The Ghanaian Pentecostal Diaspora in London: Transcending Race and Culture

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Pentecostalism in post-colonial Africa has served as a counter-discourse to national and racial thinking, linking individual members with a larger international community and with the white communities from which Christianity first came. Transnational church networks are important in building moral communities that extend beyond the confines of the nation-state, where the International Pentecostal Church becomes central to success and mobility. The Ghanaian ‘Church of Pentecost’ (CoP) is an international church and a site for recreating an African and global community. In their migration to other parts of the world, and in their efforts to evangelize to others, church members see themselves as members of a global Christian community, transcending social distinctions such as race and culture. Their global Christian identity, however, is in constant dialogue with the importance of these same social classifiers. This paper will argue that, while Pentecostalism has allowed for expansive ideas of citizenship and belonging, it simultaneously recreates new encapsulations. It will do so through an analysis of the moral debates concerning the dangers of ‘culture’. These debates concern the tensions between their continued membership to a Ghanaian community in London and their Christian identity.

Introduction

For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white – Frantz Fanon, 1967:10

‘Ghana is a Christian country’ is a commonly heard phrase in southern Ghana. It is not surprising that many of these Ghanaian speakers are also Pentecostal Christian. Becoming Pentecostal is similar to becoming a member of a new imagined community where membership has its privileges. As citizens of a new transcendental domain, whose final authority is the Judeo Christian God, they receive special privileges that pertain to their lives on earth. They are told that they are no longer held back by the problems of the world; including racial distinctions, problems of a crumbling economy, citizenship to a failing nation-state, or the corruption of its political leaders. Instead they are members of a new global community who belong to the kingdom of God, where their success and power in the world are free from the constraints of the world. Pentecostal discourse shares many similarities with the liberal discourse of democracy where ideas of equality and liberation from an oppressive past provide weight to the moral force of Pentecostal conversion in Africa. At the same time, in its transnational movement and in the creation of a global identity, Pentecostalism creates another form of moral belonging, which needs to be accounted for.
In his book *White Masks, Black Skins* Franz Fanon draws the readers’ attention to the importance of race and skin color in how the black person has been conceived, and has conceived his or her own identity, vis-à-vis colonialism and missionary intervention. Africa’s previous encounters with Christian missionaries and colonialism have created institutional frameworks that set the precedent for its present self-image and ongoing relationships with the outside world. The burden of colonialism creates a feeling of inferiority to, and emulation of, the ‘white’ colonizers. Fanon’s work allows the reader to look beyond the immediacies of the anti-colonial context. They raise questions regarding a language of duality – colonizer/colonized, White/Black, modern/traditional, North/South – and how it applies to Ghanaian Pentecostals who, in their migratory movement to London, attempt to break down these distinctions and evangelize to the same people who once colonized them. In order to understand the persistence of these and other kinds of dichotomies in the social worlds of Ghanaian Pentecostals I shift my attention to the moral world and ethical positioning of these social actors. In this paper I show how the missionary impetus of Ghanaian Pentecostals in their migration to London is not merely a reflection of earlier power relationships or their historical subjection to colonialism and Christian missionary activity, but also about how Ghanaian migrants constitute themselves as moral subjects ‘in Christ’ and citizens of a Pentecostal nation in the present.¹

Rather than viewing the whole colonial project as a burden, Pentecostals in Ghana today emphasize their indebtedness to the earlier missionaries in bringing Christianity to Ghana. For them, Christianity has helped them move forward, toward another destiny, beyond the constraints of colonialism. As Pentecostal Christians, Ghanaians no longer consider themselves simply ‘black’ or ‘African’. In fact they consider themselves more privileged and better off than the rest of humankind who are not Christian. Their destiny is not to be ‘white’, as a discourse of race and inferiority should not matter in a transcendentalizing religion. Instead they see themselves as children of God and equal to other Pentecostals around the world. Their mission is to evangelize to the rest of the world and convert others into becoming citizens of Heaven, like themselves.

¹ A focus on moral practice draws from the work of anthropologists who take on an ‘Aristotelian perspective in which practical knowledge is understood not as detached from being or becoming, but as constitutive of them’ (Lambek 2002: 25).
Since the 1980s, there has been a return mission in the form of Ghanaian Pentecostals who migrate to the West. The increasing economic migration of Ghanaians to London in the last thirty years has coincided with the rise of Pentecostalism in Ghana. It is therefore no surprise that Pentecostalism has played an important role in mediating travel and economic migration to Europe and other parts of the Western world. When speaking about travel to Europe many Ghanaian Pentecostals see themselves exploring Ghana’s link with the places from where earlier Christian missionaries first came. They also see themselves drawing closer to the very heart of their Christian identity, the cities in Europe from where the fire of Christianity was rekindled and then brought to Africa by white missionaries. Others see themselves as missionaries, bringing the fire of Christianity back to these European centers, some which may have since lost their way. A Pentecostal Christian identity in Ghana allows the Ghanaian traveler, the economic migrant and the international student to tap into transnational church networks, linking individuals to a larger moral community that extend beyond the confines of the world and its distinctions, where the Pentecostal Church becomes central to international success and mobility.

This paper will look at some aspects of this phenomenon of economic migration and return mission through the ethnographic example of Ghanaian Pentecostals in London. It will discuss the paradoxes accompanying the migration of Ghanaian Pentecostals to London in their dual role as economic migrants and Pentecostal missionaries. While Pentecostalism has allowed for permeable ethnicities and expansive ideas of global belonging, this global religion simultaneously recreates new encapsulations and alternate ideas of belonging. These tensions are expressed through moral debates concerning the tensions between their continued membership to a Ghanaian community and their Christian identity in London. While sharing an ideal of transcending ethnic and national differences through their Born-again identity, Ghanaian Pentecostals actively reflect on differences between themselves and others, through which ‘culture’ (African and British) becomes the object of struggle. Through examples of encounters between Ghanaian Pentecostals and African and British ‘culture’, I will argue that this rhetoric of ‘culture’ is intrinsic to a Pentecostal identity and similar to other rhetorical devices included in nationalist projects in which ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ become absolute points of comparison.
Pentecostalism in Ghana and its Global reach

Philip Jenkins (2007) has observed that ‘the centre of gravity in the Christian world has shifted inexorably southward, to Africa and Latin America’ where the vast majority of Christian believers will be non-white, and come from the global south (ibid: 1-2). He goes on to say that the weakness of the nation-state, and corrupt bureaucrats, in these parts of the world have led to a heightened importance in religious identity. Jenkins remarks that, in many countries in the global south, Christianity has come to replace the state in providing universal and supranational forms of identity (ibid:13). Paul Gifford, who writes on Pentecostalism in Ghana, argues a similar point. He observes of that the rising popularity of Pentecostal-Charismatic churches in Ghana since the 1980s overlaps with the failure of economic policies, a weakening image of the nation state, and a new North American influence (Gifford 1998; 2004). Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity in West Africa has been described as a new form of religious life that draws on a global identity, mass-mediated popular culture and transnational and migrant networks (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005; Peel 2004:26; Meyer 2004b: 453-4; see also Hackett 1998; Marshall-Fratani 1998; De Witte 2003; Meyer 2004a).

Pentecostalism has been described as a shift in religious orientation of Christianity in Africa. It allows researchers to ask new questions concerning the complexities of social change, globalization and religious transformation, and the individual expectations that follow such change. One such shift in research focus has been the change in conceptual orientation from a focus on continuity between Christianity and African ‘culture’ to a new emphasis on discontinuity (Meyer, 1998; 2004a; Engelke 2004). These authors suggest that any work on Christianity in Africa has to take seriously the claims of Pentecostals and African Christians in emphasizing a discontinuity with their non-Christian past. Others have also shown how this emphasis on ‘discontinuity’ is usually accompanied by a conscious effort to establish continuities with a Christian past (Daswani 2007; Maxwell 2006). Another shift in orientation concerns the North American transnational networks that accompany these religious movements, networks supported by a more complex bureaucracy, a focus on ‘success’, and the use of media technology (Asamoah-Gyadu 2005; Maxwell, 2006b; Meyer 2004b; De Witte 2003). Thirdly, the increasing transnational movement of African Pentecostals and missionaries to overseas destinations in Europe and America has given African Pentecostalism a global identity. Amidst these new theoretical shifts in the study of Pentecostalism, there has also been a call for studies that reveal the historical continuities...
between the earlier transnational Pentecostal movements, the African Independent Churches, and the more recent Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches (Hastings 2000; Maxwell 2006a; 2006b). These shifts in theoretical orientation are reflective of more recent changes in the world and the increasing importance given to transnational and global movements.

The transnational and global dimensions of Pentecostalism have been important reasons for its growth and growing popularity in Africa. Drawing from Appadurai’s framework of different ‘scapes’ in better understanding globality, some authors have employed the term ‘religioscapes’ (McAlister 2005:251) in highlighting the role of religion as a driving force in making global connections. Pentecostalism meets Csordas’s prerequisites for the global spread of a religion in that it includes both ‘portable practices’ and ‘transposable messages’ (Csordas 2007:261-62). As early as the beginning of the twentieth century, the expansion of print media and the movement of people from both Europe and America served as important modes of transmission for the spread of Pentecostalism around the world and in the creation of an ‘imagined community’ of Pentecostals (Maxwell 2006b). The early ‘founders’ of Pentecostalism in Ghana were part of an international community of Pentecostal Christians, globally connected through the distribution of tracts and pamphlets as early as 1917 (Daswani 2007).

Through the worldwide spread of print media, and close associations with Pentecostal missionaries who traveled through colonial Africa, Ghanaian Christians formed their own Pentecostal churches based on a global message of ‘salvation’ whereby becoming Born-again has become associated with an underlying promise of freedom. Pentecostal prayer practices, that involves the infilling of the Holy Spirit, have become significant historical starting-points for the inspirational founding of these churches. While many of these African Pentecostal churches were strongly influenced by overseas missionaries from Europe and America, they moved towards self-governance and independence around the time of decolonization. This transnational spirit of Pentecostalism, its prayer performances and evangelistic component, continue to be a driving force in the construction of an imagined community of Pentecostals that moves beyond a nationalist project while promoting ideas of global equity. In its very discursive formation Pentecostalism becomes an ethical and political project that leads to the construction of an alternative ‘national consciousness’.

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The Pentecostal Nation

Benedict Anderson has shown how the ‘nation’ as an imagined community is an important analytical category, distinguishable, yet not divorced, from state and legal processes (Anderson 1983). If the concept of ‘nation’ is decoupled from ‘state’, then the spatial fixity of the concept is erased, as ‘peoples’ can form imagined ‘nations’ without occupying the same territory. Similarly Pentecostal communities around the globe imagine themselves as citizens of a ‘Christian nation’, members of an intersubjective moral community that transcend legal and state boundaries. Aihwa Ong (1996) has commented that writing on citizenship has more commonly focused on the broader political-legal framework while ignoring ‘subjective and contradictory experiences’ (ibid: 737). Drawing from the work of Foucault, she shifts the focus from the political-legal aspects of studying citizenship to looking at it as a process of subject-making where ‘cultural citizenship is a dual process of self-making and being made within a web of power relations linked to the nation-state and civil society’ (ibid:738). I want to suggest that Pentecostalism allows for a context of subject-making in which ‘cultural citizenship’ can be seen to extend beyond the confines of the nation-state to allow for religious imaginaries of citizenship. They allow the individual Pentecostal in Ghana to identify with other Pentecostal believers around the world while being rooted in the world. It is Christianity’s very lack of ‘locality’ that makes it attractive and allows it to become a universal model that can be applied globally. From the point of view of subordinate groups ‘cultural citizenship’, in this case through religious affiliation, is a powerful way to legitimate demands previously denied them through the nation-states (Ong 2003).

An important consideration for the popularity of Pentecostalism in West Africa is that it claims to have the answers to the problems of poverty and marginalization, allowing believers to pursue ‘rights’ that they understand as Biblical. Pentecostalism promotes liberal ideas of freedom, choice and equality that are not confined to the failure of economic policies and the weakness of the post-colonial state. Its ideas overlap with the ‘myth’ and imagery of progress, citizenship, and rights, while thriving on the limits of the post-colonial state, where freedom and emancipation from suffering are underlying promises (Gifford 1994:531). They consider themselves as ‘citizens of Heaven’ and no longer captives of this material world. This ‘redemptive view of citizenship’ allows Pentecostals to reconceptualize the moral order in order influence the conduct of others and improve their own conditions (Marshall-Fratani 1998:305-6). Through the creation of a new moral community of believers Ghanaians identify
with a Pentecostal identity (‘nation’) that extends beyond geographical territory and one that offers a sense of certainty in a changing world through salvation in eternity. Their exclusive relationship to a transcendental source of power provides Ghanaian Pentecostals with a more encompassing idea of ‘citizenship’ (including an ideology of inheritance, rights and obligations) that extends to all Born-again Christians, breaking down North-South distinctions. Their special association with, and embodiment of, the Holy Spirit allows them to transcend borders and boundaries while committing to shared aspirations for a better future. In their migration to, and missionary activity in, London, Ghanaian Pentecostals carry and embody a project of self-transformation. They bring a civilizing project of transforming others for the better, evangelizing to those who have not become fully human; fully moral beings. It is in their own self-transformation they perceive the rest of the world and aim to change the world.

The Empire Strikes Back

Let us endeavour to make a man in full, something which Europe has been incapable of achieving – Fanon (1963:263)

CoP is a Ghanaian Pentecostal church with a worldwide membership of over a million, six hundred thousand people. The church has an international presence in sixty-nine countries outside of Ghana with almost two hundred and thirty thousand of its members living overseas (CoP 2008). In a national survey by the Ghana Evangelism Committee (1989), conducted between 1985 and 1989, CoP had the highest ‘average church attendance’ ratings amongst all the other churches in Ghana (ibid: 16). The specificities of the church, especially its organizational structure, are particularly important in explaining why it has been so successful in Ghana and abroad. An important part of its success is that, unlike many newer Pentecostal-Charismatic churches that are located in urban areas, CoP has an effective rural base that serves as the first point of contact for Ghanaian converts before they migrate to the urban city centers such as Kumasi and Accra. The church today is presented as a historical encounter between Ghanaian Christians and the Judeo-Christian God who provided them with a new

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2 According to the Ghana population census in 2000, 69% of all Ghanaians considered themselves Christian. This has some resonance with Paul Gifford’s (1998) general remark that, ‘Ghana’s ethos is recognisably Christian’ (ibid: 110). While many Ghanaians (especially in southern Ghana) might, more often than not, label themselves Christian, there are recognisably different kinds of Christians in Ghana. This is an important point that needs to be accounted for as a Christian identity must be seen in relation to a specific affiliation to Christian denomination and / or Church.
identity and mission. A spiritual revival in 1931 at Asamankese, Eastern Ghana, brought the
Holy Spirit into direct connection with the Ghanaian people through prophecies of a future to
come. These prophecies served to legitimize the role of Ghanaians as agents in the future
spread of Christianity to other parts of Africa and the European world. This became a
universal message that could be embodied and transmitted across the globe, where Ghanaians
are described as political actors who have a sense of purpose and an active role to play in the
survival of church practice and global expansion.

In a CoP book of songs published in 1999, an addendum was added entitled ‘God’s First
Covenant and Promises with The Church of Pentecost (Revealed)’ (1999:147). It starts with
the statement ‘The spiritual growth of The Church of Pentecost and its spread throughout the
world is a fulfilment of God’s Covenant made with the founders of the Church at its
beginning (from 1931)’ (ibid.). The first of eight promises of the covenant entitled ‘God’s
Part’ is as follows:

‘1. That He God would raise a nation out of Africa that would be a spearhead and
light to the world, heralding the 2nd Coming of Christ Jesus our Lord’

It goes on to say that ‘the group…would become a great International Pentecostal Church
which would send out missionaries from the Gold Coast to all parts of Africa and the world as
a whole’. This spiritual encounter with God at Asamankese, and later confirmations of this
encounter in 1940 and 1948 (ibid: 148) help to assert the authenticity of the spiritual
foundation of CoP and legitimate its return missionary movement to the West.

The early membership of the church consisted of labour migrants and the urban poor, initially
helping the church expand into neighboring countries in Africa. From the 1980s the church
began a reverse mission to the West, as many of its members migrated to Europe and America
as economic migrants and students. With the aim of recreating their Pentecostal church lives
in these foreign countries they started prayer fellowships and later requested for missionaries
from CoP headquarters in Ghana. The increasing transnational movement of West African
migrants to Europe and America has contributed to the increasing and visible presence of
African Pentecostal churches in these continents. A growing membership of educated youth
and elite have more recently contributed to the setting up of branches in far away countries
such as Britain and Australia by a new wave of international migrants. These overseas church members start prayer fellowships in their host countries and subsequently send for missionaries from the CoP headquarters in Ghana to assist them in establishing international branches in these host countries. Church leaders interpret the migration of their members as the fulfillment of a divine promise that God had intended for the church and its people (Onyinah 2004).

On an individual level migration is about survival and a livelihood strategy that opens up new opportunities for economic and social advancement. Ghanaians have a long tradition of migration for work and education dating back to the nineteenth century (Ter Haar 1998; Jenkins 1985). Despite being from one of the smallest countries in Africa, Ghanaians form the largest sub-Saharan African population in Europe and are spread over fifty-eight countries worldwide. Two million people left Ghana between 1974 and 1981, of which the majority was from southern Ghana (Van Hear 1998:74; Koser 2003). It was seen as a way to survive the political and economic turmoil of the 1970s, exacerbated by the structural adjustment programmes of the 1980s. It is also a commonly held assumption in Ghana that Ghanaians overseas (aborokyere), especially in America and Europe, earn lots of money and lead better lives. For Ghanaians, travel overseas has become ‘entwined with the notion of going to ‘hustle’ or to seek one’s fortune – preferably where one’s efforts are not witnessed or supervised by one’s kin’ (Akyeampong 2000:186).

However for many Pentecostal church members international travel has an added connotation: it alludes to God’s covenant with them since becoming Pentecostal. Pentecostals from Africa have high aspirations of becoming a part of an international world, in which they believe they play an important missionary role (Ter Haar 1995:29; 1998; Daswani 2007). An ideology of ‘transformative change’ accompanied my informants’ migratory movement within Ghana and between Ghana and London. An elder and prophet of the CoP told me that travel opened the way for Pentecostals to ‘see the glory of God’. He said that ‘in Akan a person who stays in one place without travel is called okurasenii [villager]’. He went on to say that only when believers traveled outside of their familiar surroundings would they ‘learn’, ‘grow’ and experience a ‘transformative change’. As the prophet said:
It is not good for a man to stay in one place. He needs a transformative change in his life ... when the opportunity comes, we should not delay because God also regards us. In the agenda of God, he wants his people to grow, in terms of travel. And for his children to know that he is a creative God.

In this way Pentecostal Christianity promotes the permeability of ethnic and physical frontiers, geographical borders and boundaries, through a religious conversion and subsequent transformation. While the relationship between religion and transnationalism has long been a part of people’s lives, we have only just begun to acknowledge the religious motives of African migrants in Europe (cf. Adogame & Weissköppel 2005; Hariss 2006). This has been accompanied by a growing number of books and articles on Pentecostalism in Africa that take on a transnational perspective (Corten and Marshall-Fratani 2001; Englund 2000; 2001; 2003; Levitt 2001a; 2001b; 2003; Laurent 2001; Maxwell 2002; 2006b; Van Dijk 1997; 1999; 2001; 2002a; 2002b; 2004). To cite two examples, Rijk van Dijk and Harri Englund have made advances in investigating the global reach of Pentecostalism in view of local transformations. Rather than marginal players reacting to forces of globalization that are beyond their control, these authors describe Pentecostals in Ghana and Malawi respectively, as both agents and subjects of power in their transnational relationships with the West. Englund (2001; 2003) describes how inclusion and exclusion are facets of transnational Pentecostal networks in urban Malawi. Not only do these networks empower and provide opportunities; they also create new hierarchies (2001:238). Van Dijk (1997; 2002a; 2002b) using multi-sited research methods in looking at Pentecostal networks that stretch over Europe and Africa, concludes that these networks cannot be understood as pursuing a single trajectory. He subscribes to an ‘anthropology of transnationalism’ that focuses more on opportunities than constraints, celebrating transnationalism as liberating and as freeing the person from constraints and relations to others (Van Dijk 2001:218).

Both authors provide useful ways of understanding Pentecostalism and its transnational connections. It is also important to acknowledge that historically Pentecostalism has been involved in transnational connections that have helped in the creation of an imagined community as early as the 1910s (Maxwell 2006b). From a historical perspective Pentecostalism has empowered and subjected Africans to relationships of power in the construction of new hierarchies before globalization was recognized as an important
phenomenon; where systematic inclusions and exclusions, cooperation and schisms, have been at the heart of Pentecostal history. While it is important to acknowledge transnationalism as liberating rather than simply constraining, it is also important to move beyond discourses of liberalism and freedom, in recognition of the ‘unliberal’ and encapsulating aspects of transnational Pentecostal movements.  

While Pentecostalism is supposed to transcend local signifiers of value such as ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ the migrant experience in London creates new encapsulations. Ghanaian Pentecostals align themselves with specific communities, ‘rooting’ themselves in specific ideas of a Christian past that are located in a place and within a specific racial identity. The persistence of ‘culture’ paradoxically challenges the very possibility of evangelism. It brings people back to issues of national belonging and cultural difference they are aspiring to move beyond. I will show how a discourse of ‘culture’ gives the transcendental aspect of world-religions like Christianity its meaning and content as a force in the world. One example that emerged from my fieldwork was the question of how a ‘Ghanaian’ church in London could participate in a British and American project of war in Iraq. Here their Pentecostal identity is able to supersede their identity as Ghanaians or economic migrants, while simultaneously aligning them with a specific historical conscience.

**Ghanaian Pentecostals in London - “We are all a part of it … it is a part of our destiny”**

The ethnographic scene is a room on the second floor of a Pentecostal church in Dagenham, situated in the east end of London, England’s capital city. It was during the American invasion of Iraq in 2002. Fifteen members of a prayer force from the Pentecost International Worship Centre (PIWC), the international branch of the Church of Pentecost, were participating in the course of the war through spiritual prayer. They prayed for the successful victory of the ‘Christian nations’ (America and Britain) over their ‘Muslim’ (Iraqi) enemy. The members of the prayer group compared themselves to the Jewish people of the Old Testament, fighting a war against the enemies of God’s ‘chosen people’. Elder Kofi led the prayer in this way,

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3 This is in line with others who argue that the processes associated with ‘globalization’ also produce ‘new forms of disconnection’ (Ferguson 1999:243), ‘friction’ (Tsing 2004) and ‘disjuncture’ (Appadurai 2008).
Exodus 17:8 reads ‘The Lord is my banner’. The first war that the people of Israel faced after crossing the Red Sea was the war with the people of Am’aleh … A war was planned to set the people of Israel off course and to confuse them. But God is in control. Currently there is a war looming in Iraq. Maybe there is good reason for it, maybe not. God must have known about the coming of war against the Am’aleh. But He wanted to cause confusion and take away Moses, their shepherd. There is a carrier leaving from Portsmouth going to the Gulf. The government, politicians are sending people to war. Like a modern day Prime Minister or President, Moses sent Joshua to war. *It was our war, a war for the people of Israel, God’s own war* … The reason they succeeded was that a hand was raised to the throne of God (referring to the staff of Moses). These days, people are full of criticism for others but you don’t realize that we are all a part of it. People don’t come to realize that it is a part of our destiny … We all have that staff of power, we have power in us. Let us raise our hands to the throne and something will happen [emphasis mine].

This sermon does not polarize Ghanaians and the West or the religious and the secular. Instead Pentecostal prayer becomes a means through which Pentecostals can engage with global politics. From the statement ‘It was our war, a war for the people of Israel, God’s own war’ the speaker was making the war in Iraq into a political and religious project, shared by Ghanaian Pentecostals, the Jewish people of the Old Testament and other Christian nations. They are moral subjects exhibiting ‘a consciousness of’ their ‘historical situation’ and applying a Christian knowledge to it (see Lambek 2002:36). They were simultaneously acting within religious terms while participating in the political circumstances of their time as cultural citizens of a Christian nation.

Elder Emmanuelle took over from Kofi and reiterated a similar point, ‘While the American and British troops are being sent to war and its leaders have to make decisions, we can send our own message from here. We can use our own weapons – prayer’. Through invoking the Holy Spirit to fill them, he asked everyone to pray for the world’s leaders and to pray for God to pour the Holy Spirit into everyone so that they could be fighting soldiers in God’s army. Through their own spiritual warfare they exhibited a consciousness of an imagined community that extended beyond the boundaries of nation-states and economic differences. Prayer services such as the one described above serve as new resource that offer a much wider field for the construction of imagined selves and imagined worlds (Appadurai 1996). However it also resembled an ethnic consciousness that they were embodying and enacting through their identification with specific groups of people.
Their identification with the Tribe of Israel provided them with a specific narrative of the Jewish people, their favored status position with the Judeo-Christian God, their battles, trials and struggles with specific enemies. America and the UK are described as Christian countries that provided continuity to the Biblical narrative of the battle between ‘good’ and ‘evil’ that was to come before the End Time. These are similar to what Richard Werbner describes as ‘unfinished moral narratives’, through which an aggrieved minority is able to express their suffering and unfair conditions in the present (Werbner 2004:41). What was taking place was not the regression of an affiliation from nation-state to ethnic group or from state to tribe. They were doing more than simply taking on the burden of another group’s history. In witnessing the events of war and collectively praying over it, identifying themselves with the God’s chosen people, Ghanaian Pentecostals in London are doing more than displaying knowledge of the Bible. They are embodying a ‘historical conscience’ (Lambek 2002) as well as specific ideas of citizenship and the values that come with it. On identifying as Pentecostal Christian these Ghanaian immigrants come to share a new identity and destiny with specific Christian others and the countries from where Pentecostalism first arrived – namely Britain and America.

Such narratives help challenge the stereotype of black Pentecostals as ‘marginal’ or ‘disadvantaged’ people (Hunt and Lightly 2001:107; Gifford 1994:531). Ghanaian Pentecostals are constantly confronted by the inadequacies of the promises made by the nation-state combined with their ongoing economic difficulties. Membership provides them with a church narrative of international expansion as well as with practical strategies for engaging with a changing world. Such narratives offered by the church form part of a political discourse that includes conveying a sense of empowerment for members to be able to affect their own lives and the world. However the template for reconstructing one’s imagined identity remains a Christian one, more than a British or American one; one that resembles a

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4 Fanon envisioned a teleological project of decolonization, post-colonization and finally nation-building (through socialism), in opposition to a backward regression into ‘ethnic’ or ‘tribal’ groupings. In his book *The Wretched of the Earth* Fanon (1967:97) writes;

National consciousness is nothing but a crude, empty fragile shell. The cracks in it explain how easy it is for young independent countries to switch back from nation to ethnic group and from state to tribe – a regression which is so terribly detrimental and prejudicial to the development of the nation and national unity.
Christian ‘national consciousness’ that extends beyond loyalties or association to the nation-state. Ghanaian Pentecostals share a sense of ‘ethnic’ or ‘national’ consciousness that resembles citizenship. While Pentecostalism is not dissimilar from nationalist thinking in that it promotes equality through conversion, it recreates strict boundaries as to who is a citizen of Heaven and who is not. It also plays up their internal unity and continuity with other Pentecostal Christians. Historical agency derives not just from the group’s demonstration of common origins and historical continuances with Judeo-Christianity, and a Christian nation, but more importantly from its successful exclusion of others. While Pentecostalism in Ghana promises personal freedom and an affiliation to transnational ‘routes’ and international networks of Christian believers, there is also another side of this promise, where ideas similar to ‘national belonging’ and Christian ‘roots’ re-emerge. On the other side of the same coin, while Ghanaian Pentecostals imagine a unified front, shared with other Christians within the global community, they are constantly confronted with the weight of differences they believe they have left behind.

**Ghanaian Pentecostals in London**

*Together we protested, we asserted the equality of all men in the world... And then the occasion arose when I had to meet the white man's eyes. An unfamiliar weight burdened me. The real world challenged my claims – Fanon 1967: 110*

Before migrating to London many church members saw England as the source of wealth and Pentecostal agency, the place where many of the earlier Christian and Pentecostal missionaries had originated from. Pentecostal conversion provides Ghanaian Pentecostals with a context for permeable ethnicities, where differences in ethnicity between church members temporarily dissolve into each other. Their Pentecostal identity allows Ghanaians to view themselves as equal to others, actively aligning themselves with an imagined community of global Pentecostals, while escaping the confines of other kinds of bounded identities in London, including ‘Ghanaian’, ‘African’ and ‘Immigrant’, and the derogatory values and low social status attached to these terms. However their arrival in London and their interaction with white Pentecostals and their status as economic migrants left some room for doubt concerning their claims to equality. African Christians in London are viewed as exceptional; either in their demonstrative Christian faith (being more Christian than their white English brothers and sisters) or through associations made between African religious practices and the
‘dark’ practices of Africa such as witchcraft and ‘ritual killings’ (see Sanders 2005). Both recreate stereotypes and establish boundaries – causing African Christians to be known through specific encapsulations and challenging their claims of transcendental identity and global unity.

Upon arriving in London Ghanaian Pentecostal migrants from CoP worshipped together with ‘white’ Pentecostals in London in a British Pentecostal church that had missionary links in Ghana. This arrangement did not last long. Differences between the Ghanaian and white British Pentecostals in London created a conflict between the ideological assumptions that all Pentecostals were equal. It also foregrounded the reality of their new spatial and moral economy and their status as economic migrants. However, rather than explain it as a ‘racial’ or ‘economic’ problem, they used ‘culture’ to speak about their sense of estrangement. While my informants attempt to de-emphasize their non-white and African identities, placing less attention to their ethnicized citizenship, ‘culture’ and hierarchical cultural evaluations become an important way of creating distinctions between themselves and others in Britain.

Cultural differences between Ghanaian members of CoP and members of the white congregation from Elim Pentecostal Church, UK were highlighted as the reasons that led to the break-up if this arrangement. What seemed missing in London and in the ‘white churches’, one Elder told me, was a sense of ‘closeness’.

The way we relate to ministers and members back home, that kind of closeness we were not getting it here. People came to church like visitors and they would go, even the local Pentecostal churches in London … Our main aim was to provide a born again Christian forum for all these people to come together and worship in the Ghanaian language, and for matters of welfare … that there will be leadership who are closer to them.

The imaginings of a more expansive ‘citizenship’ that would unite them with their ‘white’ brother and sisters remained largely unrealized. This sense of ‘closeness’ stemmed from a cultural understanding of locality or being Ghanaian; the knowledge of a Ghanaian language (Twi), an understanding of shared economic and social welfare issues, leaders who could serve their personal interests and, finally, the need for Pentecostal prayer that addressed their specific concerns. At the same time as experiencing this lack of ‘closeness’ racial differences
also came to the fore when in London. Marcus Banks (1996) notes that an important issue that was ignored in the 1970s in the UK, and that remains unresolved today, is that “perceptions of the importance of skin colour play a vital part in the relations of power and domination that exist between minority groups and the white ‘host’ population (as well as between minority groups)” (ibid:100). Many Ghanaians, experiencing similar alienation, reacted to what one Elder described as the problems of the ‘white traditional churches’ in London. He said to me, “Most of the traditional churches were not receptive … you know the white churches”. He went on to refer to “the attitude of the white minister with the black members of the church”.

Some people had immigration problems and wanted the church to assist them and this man did not do it. So the black leadership confronted him and decided to form an association within the church and provide support to people. … It started as a fellowship with the main function purely on welfare matters. Welfare in the sense that they were meeting for prayers after prayers, tea parties, assisting people who were in difficulties, providing bereavement fund.

When skin colour and cultural differences became issues of concern for church members, the members of CoP started organizing themselves in order to provide networks of support and to better represent the economic welfare and social needs of Ghanaian Pentecostal migrants in London. This made it necessary for them to form their own church congregation, separated from, yet still in alliance with, Elim Pentecostal Church. It was not until 1989 that a branch of CoP was established in London, after CoP headquarters in Ghana sent its first missionary to the UK in 1988.

While certain aspects of Ghanaian ‘culture’ served church members well in the earlier establishment of CoP in London, other aspects of Ghanaian ‘culture’ caused problems. Some considered the talk of ‘witchcraft’ as a local problem that should not be transported from Ghana to London. Others saw Ghanaian ‘culture’ as antithetical to a global Christian identity. As one of my informants said to me, Ghanaian Pentecostals brought a Ghanaian ‘locality’ to London. By living close together and constantly trying to recreate a Ghanaian ‘culture’ in London, Ghanaian Pentecostals limited their potential for evangelism outside their own community. According to him British people had different expectations of religion. Ghanaian Pentecostals had to realise that they could not reproduce a Ghanaian culture in London. This would not help their attempts to proselytize to non-Ghanaians in London.
Upon arriving in London from Ghana Sammy was disappointed by the cultural continuities with a Ghanaian culture and a lack of evangelical work outside the church community. He became disappointed by the use of Twi, an Akan language widely spoken in southern Ghana, in church services. According to him this attempt to hold on to Ghanaian ‘culture’ held them back from spreading their universal message to British people.

When I first came to this country four years ago, I was very excited. I thought I was coming to the heart of the fire – England. I had great expectations upon arriving. But when I got here, I called up the local church of Pentecost and asked them when the next service was. I got my reply in Twi. I was shocked and disappointed. ‘Why was Twi being used in London?’ I asked myself. When I attended the Twi service, I prayed to God that I could help bring the church forward and move beyond Twi. How else are we going to evangelize to others? God loves us all. The colour of our skin is not important to God and I felt that others had to be brought to God. The church has to become more accessible.

Their expectations of a more vibrant Christianity, filled with the ‘Holy Spirit’, were also made with reference to their impressions and experiences of Christianity in Ghana. Aspects of ‘culture’, both ‘Ghanaian’ and ‘British’, became stumbling blocks for spreading their universal message of Salvation and for maintaining a Christian identity. This model of religious transformation made available new ways of looking at the ‘old’ and forbidden from which individuals were required to distance themselves. In a group conversation with several younger members Sammy, who is a Deacon in PIWC London, added, that the people of Dagenham and the United Kingdom in general were fortunate to have the church in its midst. Ghanaian Pentecostals were moral people who prayed to God, and their intercessory prayers helped keep the UK safe from God’s wrath. ‘But why would God be angry with the people of the UK in the first place?’ someone asked. Sammy went on to explain.

Sammy worked as a nurse in the south of London and lamented about how his work brought him into contact with many young people on drugs or suffering from AIDS, as well as many young girls who had experienced teenage pregnancies. The Ghanaian youth of the church, he carefully added, were also susceptible to the dangerous consequences resulting from immoral activities. The education system and the social life in London put them in close contact with other teenagers who were involved in these types of things. According to him, some aspects of British ‘culture’, especially those related to the freedom of sexual behaviour, posed an impending threat.
Such acts of gay-ism, homosexuality and gender adjustments are common here in the UK. In the Bible, God hated these acts and even came down himself to see if they were true. Things are much worse now as men can chop off their manhood, implant breasts and act, walk and talk like women. Wouldn’t God be more furious by these acts? But why hasn’t he done something about this sooner? In the Bible God allowed the land of Sodom and Gomorrah to survive because he had said that if he could find at least ten righteous men in the land, he would not destroy it … In the same way our presence in London and our prayers for them as Christians have helped saved England from God’s wrath. Again why doesn’t he just ask us to go back to Ghana? It is our presence here that protects England.

In his explanation Sammy cited the story of Sodom and Gomorrah from the Old Testament. This provided him with a narrative which he employed to make further distinctions between British people and Ghanaian Pentecostals. ‘At the end of the day’, Sammy told me, ‘the prayers of Ghanaian Pentecostals’ were providing a moral buffer for the sins of the British people as well as protecting their own women and youth from immorality. Instead of ‘exodus’, he evoked a symbolic comparison to the Biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah as an example of ‘exile’, and the important role of Ghanaian Pentecostals in preventing the destruction of the country. The formerly colonized have become the new protectors of the UK. However the reality on the ground was that, as newcomers, many Ghanaian Pentecostals faced new forms of discrimination in a plural society where their Christian identity no longer held the same importance in the public sphere. They are strangers, economic migrants, in a new land, sharing an ideology of transcendence that allows them to recreate themselves as citizens of Heaven and saviors of their host citizens

British ‘culture’ is also associated with lifestyle choices that were considered non-Christian; morally dangerous to themselves, their unmarried youth and children. These include premarital sex, smoking, drinking alcohol and going out clubbing. The free time and leisure activities of the young and the unmarried in the church became another problem and a negative aspect of British culture. This leisure time and lack of adult supervision created opportunities for the corrupt influence of British culture to take full effect on the young. As Ghanaians in London attended church less frequently and had less help from extended kin, the youths of the church in London reflected the saying ‘Idle minds are the Devil’s playground’. Ghanaian parents had less time to supervise their children’s activities in London and the church’s influence was limited to Sunday services. Non-Christian friends and their idle
pursuits in London provided many opportunities for immoral behavior. The consumption of negative components of British ‘culture’ had a perilous and direct impact on public order and fostered the image of an immoral population.

The immoral activities of Ghanaian youth in London’s moral economy, was a common conversation topic amongst Ghanaian Pentecostals. In a conversation with a church deacon, he criticized female Ghanaian university students who came to London specifically to earn money during their holidays. According to him, these girls came to London to ‘earn pounds’ and indulge themselves in the purchase of luxury items before returning to Ghana with a false sense of status. Ghanaian girls, he said, sometimes became involved in immoral activities such as ‘prostitution’. The discipline of young people, especially unmarried women, featured strongly among church worries concerning the negative influence of working and living in London. It is notable that church members did not associate these same immoral activities with youth in Ghana but with those in London. London became associated with an immoral consumer economy that became potentially destructive for Ghanaian Pentecostals. For one church member London was closely tied to a different kind of ‘witchcraft’ that was associated with a new market economy and their place in it.

Witchcraft in Ghana generally comes from bad intentions and jealousy directed at a person close to you, usually a family member, and involves the secret identity of the witch who is yet-to-be-discovered. A witch can include direct family, close friends, and business partners as well as competitors. Witchcraft in London evoked a different image of modernity where witches were also described as ‘white entrepreneurs’ who manipulated capitalist relationships in order to profit while others struggled. According to Eben, while witches in Ghana sought the destruction of people, usually relatives and close associates, ‘white witches’ used their spiritual powers to profit from the consumer market and the gullibility of consumers. Ghanaian Pentecostal migrants were victims of new technologies that these witches invented, causing them to spend their hard earned money on new models of mobile phones and the latest fashions. In this case witchcraft was reflective of new relationships of mistrust and social inequality, where Ghanaian Pentecostals in London faced contradictions between their privileged status as Christians and economic status as migrants.
There are two cultural systems operating at once in London, emphasizing a tension between a new Christian identity that promotes global connections and a cosmopolitan life, and the encapsulations created by their new status as economic migrants, a new consumer culture and as members of a Ghanaian community. The next section will argue that the distinction between ‘Christianity’ and ‘culture’ becomes an important way of reflecting on, and thinking through, these moral differences and the frictions they create. While Pentecostalism serves as a counter-discourse to national and racial thinking, it also creates encapsulations through the Christian construction of ‘culture’.

How is Pentecostalism distinct from Culture?

Almost unnoticed, the idea of culture, which once connoted all that freed men from the blind weight of tradition, was now identified with that very burden, and that burden was seen as functional to the continuing daily existence of individuals in any culture.

– G.W. Stocking, “Franz Boas and the Culture Concept in Historical Perspective”

While the idea of culture has helped challenge the essentializing and static ideas of ‘race’ and ‘tradition’ found within a developmental model of evolution, it has come to also carry the burden of becoming a category that encapsulates the ‘other’ in essentializing ways (see Abu-Lughod 1991:143; Fabian 1983; Said 1978). Franz Boas, in marking a distinction between the ‘cultural histories of peoples’ and the general ‘evolution of cultures’ argued that each culture had to be understood in its own terms and that it would be scientifically misleading to judge and rank other cultures according to a Western ‘ethnocentric’ typology that gauged ‘levels of development’. He and his students criticised racial explanations of difference and rejected any biological basis for culture. His argument was that ‘culture’ not ‘biology’ makes us. Since then the culture concept in anthropology has been the subject of numerous debates (see Borofsky, Barth, Shweder, Rodseth & Stolzenberg 2001). For Frederick Barth ‘culture’ has become an abstraction that needs to be contextualized and embedded in human action (ibid: 435). While this might be true it is precisely because of its lack of precision that ‘culture’ becomes a much used and thought about concept, not only for anthropologists but religious leaders and public policy makers, debating the question of when culture become a social
benefit and a social harm? Pentecostal church leaders and members in London ask similar questions regarding the role of ‘culture’ in Christianity. They would agree that culture is to be found in the world and in human action. However, in their model of the world, it is precisely culture’s material positioning from within a transcendental starting point that relegates it to becoming merely a vehicle for good or evil. The constant attempt to distinguish between what is Christianity and what is culture then becomes as inescapable reality for Pentecostal Christians (see Keane 2007:107).

Christianity is driven by a Salvationist paradigm that assumes the superior existence of a transcendental realm over the material world of everyday life (see Cannell 2006; Engelke 2007:12). There are certain moral assumptions resembling the creation of a modern liberal subject that accompany a Christian conversion where, in the promise of attaining human liberation and emancipation from suffering, converts are required to give up their false ‘idols’ that are a part of this transient world. They are then shown how to identify the true locus of agency (c.f. Keane 2007). The underlying assumption is that once people realize that they are simply misguided then they can abandon their previous practices, spirits, places and objects for the real thing – the transcendental (see also Keane 1998:17). While all Pentecostals share a Christian agency in their new relationship with God, there is a tension in regard to which aspects of this transcendental power can legitimately be recognized as present in the world. They share the vision of a modern human subject who, through a self-transformation, reproduces ‘a vision of a self that must be abstracted from material and social entanglements’ (Keane 2007:55).

Within this same transcendentalizing project culture becomes an inescapable materiality located in the world either through the African traditional ‘past’ or through ‘present’

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5 These questions which aim to distinguish between culture as harmful or beneficial are intrinsic of an earlier Victorian project. For example Sales of Poisons and Poisonous Publications was the subject of exchange recorded in the House of Lords in 1857. It started as a debate on legislation to regulate the indiscriminate sale of poisons in London. The Lord Chief Justice, John Campbell, took this opportunity to air his grievance about another ‘moral poison’ he described as a far greater danger to society than the misuse of chemicals – the indiscriminate sale and trade in obscene publications in London (Nead 2000: 150). The power of poison was a metaphor for obscenity and moral decay in mid 19th Century Victorian London. It described a substance whose dangers might not be apparent immediately but which destroys from the inside when consumed. In her book Victorian Babylon Lynda Nead (2000) relays that “(t)he context for the subsequent introduction of Campbell’s bill was that in the mid-nineteenth century, culture was becoming one aspect of the problem of metropolitan modernity … Legislators and moralists were torn between seeing these new forms of cheap commercial culture as a social benefit or as a social harm” (ibid: 151-4).
conditions whereby certain ideas, words and actions lie outside the boundaries a Christian truth. While the concept of culture serves as a useful purpose in allowing a transcendental God to be known in the world, for Pentecostals it also serves to bring people back to the evils of the world. The persistence of non-Christian spirits as well as aspects of British and Ghanaian ‘culture’ in London challenges the very possibility of Christian Salvation. At the same time it is these spirits or aspects of ‘culture’ that allow Pentecostals to speak of Salvation, where it can be found and how it can be achieved. It becomes the responsibility of church leaders and moral reformers to help church members govern themselves better through indicating the boundaries of Salvation.

For Apostle Onyinah, a CoP leader and present Chairman, ‘culture’ creates ‘extremes’ in Pentecostal Christianity. In his books he addresses questions that others, including academics, government officials, development workers and educators, continue to ask: ‘How is religion distinct from culture?’ (Keane 2007:85). If religions are cultural phenomenon, but not manifestly a ‘culture’, what is the proper context for their analysis? Apostle Onyinah (1995) wrote his book *Overcoming Demons* in reaction to the popularity of deliverance prayer, aimed at removing the continuing effects of evil spirits from people’s lives. In making a distinction between Christianity and culture, Onyinah (1995) distinguishes between the work of the Holy Spirit in Christianity and the work of other spiritual powers that include the use of ‘divination, sorcery, spiritism or fetishism’ (ibid: 87). Onyinah reifies the notion of ‘culture’ as something that comes from the outside world as opposed to an untouched inner essence of Christianity. While, sometimes ‘culture’ in Christianity might be necessary and even beneficial, Onyinah (1995) warns Christians about “[t]oo much culture and personality in Christianity.”

Christianity cannot be understood without culture … Christ has to be incarnated in the culture before the indigenous people will understand Him…There are a lot of traits from the European culture in Christianity in Africa. Some of these are the way of dressing, putting on a suit and tie in the hot weather, the way of christian marriages and weddings.

While European language and dressing might be suggestive of an infiltration of European ‘culture’ into Christianity, the persistence of ideas surrounding demons and ancestral spirits become associated with an ‘African culture’ that Pentecostals are supposed to have left behind. Similarly Ghanaian Pentecostals in London associate the non-Christian aspects of
their life in England as immoral and as negative aspects of British ‘culture’. While there are positive aspects of ‘culture’ in Christianity, other aspects of ‘culture’ are seen as a threat that needed to be addressed. ‘Culture’ within this model of religious transformation has a double explanatory purpose. While it can serve as a vehicle for people to experience Christian salvation it can also create a situation where ‘culture’ is a corrupting influence. In speaking and writing about what ‘Christianity’ is and how it is distinct from ‘culture’, church leaders confine ‘religion to a distinct sphere apart from other domains of social life’ (Keane 2007: 106).

It is important to understand how a concept of ‘culture’ is used in marking sameness or difference. Like ‘race’, ‘culture’ becomes an essentializing discourse that becomes a powerful way of marking absences. Ghanaian Pentecostals in London rationalize the difficulty of their dual role as economic migrants and Pentecostal missionaries through addressing what is absent in London. An absence of a ‘sense of closeness’ and an understanding of Ghanaian ‘culture’ initially led CoP members in London to separate from their white Pentecostal brethren and form their own church. While ‘race’ was most probably an equally important issue that marked difference, it becomes secondary to cultural differences. Secondly Ghanaian Pentecostals who arrive in London and believe themselves to be bringing the fire of Pentecost back to Europe become quickly disappointed by the persistence of Ghanaian culture in the church in London. The absence of a Pentecostal identity that transcends the social classifiers of race and class became frustrating for those with a missionizing goal. Thirdly, British ‘culture’ becomes a way of speaking about the absence of a Pentecostal morality. It is then up to the Ghanaian Pentecostal church in London to help fill that gap, between Christianity and culture, through the embodiment of specific attributes that link Christian agency to states of interiority such as ‘sincerity’, ‘perseverance’ and ‘patience’.

Certain learnt dispositions and demonstration of attitudes are necessary in order to assess the validity of identity claims, as Pentecostal Christians and citizens of Heaven. A racial logic sits in the very centre of liberal ideals of citizenship. Thus while there are similar claims to equality and permeable identities – where a new cosmopolitan identity is being shaped and formed, I have argued that new cultural boundaries are essential in framing ideas of expansion and universality – excluding others through the idiom of ‘culture’.
Conclusion

‘England is no longer a Christian country’ would be the appropriate conclusion to this paper, where moral distance is translated into cultural difference. A Ghanaian Pentecostal Christian is Pentecostal through his or her relation to a non-Pentecostal. The equality of all Pentecostals, and their superiority to non-Pentecostals, emerges from their relationship to, and through, the ‘other’. When in alignment with their Pentecostal identity their racial and post-colonial schema crumbles, as Ghanaians come to embody a transcendental identity that lies outside the material world. However this same identity is firmly set within the world and in human action. When in Ghana, their Pentecostal identity is a practical strategy aimed at transcending ethnic and regional divisions, collapsing North-South distinctions, and as a counter to notions of Africa and Africans as ‘poor’ and ‘backward’. By becoming Pentecostal, Ghanaians are moving away from and beyond the categorical distinctions of ‘Black’, ‘Ghanaian’ or ‘African immigrant’ – as by becoming Born-again Christians they are favored and become a part of a universal community brought together by the one ‘True God’. While occupying separate geographical spaces, ‘British culture’ and ‘Ghanaian culture’ are intertwined and fused in a specific Christian history and its moral expectations of the future.

As I have tried to show, it is insufficient to take the public rhetoric of Pentecostalism as a transcendental religion without also acknowledging the moral politics of boundary-making. It does not simply promote discontinuity with a non-Christian past or continuity with a new Christian identity (Ghana is a Christian country’). While such rhetoric has a propositional force for its members, the ways in which a Christian identity is shaped and formed share many similarities with the politics of boundary creation and its maintenance that is apparent in nation building efforts and racial thinking. Rather than simply about the continuity of ‘culture’ or the radical break from one culture or worldview to another, a Pentecostal identity is a moral claim associated with freedom that allows individuals to oscillate between different value systems while still engaging with, and in, the world. Pentecostalism makes available new ways of looking at the ‘old’ and forbidden from which individuals are required to distance themselves. Pentecostalism’s reforming character, which highlights the possibility of self-transformation, creates new distinctions between people, people and things and people and non-human entities (cf. Keane 2007).
Rather than transcending race and culture, Ghanaian Pentecostals use ‘culture’ in speaking about aspects of the ‘past’ they are trying to leave behind, as well as about their aspirations for the ‘future’, through present conditions in which certain actions, people and places are considered immoral. This ideal of liberation that they share is an important consideration for Ghanaian Pentecostals; guiding their questions about where Pentecostal agency can be located, as well as how it operates in the world. It is this consideration that allows for a double consciousness to be at work, allowing a movement forward into a better future where ‘race’ becomes irrelevant, simultaneously juxtaposed with a return to an imagined past, where ‘culture’ emerges as a great divide, be it Ghanaian or British. In taking into account the moral world and ethical positioning of these social actors this paper has shown how Ghanaian Pentecostals in London embody a language of duality – white / black, Christianity / culture, Moral / Immoral, Modern / Traditional – in their efforts to transcend these same dichotomies.

I conclude this paper with some remarks on Franz Fanon’s words ‘The black man wants to be like the white man. For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is white’ (1967:228). While they acknowledge the role of the western missionaries in bringing Christianity to Africa Ghanaian Pentecostals would not admit to the superiority of the white man or the people who once colonized them. Neither would they claim that their destiny is to be white. Instead they are transformed through their Pentecostal conversion, claiming a new identity (citizens of Heaven) that transcends these same social markers. However there might be an ironic twist to this argument. In their efforts to claim equality through transcending ‘race’ and locality, they have come to embody the claims and moral authority of another empire, where for all humans there is only one destiny – to become Pentecostal.

**Bibliography**


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