psychological stress, depression, unemployment, lack of direction in life etc. Pentecostal churches are seen as offering solutions to these problems and providing an improvement in quality of life: “[...] people convert to Pentecostalism when they are experiencing a life crisis. Pentecostalism has proved to be an efficient strategy for overcoming these crisis, and therefore for supporting the poorest people.”⁹

As such, individuals affiliated with Pentecostalism experience religious activity as a potential response to their problems. However, the solutions developed in South America's Pentecostal

⁴ Cf. Semán, Pablo. “La recepción popular de la teología de la prosperidad.” *Scripta Ethnológica* 23 (2001b.): 145–62.

⁵ Cf. Míguez, Daniel. *Spiritual Bonfire in Argentina: Confronting Current Theories with an Ethnographic Account of Pentecostal Growth in a Buenos Aires Suburb*. Amsterdam: CEDLA, 1998, 31,68.

⁶ Today, Pentecostals (or: charismatic evangelicals) are the second largest religious group in Latin America where more than 141 million people are estimated to be Pentecostals; Allan Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004), 336-37; Conicet, Ceil-Piette. “Primera Encuesta sobre Creencias y Actitudes Religiosas en Argentina.” 2008; Gooren, Henri. “The Pentecostalization of Religion and Society in Latin America.” *Exchange* 39 (4, 2010): 355–76.

⁷ Bastian, Jean-Pierre. *La mutación religiosa de América Latina: Para una sociología del cambio social en la modernidad periférica*. 1. ed. Colección popular 529. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica. Berger, Peter L. 2009. “Faith and Development.” *Society* 46 (1, 1997): 61–68, 139-140; Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil*, 1997; Mariz, Cecília L. *Coping with Poverty: Pentecostals and Christian Base Communities in Brazil*. Philadelphia: Temple UT, 1994; Freston, Paul. “Pentecostalism in Latin America,” 335–58.

⁸ Cf. Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil*, 1997; Mariz, *Coping with Poverty*, 1994.

⁹Cf. Mariz, *Coping with Poverty*, 156.

churches are as heterogenic as the problems faced by individuals arriving at their doors. There are a diverse range of practices potentially contributing to life-improvement such as praying, psychological coaching, self-help groups, business workshops, motivational training, mutual material assistance, exorcisms, and faith healing. The life-improving features of Pentecostalism have led to an academic debate about its life-improving aspects.

The research on the life-improving impact of Pentecostalism commenced comparatively early in South America. In the 1960s Emilio Willems conducted a study about the expansion of Protestantism and its socio-economic impact in Argentina and Chile. Pentecostal congregations number among the Protestants that he studied. He conceived of Protestantism as facilitating modernization: it becomes a carrier of change, allowing its adherents to surmount old social structures and to come to terms with modernity.¹⁰ This theory is contradicted by d'Épinay's study on Pentecostalism in Chile, published shortly after Willems' work. According to d'Épinay, Pentecostalism seeks to restore the traditional social order by reconstructing the patron-based structures of the hacienda within the congregation. Moreover, because of its world-renouncing character, Pentecostalism forms a barrier for progress rather than promoting change and enabling an adaptation to modernity.¹¹ With classical Pentecostalism still dominating the religious scene in Chile and Argentina in the 1960s, d'Épinay and Willems were unaware of the new wave of Pentecostalism that would occur from 1980s onwards. Concerning this new, more world-embracing Pentecostalism, d'Épinay's assessment in particular might have been different.

In the aftermath of the massive expansion of this new type of Pentecostalism, the academic debate on the socio-economic impact of Pentecostalism in South America experienced a resurgence.¹² A particularity of this debate in South America has been its strong emphasis on the *self-disciplining effects* of Pentecostalism. Authors writing on South America tend to stress that Pentecostalism helps individuals to restrict their conduct of life and to engage in a kind of inner-worldly.¹³ Pentecostalism is thought to lead to new behavioral patterns among

¹⁰ Cf. Willems, *Followers of the New Faith*, 1967.

¹¹ Cf. Lalive d'Épinay, Christian. *Haven of the Masses. A Study of the Pentecostal Movement in Chile*. London: Lutterworth Press, 1969.

¹² The mass expansion of Pentecostalism results in a strong academic interest in its expansion and impact in the society; Bastian, "La Mutación Del Protestantismo Latinoamericano," 115–133; Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil*; André Corten, *Le pentecôtisme au Brésil: Émotion du pauvre et romantisme théologie*. Paris: Éditions Karthala, 1995; André Corten, "Pentecôtisme et politique en Amérique latine, Problèmes d'Amérique Latine," in *Problèmes d'Amérique Latine* 24 (janvier-mars): 17–31. 1997; André Corten, and Ruth Marshall, *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America*. Bloomington Ind: Indiana UP, 2000a; André Corten and André Mary, *Imaginaires politiques et pentecôtismes, Afrique/Amérique latine: Afrique/Amérique latine*. Paris: Éd. Karthala, 2001a; Mariz Cecília L. *Coping with Poverty: Pentecostals and Christian Base Communities in Brazil*. Philadelphia: Temple UT, 1994; Martin David, *Tongues of fire: The explosion of Protestantism in Latin America*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1990; Martin, David. *Pentecostalism: The world their parish*. Religion in the modern world. Oxford: Blackwell, 2002; Willems, Emilio. *Followers of the New Faith: Culture Change and the Rise of Protestantism in Brazil and Chile*. Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 1967.

¹³ Cf. Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil*, 108–115; Chesnut, Andrew R. *Competitive Spirits: Latin America's new religious economy*. Oxford: Oxford UT, 2003, 48; Mariz, *Coping with Poverty*, 42, 66, 70, 160; Martin, Bernice. "New Mutations of the Protestant Ethic among Latin American Pentecostals." *Religion* 25 (2, 1995): 103,107; Míguez, *Spiritual Bonfire in Argentina*, 71, 75–77; Míguez, Daniel. "La conversión religiosa como estrategia de supervivencia. Los pentecostales y el descenso social durante la "década perdida"."

converts: costly and self-destructing practices such as drug and alcohol abuse, gambling, extra-marital sex, and domestic violence are suppressed.¹⁴ Moreover, a strong work ethic is enforced on its members. Abstaining from vices and focusing on work and family, Pentecostals tend to spend their money more wisely on health and education.¹⁵ Since many of the aforementioned vices are associated with being a male, Pentecostalism helps to resolve problems related to the macho-complex: the conversion to Pentecostalism allows men to break away from some harmful behavioral patterns associated with masculinity and results in more peaceful social relations in the household.¹⁶ An additional outcome of the restrictive Pentecostal ethic is the positive image of Pentecostals: they are notorious for constituting a reliable workforce.¹⁷ As such, middle class families prefer to employ Pentecostal women as domestic staff.¹⁸

Another aspect, often mentioned in the South American debate, is the *emotional and psychological support* that results from religious activity. Pentecostalism sends hope to those who have otherwise little expectations to overcome their problems and improve their lives.¹⁹ Aside from mutual psychological support among members, religious practices such as powerful chanting, encouraging sermons, and participation in spiritual practices such as prayers, blessings and sometimes exorcisms help to enhance the self-confidence of the adherents and impart a feeling of self-control.²⁰

In comparison with the previously mentioned topics, *social outreach programs* of Pentecostal churches receive less attention. Although some authors touch upon social help networks within churches, material, financial and psychological assistance, medical care, educational facilities, and drug-rehabilitation programs²¹, these programs and initiatives are not emphasized to the same extent as the life-structuring and psychological impact of Pentecostalism.

Intersecciones en Antropología 2: (2, 2001): 79, 83; Nolivos, Eloy. "Capitalism and Pentecostalism in Latin America: Trajectories of Prosperity and Development." In *Pentecostalism and Prosperity*, edited by Amos Yong and Katharine Attanasi, 88–105. London: Macmillan Publisher, 2012; Willems, *Followers of the New Faith*, 198.

¹⁴ Cf. Mariz, *Coping with Poverty*, 42; Míguez, *Spiritual Bonfire in Argentina*, 71.

¹⁵ Cf. Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil*, 107.

¹⁶ Cf. Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil*, 112; Martin, "New Mutations of the Protestant Ethic among Latin American Pentecostals," 107.

¹⁷ Cf. Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil*, 105; Lalive d'Épinay, *Haven of the Masses*, 133; Willems, *Followers of the New Faith*, 176–179, 198–199, 251.

¹⁸ Cf. Martin, "New Mutations of the Protestant Ethic among Latin American Pentecostals," 110–111.

¹⁹ Cf. Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil*, 106; see: Martin, "New Mutations of the Protestant Ethic among Latin American Pentecostals," 111.

²⁰ Cf. Míguez, "La conversión religiosa como estrategia de supervivencia. Los pentecostales y el descenso social durante la "década perdida", 79, 83; Mariz, *Coping with Poverty*, 1992; Willems, *Followers of the New Faith*, 250.

²¹ Cf. Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil*, 66–67; Mariz, *Coping with Poverty*, 1992; Míguez Bonino, José. *Faces of Latin American protestantism: 1993 Carnahan lectures*. Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1997, 66–67; Míguez, Daniel. "Opio Rebelde. Los Programas Pentecostales de Rehabilitación de Adictos en la Argentina." *Pentecostudies* 2005 (4, 2005); Míguez, "La conversión religiosa como estrategia de supervivencia. Los pentecostales y el descenso social durante la "década perdida", 79, 83.

Astonishingly, scholars seldom explicitly address the potential life improving impacts of *prosperity gospel*. This tendency may be related to the potentially diminutive presence of prosperity gospel in South America or to the reluctance of scholars working on South American Pentecostalism to attribute a positive impact to churches associated with the health and wealth gospel²². At the same time, the way of addressing the concept in the literature may be implicit rather than explicit. Thus, some scholars may take the life improving dimension of prosperity gospel for granted.

As mentioned above, in the classical works from the 1960s, there are some critical positions pointing to the limitations and some *counterproductive effects* of Pentecostalism for the life quality of its followers. D'Épinay²³ argues that Pentecostalism does not promote economic activity due to its dualistic worldview, which encourages its adherents to withdraw from society rather than to engage in it. As a result, Pentecostals would not show a specific entrepreneurial spirit. This argument is supported in more recent research by Gill²⁴ who compares the economic and political attitudes of members from different religious denominations in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Mexico. According to his results, there is no significant difference between the economic attitudes of Protestants and the members of other denominations. Other scholars, such as Míguez²⁵, acknowledge the positive impact of Pentecostalism for those located at the very bottom of the social ladder, but cast doubts upon the potential of further improvement for those who have already achieved a certain level of socio-economic stability. For individuals enjoying an improved socio-economic situation, the time and money investments in their congregation easily rise above the benefits from their religious activity. Moreover, Pentecostalism may turn into an emotional and psychological burden for adherents who are in a difficult situation without experiencing a betterment over time, since the absence of an improvement may be attributed to a lack of personal faith²⁶.

There are also indications for *local and social differences* in Pentecostal life improvement strategies. Depending on the given socio-cultural and local context, specific life-improvement strategies are favored by Pentecostals. Life improvement strategies are likely to vary due to national and regional peculiarities in South American Pentecostalism.^{27,28} Moreover, there will be class-related differences in Pentecostal life improvement techniques. Regarding lower

²² Cf. Miller, Donald E., and Tetsunao Yamamori. *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007; Oro, Ari P., and Pablo Semán. "Brazilian Pentecostalism Crosses National Borders." In *Between Babel and Pentecost*, edited by André Corten and Ruth Marshall, 181–95. Ind. University Press: Bloomington, 2000; Wynarczyk, Hilario. *Ciudadanos de dos mundos: El movimiento evangélico en la vida pública argentina 1980–2001*. 1a. Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de San Martín, 2009.

²³ Cf. Lalive d'Épinay, *Haven of the Masses*, 157.

²⁴ Cf. Gill, Anthony. "Weber in Latin America: Is Protestant Growth Enabling the Consolidation of Democratic Capitalism?" *Democratization* 11 (4, 2004): 42–65.

²⁵ Cf. Míguez, *Spiritual Bonfire in Argentina, 1998*; Míguez, "La conversión religiosa como estrategia de supervivencia. Los pentecostales y el descenso social durante la "década perdida," 2001.

²⁶ Cf. Míguez, *Spiritual Bonfire in Argentina*, 159.

²⁷ Cf. Oro and Semán, "Brazilian Pentecostalism Crosses National Borders," In *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America*, edited by André Corten and Ruth Marshall, 181–195. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000.

²⁸ In other regions of Latin America, there may be also types of life-improvement strategies differing from those of South America (see for instance Gooren 2002); Willems, *Followers of the New Faith: Culture Change and the Rise of Protestantism in Brazil and Chile*, Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1967, 253–55.

class Pentecostalism, Bernice Martin argues that it forms a “survival technique of the poor”²⁹. She refers to moral and social surveillance techniques in lower class churches that help lower class actors transform their lives, abstain from harmful practices and become an employable workforce.³⁰ Thus, harsh moral rules and social control appear to be a typical improvement technique among lower class Pentecostals. In my own research in Argentina, I was able to witness an inclination in many lower class Pentecostal churches towards *spiritual improvement techniques* in the form of strong prayers, spiritual healing practices, and exorcisms. Since problems are often attributed to spiritual possession, the churches seek to solve problems by spiritual intervention techniques. By performing these spiritual practices, Pentecostals can experience power and hope. This experience may help them to transform their lives and to take over self-control.³¹ In contrast to lower class churches, middle class churches appear to favor other improvement strategies. They seem to avoid the moral strictness and puritan lifestyle of lower class Pentecostalism³²: members of middle class congregations are permitted to enjoy the fruits of their enhanced socio-economic situation, for instance, by wearing modern clothing and jewelry, going to the cinema, watching football matches etc. Additionally, middle class congregations teach business skills and encourage business networks in order to further the social position of their followers.³³ At the same time, middle class Pentecostals have a lesser inclination towards spiritual improvement techniques than their lower class peers: secular improvement strategies (such as business education, psychological counselling etc.) exert a strong influence, substituting the spiritual practices.³⁴

In sum, the debate over life improvement strategies in South American Pentecostalism begins comparatively early and particularly emphasizes the impact of Pentecostalism on self-discipline and the psychological well-being of converts. Surprisingly, social outreach programs and prosperity gospel play a comparatively small role in the debate. Instead, contributions focus on the modernity paradigm and examine Pentecostalism’s capacity for promoting “modernity”. At the same time, some of the researchers present a rather critical assessment of the abilities of Pentecostalism to sponsor social progress. Nevertheless, the configuration and impact of Pentecostal life improvement strategies appears to depend partially on the socio-cultural context. While lower class Pentecostals appear to be inclined towards employing spiritual and material survival strategies alongside a harsh moral code, middle class churches allow members to enjoy the fruits of modern capitalism and promote them by providing specific educational programs and business networks.

²⁹ Cf. Martin, “New Mutations of the Protestant Ethic among Latin American Pentecostals,” 107.

³⁰ Cf. Martin, “New Mutations of the Protestant Ethic among Latin American Pentecostals,” 107–111.

³¹ Cf. Chesnut, *Born Again in Brazil*, 92–97.

³² Cf. Martin, “New Mutations of the Protestant Ethic among Latin American Pentecostals,” 108.

³³ Cf. Martin, “New Mutations of the Protestant Ethic among Latin American Pentecostals,” 114.

³⁴ Cf. Köhrsen, Jens. Religiöse Geschmäcker und Stile als Distinktionsmittel in der argentinischen Pfingstbewegung. In: Martina Löw (Hg.): Vielfalt und Zusammenhalt. Verhandlungen des 36. Kongresses der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie in Bochum und Dortmund 2012. Frankfurt am Main: Campus; Köhrsen, 2014; Köhrsen, Jens. “Inappropriate Spirits”: Middle Class Pentecostalism in Argentina. Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015.

Pentecostal Life Improvement Strategies in Africa

Pentecostalism embarked on the African continent at the beginning of the 20th century. Despite its early arrival, its mass dissemination did not start before the 1970s.³⁵ In the year 2000, around 11% of the African population was estimated to be Pentecostal and/or charismatic (in the following described as Pentecostals), according to Anderson.³⁶ As in the case of South America, there are vast differences in the regional distribution of Pentecostalism. Zimbabwe shows the highest proportion of Pentecostals, followed by Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and Zambia.³⁷

Unlike in South America, the massive expansion of Pentecostalism took place, not only in the lower class, but also in different segments of the population. Yet, similar to South America, the spreading to Pentecostalism is embedded in a setting of economic liberalization and impoverishment and related to the emergence of a new type of Pentecostalism.³⁸ Prosperity gospel and spiritual warfare characterize this new style of Pentecostalism. Particularly prosperity gospel with its focus on success and material well-being appears to be widespread in Africa's present-day Pentecostalism.³⁹ The popular health and wealth gospel is frequently accompanied by a discourse of deliverance from satanic forces, which are thought to prevent believers from their divinely entitled right of prosperity.⁴⁰ As such, banishing these forces will enable believers to prosper.

Due to a strong emphasis of African Independent Churches (AIC) and a partial equation of AICs and Pentecostalism, African Pentecostalism has been historically less studied than Latin American Pentecostalism.⁴¹ However, in the recent decades, the academic production regarding African Pentecostalism has augmented significantly. A key contribution concerning the debate on development and Pentecostalism on the African continent is David Maxwell's article "Delivered from the Spirit of Poverty?": Pentecostalism, Prosperity and Modernity in

³⁵ Cf. Martin, David. *Pentecostalism: The world their parish*. Religion in the modern world. Oxford: Blackwell, 2002, 132–133.

³⁶ Cf. Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 103–104.

³⁷ Cf. Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 103–104.

³⁸ Cf. Gifford, Paul. "Persistence and Change in Contemporary African Religion." *soc compass* 51 (2, 2004b): 170-171; Meyer, Birgit. "Christianity in Africa: From African Independent to Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches." *Annu. Rev. Anthropol* 33 (1, 2004b.): 453.

³⁹ Cf. Droz, Yvan. "Les origines vernaculaires du Réveil pentecôtiste kenyan: Mobilité sociale et politique." In *Imaginaires politiques et pentecôtismes, Afrique/Amérique latine*, edited by André Corten and André Mary, 81–101. Paris: Éd. Karthala, 2001 ; Gifford, Paul. "Persistence and Change in Contemporary African Religion." *soc compass* 51 (2, 2004b): 172; Ukah, Asonzeh F. K. "'Those Who Trade with God Never Lose' - The Economics of Pentecostal Activism in Nigeria." In *Christianity and Social Change in Africa: Essays in Honor of J.D.Y. Peel*, edited by Peel, J. D. Y and Toyin Falola, 253–74. Durham, N.C: Carolina Academic Press, 2005; Ukah, Asonzeh F.K. "African Christianities: Features, Promises and Problems." <http://www.ifeas.uni-mainz.de>. 2007.

⁴⁰ Cf. Heuser, Andreas. "„Refuse To Die in Poverty“: Armutsüberwindung und Varianten des Wohlstandsevangeliums in Afrika." *Theologische Zeitschrift* 69 (1/2, 2013): 154; Gifford, Paul. "Persistence and Change in Contemporary African Religion." *soc compass* 51 (2, 2004b):172.

⁴¹ Cf. Corten, André, and André Mary. "Introduction." In Corten and Mary, *Imaginaires politiques et pentecôtismes, Afrique/Amérique latine*, Paris: Éd. Karthala, 2000b, 13 ; Corten, André, and Ruth Marshall. "Introduction." In Corten and Marshall, *Between Babel and Pentecost*, 12; Meyer, "Christianity in Africa."

Zimbabwe”, published in 1998.⁴² Studying the Zimbabwean Assemblies of God, Maxwell contends that prosperity gospel influences the economic attitudes of Pentecostals in a way that allows them to come to terms with modern capitalism. He emphasizes, above all, the transformation of the convert, which is conceived of as a break from the past. Very vital in this is the *rupture with African traditions*, relieving the convert from the costly responsibilities to the extended family and expensive traditional rituals. The transformation constitutes a kind of re-socialization, changing the behavioral code of the individual towards a code that enables the actor to deal with the challenges of modernity. The new behavioral code turns the convert into a free, sober, clean, trusty, hard-working and therefore employable actor.⁴³

This line of argument is picked up by the following debate which stresses the “*breaking with the past*”⁴⁴ as a crucial moment for the betterment of the convert’s situation.⁴⁵ The new adherent of the Pentecostal movement is transformed from an individual blocked by tradition and vices, to one conforming to the requirements of modern capitalism. New moral patterns embracing sobriety, trustworthiness and hard work substitute the old traditional code. Vested with a new behavioral code, the convert can engage more successfully in the modern labor market. Moreover, the experience of the break improves the self-confidence of actors and leads to a more active attitude towards life.⁴⁶

Interestingly, the debate on the life-improving aspects in Africa explicitly addresses *prosperity gospel* and shows a comparatively high emphasis on the topic. Many churches that are examined in the academic contributions are involved in the health and wealth gospel.⁴⁷ Gifford even states that all charismatic churches in Ghana stress success and economic wealth.⁴⁸

⁴² Cf. Maxwell, David. “Delivered from the Spirit of Poverty?: Pentecostalism, Prosperity and Modernity in Zimbabwe.” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28 (3, 1998): 350–373.

⁴³ Cf. Maxwell, “Delivered from the Spirit of Poverty?,” 350–373.

⁴⁴ Cf. Meyer, “Christianity in Africa.”

⁴⁵ Cf. Freeman, *Pentecostalism and Development*, 12–14, 20–21, 23; see: Garner, Robert C. “Religion as a Source of Social Change in the New South Africa.” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 30 (3, 2000): 326–328; Meyer, “Christianity in Africa,” 56–457, 460; Van Dijk, Rijk. “Pentecostalism and Post-Development: Exploring Religion as a Developmental Ideology in Ghanaian Migrant Communities.” In *Pentecostalism and Development*, edited by Dena Freeman 87–109. Grudzien, 2012.

⁴⁶ Cf. The Centre for Development and Enterprise. “Under the Radar: Pentecostalism in South Africa and Its Potential Social and Economic Role.” In *Pentecostalism and Prosperity*, edited by Amos Yong and Katherine Attanasi, 63–85. London: Macmillan Publisher, 2012, 80; Van Dijk, “Pentecostalism and Post-Development,” 93.

⁴⁷ Cf. Hasu, Päivi. “World Bank & Heavenly Bank in Poverty & Prosperity: The Case of Tanzanian Faith Gospel 1.” *Review of African Political Economy* 33 (110, 2006): 679–92; Maxwell, “Delivered from the Spirit of Poverty?,” 350–73.

⁴⁸ Cf. Gifford, “Persistence and Change in Contemporary African Religion,” 171–172; Gifford, Paul. *Ghana's new Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalising African Economy*. London: Hurst & Co, 2004a, 195.

Africa's preachers of prosperity gospel tend to portray wealth and success as a divine blessing and call for a fight against the "spirit of poverty"⁴⁹. They endeavor to substitute the "spirit of poverty" with an entrepreneurial spirit by *encouraging business activity*.⁵⁰ Maxwell names a striking example from the Zimbabwe Assemblies of God (ZAOGA): every three years, this church arranges an activity called "talents". During a limited period, church members engage in different business activities (such as selling self-baked cakes) with the goal of fundraising for the church. By engaging in these activities, members have the opportunity of trying out different business concepts, improving their business skills, and evolving their entrepreneurial spirits. After the end of this period, successful participants are encouraged to continue their business activity.⁵¹ Moreover, in many churches the status of members appears to depend on their economic behavior and success: risky business decisions and economic success increase the status and credibility of a church member.⁵² In a nutshell, Pentecostal churches cultivate proactive business behavior and success-orientation: adherents of these churches are likely to seek economic success and engage in some kind of business activities.

In many churches, the economic sphere and the religious sphere are intertwined: numerous churches operate their own business (i.e. television channels) and/or closely *collaborate with secular companies*.⁵³ Ukah, for instance, mentions that preachers promote specific brands (i.e. Nestle Foods, Procter & Gamble) during sermons and that these secular businesses sponsor church events.⁵⁴ Furthermore, within the more affluent churches, there are business clubs where businessmen and professionals can network and create business collaborations.

However, due to their economic focus, congregations involved in prosperity gospel often become subject of *public criticism* that mourns the emphasis on tithing or even accuses pastors of corruption and personal enrichment.⁵⁵

On the other hand, many contributions highlight the *social outreach programs* of the new Pentecostal churches.⁵⁶ Studying global Pentecostalism, Miller and Yamamori use the term

⁴⁹ Cf. Heuser, "„Refuse To Die in Poverty,“ 154; Maxwell, "„Delivered from the Spirit of Poverty?," 363–364; Meyer, "Christianity in Africa.;" Ukah, Asonzeh F.K. "African Christianities: Features, Promises and Problems." <http://www.ifeas.uni-mainz.de>. 2007.

⁵⁰ Cf. Hasu, "World Bank & Heavenly Bank in Poverty & Prosperity," 72; Freeman, *Pentecostalism and Development*, 21; Gifford, "Persistence and Change in Contemporary African Religion," 140; The Centre for Development and Enterprise, "Under the Radar: Pentecostalism in South Africa and Its Potential Social and Economic Role," 81; Van Dijk, "Pentecostalism and Post-Development," 102.

⁵¹ Cf. Maxwell, "„Delivered from the Spirit of Poverty?," 356–357.

⁵² Cf. Van Dijk, "Pentecostalism and Post-Development," 100–102.

⁵³ Cf. Comaroff, Jean, and John Comaroff. "Privatizing the Millenium: New Protestant Ethics and the Spirits of Capitalism in Africa, and Elsewhere." *Afrika Spectrum* 35 (3, 2000): 304; Meyer, Birgit. "Pentecostalism and Neo-Liberal Capitalism: Faith, Prosperity and Vision in African Pentecostal- Charismatic Churches." *Journal for the Study of Religion* 20 (2, 2007.), 20; Ukah, ""Those Who Trade with God Never Lose" - The Economics of Pentecostal Activism in Nigeria" .

⁵⁴ Cf. Ukah, "Those Who Trade with God Never Lose" - The Economics of Pentecostal Activism in Nigeria," 266–267.

⁵⁵ Cf. Gifford, Paul. *Ghana's new Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalising African Economy*. London: Hurst & Co, 2004a, 191–192; see aao: Maxwell, "„Delivered from the Spirit of Poverty?": Pentecostalism, Prosperity and Modernity in Zimbabwe," 367ff.; The Centre for Development and Enterprise, "Under the Radar: Pentecostalism in South Africa and Its Potential Social and Economic Role," 79.

“progressive Pentecostalism” for congregations that are actively involved in developmental activities.⁵⁷ The main areas of their social activity are health and education and the provision of food and shelter for the poor.⁵⁸ A peculiarity of African Pentecostalism is the strong presence of HIV-prevention programs and the care for those infected with HIV.⁵⁹

Many authors assess the impact of Pentecostalism on development in Africa in a *highly optimistic* manner.⁶⁰ Freemann, for instance, propounds that Pentecostal churches constitute more effective carriers of change and improvement than development NGOs.⁶¹ However, other scholars are more cautious regarding the long-term impact of Pentecostalism.⁶² Heuser, for instance, raises concerns regarding the ability of Pentecostal churches to professionally manage development projects.⁶³ And Van Dijk disapproves of Pentecostal churches that stress the transformation of the individual rather than pointing to the necessity of structural changes.⁶⁴

As in the case of South American Pentecostalism, the improvement techniques of Pentecostals are likely to vary according to their *socio-cultural and regional context*. Some authors indicate social class differences. Päivi Hasu⁶⁵, for instance, compares a lower and middle class church in Tanzania. In the lower class church – Glory of Christ Tanzanian Church – spiritual warfare stands in the center. The problems of the adherents are portrayed as the outcome of evil spirits from which adherents must be relieved in order to progress in life.

⁵⁶ Cf. Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism*, 276–277; see also: Comaroff, and Comaroff, “Privatizing the Millennium,” 305; see Dickow, Helga. “Strebsam und Gemeinschaftsorientiert. Neue Pfingstkirchen in Südafrika.” *Herder Korrespondenzen* 65 (2011.) : 476; Heuser, “„Refuse To Die in Poverty,“ 166; Mathole, Ezekiel Mokwele Katiso. “Beyond Common Stereotypes about the Pentecostal-Charismatic Evangelicals in South Africa.” In *Religion on the move: Exploring passages in South African Christianity*, edited by Helga Dickow and Andreas Heuser, 59–76, 23. Byblos: International Centre for Human Sciences, 2008, 72; Meyer, “Christianity in Africa,” 459; Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism*; Ukah, “Those Who Trade with God Never Lose” - The Economics of Pentecostal Activism in Nigeria,” 268–269; Van Dijk, Rijk. “Pentecostalism and Post-Development,” 93–99; see Wariboko, Nimi. “Pentecostal Paradigms of National Economic Prosperity in Africa.” In *Pentecostalism and Prosperity*, edited by Amos Yong and Katherine Attanasi, 35–59. London: Macmillan Publisher, 2012, 52–53.

⁵⁷ Cf. Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism*.

⁵⁸ Cf. Dickow, “Strebsam und Gemeinschaftsorientiert,” 27.

⁵⁹ Cf. Dickow, “Strebsam und Gemeinschaftsorientiert“; Heuser, “„Refuse To Die in Poverty,“ 166; Mathole, “Beyond Common Stereotypes about the Pentecostal-Charismatic Evangelicals in South Africa,” 72; Van Dijk, “Pentecostalism and Post-Development,” 93–96.

⁶⁰ Cf. Dickow, “Strebsam und Gemeinschaftsorientiert,“; Dickow, Helga, “Religion und Lebenseinstellungen in Südafrika. Pfingstkirchen, Charismatiker und „Wiedergeborene““ 2012, http://weltkirche.katholisch.de/media/weltkirche_medien_1/weltkirche_dokumente/DBK_WA_Dickow_Religion_und_Lebenseinstellungen_in_Suedafrika.pdf; Freeman, *Pentecostalism and Development*; Garner, “Religion as a Source of Social Change in the New South Africa”; Mathole, “Beyond Common Stereotypes about the Pentecostal-Charismatic Evangelicals in South Africa”; Martin, *Pentecostalism: The world their parish*. Religion in the modern world, 151; Miller and Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism*; The Centre for Development and Enterprise, “Under the Radar: Pentecostalism in South Africa and Its Potential Social and Economic Role.”

⁶¹ Cf. Freeman, *Pentecostalism and Development*, 3,24.

⁶² Cf. Meyer, “Pentecostalism and Neo-Liberal Capitalism: Faith, Prosperity and Vision in African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches.”; Gifford, *Ghana's new Christianity*; Heuser, “„Refuse To Die in Poverty,“; Van Dijk, Rijk. “Pentecostalism and Post-Development.”

⁶³ Cf. Heuser, “„Refuse To Die in Poverty““ 166–167;

⁶⁴ Cf. Van Dijk, Rijk. “Pentecostalism and Post-Development” 97, 101–102.

⁶⁵ Cf. Hasu, “World Bank & Heavenly Bank in Poverty & Prosperity.”

Unlike the lower class church, the middle class church – Efatha Church – embraces the concept of prosperity gospel and emphasizes personal agency. Members are encouraged to work hard and pursue educational training. Spiritual warfare barely plays a role in this church. Moreover, the congregation operates an advanced organizational structure including a TV-station, bank and hospital.⁶⁶ Other authors indicate that bigger and mega-churches attract middle classes and upward-oriented urban sectors. These churches offer to their members a vast organizational structure, exclusive business networks, good contacts to the business world and are often involved in social help programs.⁶⁷

To summarize, the literature on African Pentecostalism stresses the break with the past as a forceful mechanism which allows Pentecostals to improve their lives. Interestingly, prosperity gospel plays an outstanding role in the debate. Authors accentuate that churches with a focus on prosperity gospel encourage entrepreneurship and animate their members to pursue economic success. Scholars also underscore the social outreach programs of Pentecostal churches. Particularly bigger churches are involved in the areas of education, health, and poverty-alleviation. These programs and the general impact of Pentecostalism encourage some scholars to posit highly optimistic assessments, whereas other researchers of African Pentecostalism regard its potential for promoting progress more critically. Again, the configuration and impact of Pentecostal life improvement strategies appears be partially dependent on its socio-cultural context. Churches with a middle class tendency seem to evolve vaster organizational structures, including social help and education programs as well as business clubs and close collaborations with the business world.

Comparing African and South American Pentecostalism

Although, in both regions Pentecostalism arrives at beginning of the twentieth century, its mass expansion did not take place until the 1960s in South America and the 1970s in Africa. Its influence grew in the context of economic liberalization and rising social inequalities. As a result, Pentecostalism is often perceived as a strategy to deal with social change, helping individuals cope with the challenges that arise from modernization. Although the basic rationale behind the Pentecostal success appears to be similar in both regions, they differ in the social composition of the movement. While Pentecostalism in South America recruits its membership mostly among the lower classes, in Africa, it appears to reach all social classes, including the educated middle class.⁶⁸

In both regions, the new Pentecostals enjoy unprecedented success. They employ mass-media, favor a more world-oriented attitude and incorporate varying degrees of the doctrines of the health and wealth gospel and spiritual warfare. The globalization of Pentecostalism seems to have led to the worldwide circulation of similar religious concepts (e.g. spiritual warfare,

⁶⁶ Cf. Hasu, “World Bank & Heavenly Bank in Poverty & Prosperity.”

⁶⁷ Cf. Heuser, “„Refuse To Die in Poverty““ 166; Martin, *Pentecostalism*, 152; see: Meyer, “Pentecostalism and Neo-Liberal Capitalism: Faith, Prosperity and Vision in African Pentecostal- Charismatic Churches,” 13; Ukah, ““Those Who Trade with God Never Lose” - The Economics of Pentecostal Activism in Nigeria” 261–262.

⁶⁸ Cf. Corten, and Mary. “Introduction.” In Corten and Mary, *Imaginaires politiques et pentecôtismes*, “ 18,20.

prosperity gospel) in both regions of the world⁶⁹, while their employment varies according to the given context.

The comparatively early mass expansion of Pentecostalism in South America results in an earlier and more extensive academic interest in its development and social implications in this region.⁷⁰ However, in the last decades, the academic attention to African Pentecostalism has been mounting and has resulted in an increased number of publications concerning its social impact.

Both strands of research, the “African” and “South American”, name a variety of Pentecostal life improvement strategies. Although the range of strategies is the same, the emphases are different. While the literature on South American Pentecostalism tends to stress the impact of Pentecostalism on the self-discipline of its followers, this aspect is tackled in the study of African Pentecostalism under the notion of “breaking with the past”. Both aspects are related to each other: the personal transformation takes place along the disciplining moral code of Pentecostalism. This transformation is thought to lead to a sober, reliable, and hardworking personality, which matches with the requirements of modern societies, particularly capitalism. The notion of a “break with the past” may be more present in the African contributions due to a stronger and economically more harmful presence of tradition. African traditional rituals and the obligations of the extended family network seem to fiercely affect the possibility of economic accumulation.

Another difference is that the African strand of the debate highlights the prosperity gospel and social outreach programs more than the South American strand. Social help programs, particularly HIV-programs, are frequently mentioned by scholars working in Africa. In addition, the success orientation of Pentecostal churches and their focus on wealth accumulation are underscored in the African debate. This focus is believed to stimulate the entrepreneurial activity of church members. Two possible reasons for the lower emphasis of these characteristics in the literature dealing with South American Pentecostalism may be: 1) a tendency among scholars to discount the positive aspects of prosperity gospel, and 2) a sparser presence of an emphatic prosperity gospel in South America. There appears to be a different attitude towards material wealth among South American Pentecostals: Pentecostal pastors in South America tend to be more reluctant to display their wealth while many of them criticize the health and wealth gospel for its alleged material focus. Arguably, a rarer presence of an aggressive, material-oriented prosperity gospel may create less pressure on Pentecostal members in South America to be materially successful and therefore motivate the entrepreneurial activity to a lesser degree.

Another reason for the prevalence of prosperity gospel and social outreach programs in the African strand may be its focus on big and mega-churches: many studies stress big and mega-churches that appear to take a more favorable stand towards prosperity gospel and dispose of the financial and organizational resources that are needed to launch vast social programs and create massive organizational facilities (such as school, business trainings, health services etc.). Unlike their counterparts working in Africa, many scholars dedicated to South American

⁶⁹ Cf. Corten, and Mary. “Introduction.” In Corten and Mary, *Imaginaires politiques et pentecôtismes*, “ 18, 20.

⁷⁰ Cf. Corten, and Mary. “Introduction.” In Corten and Mary, *Imaginaires politiques et pentecôtismes*, “. 13.

Pentecostalism have predominantly studied smaller and medium-sized churches. These churches represent the vast majority of Pentecostal believers in South America and are generally not strongly inclined toward prosperity gospel. Moreover, they lack the organizational and financial resources to create vast organizational structures and social help programs.

Finally, for the African context we can witness some very optimistic voices claiming that Pentecostalism contributes significantly to the betterment of living conditions. However, these voices are leveled off by some critical perspectives pointing to the absence of more systemic solutions and the lack of experience in development projects among Pentecostal churches.

In both regions, the configuration of Pentecostal life-improvement strategies appears to depend partly on the socio-cultural setting, particularly those of social class. We can witness differences between lower and middle class congregations. Pentecostalism appears to constitute a survival strategy among lower classes which rely on spiritual warfare and a harsh moral code in order to manage their limited resources and improve their economic situation. By contrast, middle class Pentecostals tend to loosen the moral code of Pentecostalism, enjoy the fruits of modern capitalism and seek an improvement through business networks and education.

Conclusion

In the literature on Pentecostal life improvement strategies, we can identify similarities but also differences between Africa and South America. It is hard to determine whether the differences correspond to empirical differences in African and South American Pentecostalism or are related to the relatively detached developments of the scientific discourse on African and South American Pentecostalism in which each scientific community evolved its own foci and terminologies (e.g. “break with the past”). Hence, lacking further empirical explorations, we can only assume that some of the observed differences in the two academic debates correspond to empirical differences. For instance, this may be the case for the presence of prosperity gospel. If its prevalence in the academic debate on Pentecostalism in Africa is related to a more vigorous prosperity gospel in Africa, different patterns of life improvement strategies in African and South American Pentecostalism are likely to exist: since prosperity gospel is believed to encourage entrepreneurship, African Pentecostalism will promote entrepreneurship and business activity among its adherents to a much higher degree than South American Pentecostalism.

Empirical differences in Pentecostal life improvement strategies are related to the given socio-cultural context in which the religious sphere is embedded. An aggressive, materially-oriented prosperity gospel appears to be less socially acceptable in Argentina and Chile and consequently may have spread less in this region. In other world regions, however, this type of prosperity gospel may be more adaptable to prevalent religious and social concepts. Also within each of these regions, there will be vast socio-cultural differences and varieties of Pentecostalism that have to be studied further.

The differences in the literature indicate that the relations between Pentecostalism and development will vary from region to region and even between social classes in the same region. Not only scholars, but also practitioners such as development agencies must take these differences into account when working together with local congregations. In order to improve our understanding of the relationship between Pentecostalism and development, more research will be necessary. Particularly comparative studies can contribute to our understanding of contextual differences and the factors that cause these differences. This knowledge will help us to unfold the context-specific impact of Pentecostalism on life-improvement and may help development agents to engage in collaborations with religious actors.

References

- Anderson, Allan. *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*. 1st publ. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2004.
- Aubrée, Marion. "Pentecôtisme / Néo-Pentecôtisme." In *Dictionnaire des faits religieux*, edited by Régine Azria and Danièle Hervieu-Léger, 875–82. Quadrige. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2010.
- Bastian, Jean-Pierre. "La Mutación Del Protestantismo Latinoamericano: Una Perspectiva socio-histórica." In *Protestantismo Y Cultura en América Latina: Aportes Y Proyecciones*, edited by Tomás Gutiérrez, 115–33. Quito: CEHILA, 1994.
- . 1997. *La mutación religiosa de América Latina: Para una sociología del cambio social en la modernidad periférica*. 1. ed. Colección popular 529. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Berger, Peter L. 2009. "Faith and Development." *Society* 46 (1): 69–75.
- . 2010. "Max Weber is Alive and Well, and living in Guatemala: The Protestant Ethic Today." *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 8 (4): 3–9.
- Chesnut, Andrew R. *Born Again in Brazil: The Pentecostal Boom and the Pathogens of Poverty*. New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers UT, 1997.
- . 2003. *Competitive Spirits: Latin America's new religious economy*. Oxford: Oxford UT.
- Cleary, Edward L., and Timothy J. Steigenga. "Resurgent voices: Indians, Politics, and Religion in Latin America." In *Resurgent Voices in Latin America: Indigenous Peoples, Political Mobilization, and Religious Change*, edited by Edward L. Cleary and Timothy J. Steigenga, 1–24. New Brunswick, NJ, London: Rutgers UT, 2004.
- Comaroff, Jean, and John Comaroff. "Privatizing the Millenium: New Protestant Ethics and the Spirits of Capitalism in Africa, and Elsewhere." *Afrika Spectrum* 35 (3, 2000) : 293–312.
- Conicet, Ceil-Piette. "Primera Encuesta sobre Creencias y Actitudes Religiosas en Argentina." 2008.
- Corten, André. *Le pentecôtisme au Brésil: Émotion du pauvre et romantisme théologie*. Paris: Éditions Karthala, 1995.
- . 1997. "Pentecôtisme et politique en Amérique latine, Problèmes d'Amérique Latine." *Problèmes d'Amérique Latine* 24 (janvier–mars): 17–31.
- Corten, André, and Ruth Marshall. *Between Babel and Pentecost: Transnational Pentecostalism in Africa and Latin America*. Bloomington, Ind: Indiana UP, 2000a.
- . 2000b. "Introduction." In Corten and Marshall, *Between Babel and Pentecost*, 1–21.
- Corten, André, and André Mary. *Imaginaires politiques et pentecôtismes, Afrique/Amérique latine: Afrique/Amérique latine*. Paris: Éd. Karthala, 2001a
- . 2001b. "Introduction." In Corten and Mary, *Imaginaires politiques et pentecôtismes, Afrique/Amérique latine*, 1–33.
- Dickow, Helga. "Strebsam und Gemeinschaftsorientiert. Neue Pfingstkirchen in Südafrika." *Herder Korrespondenzen* 65 (2011.) : 475–79.

- . 2012. “Religion und Lebenseinstellungen in Südafrika. Pfingstkirchen, Charismatiker und „Wiedergeborene“.” http://weltkirche.katholisch.de/media/weltkirche_medien_1/weltkirche_dokumente/DBK_WA_Dickow_Religion_und_Lebenseinstellungen_in_Suedafrika.pdf.
- Droz, Yvan. “Les origines vernaculaires du Réveil pentecôtiste kenyan: Mobilité sociale et politique.” In *Imaginaires politiques et pentecôtismes, Afrique/Amérique latine*, edited by André Corten and André Mary, 81–101. Paris: Éd. Karthala, 2001.
- Freeman, Dena. “The Pentecostal Ethic and the Spirit of Development.” In *Pentecostalism and Development*, edited by Dena Freeman, 1–38. Grudzien, 2012
- Freston, Paul. “Pentecostalism in Latin America: Characteristics and Controversies.” *Social Compass* 45 (3, 1998): 335–58.
- Garner, Robert C. “Religion as a Source of Social Change in the New South Africa.” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 30 (3, 2000): 310–43.
- Gifford, Paul. *Ghana's new Christianity: Pentecostalism in a Globalising African Economy*. London: Hurst & Co, 2004a.
- . 2004b. “Persistence and Change in Contemporary African Religion.” *soc compass* 51 (2): 169–76.
- Gill, Anthony. “Weber in Latin America: Is Protestant Growth Enabling the Consolidation of Democratic Capitalism?” *Democratization* 11 (4, 2004): 42–65.
- Gooren, Henri. “Catholic and Non-Catholic Theologies of Liberation: Poverty, Self-Improvement, and Ethics Among Small-Scale Entrepreneurs in Guatemala City.” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41 (1, 2002): 29–45.
- . 2010. “The Pentecostalization of Religion and Society in Latin America.” *Exchange* 39 (4): 355–76.
- Hasu, Päivi. “World Bank & Heavenly Bank in Poverty & Prosperity: The Case of Tanzanian Faith Gospel 1.” *Review of African Political Economy* 33 (110, 2006): 679–92.
- . 2012. “Prosperity Gospels and Enchanted Worldviews: Two Responses to Socio-economic Transformation in Tanzanian Pentecostal Christianity.” In Freeman, *Pentecostalism and Development*, 67–86.
- Heuser, Andreas. “„Refuse To Die in Poverty“: Armutsüberwindung und Varianten des Wohlstandsevangeliums in Afrika.” *Theologische Zeitschrift* 69 (1/2, 2013): 146–71.
- Jenkins, Philip. *The next Christendom: The rise of global Christianity*. Oxford, New York: Oxford UT, 2007.
- Köhrsen, Jens (2014): Religiöse Geschmäcker und Stile als Distinktionsmittel in der argentinischen Pfingstbewegung. In: Martina Löw (Hg.): Vielfalt und Zusammenhalt. Verhandlungen des 36. Kongresses der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Soziologie in Bochum und Dortmund 2012. Frankfurt am Main: Campus.
- . 2015. “Inappropriate Spirits”: Middle Class Pentecostalism in Argentina. Leiden/Boston: Brill.
- Lalivé d'Épinay, Christian. *Haven of the Masses. A Study of the Pentecostal Movement in Chile*. London: Lutterworth Press, 1969.
- Mariz, Cecília L. “Religion and Poverty in Brazil: A Comparison of Catholic and Pentecostal Communities.” *Sociological Analysis* (53, 1992.): 63–70.

- . 1994. *Coping with Poverty: Pentecostals and Christian Base Communities in Brazil*. Philadelphia: Temple UT.
- Martin, Bernice. “New Mutations of the Protestant Ethic among Latin American Pentecostals.” *Religion* 25 (2, 1995): 101–17.
- Martin, David. *Tongues of fire: The explosion of Protestantism in Latin America*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1990.
- . 2002. *Pentecostalism: The world their parish*. Religion in the modern world. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Mathole, Ezekiel Mokwele Katiso. “Beyond Common Stereotypes about the Pentecostal-Charismatic Evangelicals in South Africa.” In *Religion on the move: Exploring passages in South African Christianity*, edited by Helga Dickow and Andreas Heuser, 59–76, 23. Byblos: International Centre for Human Sciences, 2008.
- Maxwell, David. “‘Delivered from the Spirit of Poverty?’: Pentecostalism, Prosperity and Modernity in Zimbabwe.” *Journal of Religion in Africa* 28 (3, 1998): 350–73.
- Meyer, Birgit. “Make a Complete Break with the Past. Memory and Post-Colonial Modernity in Ghanaian Pentecostalist Discourse.” *Journal of Religion in Africa* (1998): 316–49.
- . 2004. “Christianity in Africa: From African Independent to Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches.” *Annu. Rev. Anthropol* 33 (1): 447–74.
- . 2007. “Pentecostalism and Neo-Liberal Capitalism: Faith, Prosperity and Vision in African Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches.” *Journal for the Study of Religion* 20 (2).
- Míguez, Daniel. *Spiritual Bonfire in Argentina: Confronting Current Theories with an Ethnographic Account of Pentecostal Growth in a Buenos Aires Suburb*. Amsterdam: CEDLA, 1998.
- . 2001. “La conversión religiosa como estrategia de supervivencia. Los pentecostales y el descenso social durante la “década perdida”.” *Intersecciones en Antropología* 2: (2): 73–88.
- . 2005. “Opio Rebelde. Los Programas Pentecostales de Rehabilitación de Adictos en la Argentina.” *Pentecostudies* 2005 (4).
- Míguez Bonino, José. *Faces of Latin American protestantism: 1993 Carnahan lectures*. Grand Rapids, Mich: W.B. Eerdmans Pub. Co, 1997.
- Miller, Donald E., and Tetsunao Yamamori. *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007.
- Nolivos, Eloy. “Capitalism and Pentecostalism in Latin America: Trajectories of Prosperity and Development.” In *Pentecostalism and Prosperity*, edited by Amos Yong and Katharine Attanasi, 88–105. London: Macmillan Publisher, 2012.
- Oro, Ari P., and Pablo Semán. “Brazilian Pentecostalism Crosses National Borders.” In *Between Babel and Pentecost*, edited by André Corten and Ruth Marshall, 181–95. Ind. University Press: Bloomington, 2000.
- Saracco, José N. *Argentine Pentecostalism its History and Theology*. Birmingham, 1989.
- Schäfer, Heinrich. *Protestantismo y crisis social en América Central*. San José: Departamento Ecueménico de Investigaciones, 1992.

- . 1998. “¡Oh Señor de los Cielos, danos poder en la tierra! El fundamentalismo y los carismas: La reconquista del campo de acción en América Latina.” *Revista Latinoamericana De Teología* 15: 61–78.
- Semán, Pablo. “La recepción popular de la teología de la prosperidad.” *Scripta Ethnológica* 23 (2001b.): 145–62.
- . 2003. “Argentine.” In *Les nouveaux conquérants de la foi: L'église universelle du royaume de dieu, Brésil*, edited by André Corten, Jean-Pierre Dozon, and Ari P. Oro, 67–75. Paris: Karthala.
- The Centre for Development and Enterprise. “Under the Radar: Pentecostalism in South Africa and Its Potential Social and Economic Role.” In *Pentecostalism and Prosperity*, edited by Amos Yong and Katherine Attanasi, 63–85. London: Macmillan Publisher, 2012.
- Ukah, Asonzeh F. K. ““Those Who Trade with God Never Lose” - The Economics of Pentecostal Activism in Nigeria.” In *Christianity and Social Change in Africa: Essays in Honor of J.D.Y. Peel*, edited by Peel, J. D. Y and Toyin Falola, 253–74. Durham, N.C: Carolina Academic Press, 2005.
- . 2007. “African Christianities: Features, Promises and Problems.” <http://www.ifeas.uni-mainz.de>.
- van Dijk, Rijk. “Pentecostalism and Post-Development: Exploring Religion as a Developmental Ideology in Ghanaian Migrant Communities.” In *Pentecostalism and Development*, edited by Dena Freeman 87–109. Grudzien, 2012.
- Wariboko, Nimi. “Pentecostal Paradigms of National Economic Prosperity in Africa.” In *Pentecostalism and Prosperity*, edited by Amos Yong and Katherine Attanasi, 35–59. London: Macmillan Publisher, 2012.
- Willems, Emilio. *Followers of the New Faith: Culture Change and the Rise of Protestantism in Brazil and Chile*. Nashville: Vanderbilt UP, 1967.
- Wynarczyk, Hilario, Pablo Semán, and Mercedes de Majo. *Panorama Actual del Campo Evangélico en Argentina: Un Estudio Sociológico*. Buenos Aires, 1995.
- Wynarczyk, Hilario. *Ciudadanos de dos mundos: El movimiento evangélico en la vida pública argentina 1980-2001*. 1a. Buenos Aires: Universidad Nacional de San Martín, 2009.