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PAST PENTECOSTALISM: NOTES ON RUPTURE, REALIGNMENT, AND EVERYDAY LIFE IN PENTECOSTAL AND AFRICAN INDEPENDENT CHURCHES

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One of the major themes in the literature on Pentecostals in Africa is their desire to 'break with the past'. For many such Christians breaking with the past means renouncing one's ancestral spirits, one's extended family, and even, in some cases, one's closest kin. More broadly speaking many Pentecostals also often renounce, and even mock, certain elements of what they refer to as traditional religion and African culture (or custom), which are spoken of as 'backward' or 'primitive', and, in many cases, linked to the Devil. This renunciation is considered necessary because African culture is understood to foster jealousy and envy between people; it is backward because Africans do not work together or support one another and so never 'progress'. Breaking with the past is in part a process of self-reformation in which one is understood to become modern. Indeed, against the negative stereotypes of African culture and the African past, Pentecostals often define themselves as modern – as looking forward, not back, and as thus free from the chains of tradition.

The Pentecostal emphasis on breaking with the past has been very productive for analysts, who have used it to interrogate a host of concepts, most notably the modernity to which Pentecostals often allude. For example, in her work on Ewe Pentecostals in Ghana, Birgit Meyer argues that the break with the past is part of a 'language to deal with the demons which are cast out in the process of modernity's constitution' (1999: 216). Her emphasis on process is important: Meyer does not take for granted what that modernity could or should look like. She is also clear that the relationship between past and future in this Pentecostal language is dynamic. Looking forward always requires looking back, and thus the language of the break, and the past it circumscribes, is a necessary feature of the modernities in question. What we have here is a paradoxical demand of remembering to forget. This demand is complicated by the fact that the language of the break is often both utopian and ambivalent. Breaking with the past as articulated discursively is an impossibility in practice, a fact which is exploited by Pentecostals to express their concerns with modernity's constitution.

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I am focusing on Meyer's work because, perhaps more than any other Africanist, she has helped crystallize the importance of rupture for understanding Pentecostalism and its analytical stakes (see especially Meyer 1998, 1999). Her work is empirically and conceptually rich enough to be engaged with in its own right, and indeed many Africanists (Jones 2007; Keller 2005; Maxwell 2006a; Newell 2007; van Dijk 2001) and others (Keane 2007; Lehmann 2000; Robbins 2004a; Tomlinson 2009) have done so.[1] But alongside such primary research Meyer has also produced a notable review (Meyer 2004) on Christianity in Africa which, when read in relation to the broader literature on breaking with the past, raises two important questions. First, how should we take the analysis of rupture further? And second, what material is relevant in doing so?

PENTECOSTAL PREJUDICE?

In 'Christianity in Africa: from African Independent to Pentecostal-charismatic churches', published in the 2004 *Annual Review of Anthropology* (*ARA*), Meyer begins her analysis with a contrast between African Independent Churches (AICs) and Pentecostal-charismatic churches (PCCs). As she notes at several points (2004: 448, 452, 454), there are no clear boundaries between these types of Christianity (*cf*. Englund 2003). AICs are often charismatic in leaning, and some have connections to first-wave Pentecostals dating back to the early 1900s. But the distinction still retains some analytical purchase. Since its earliest uses, however, scholars have pointed out that all three terms in the label – African/Independent/Church – raise questions as to their suitability (for example, Fernandez 1978). Nevertheless the label continues to be used, and for Meyer it performs important rhetorical and analytical functions. Most notably she uses a contrast between AICs and PCCs to frame a larger argument about how the desire to break with the past and embracement of modernity come together to produce both new sociological configurations and theoretical problematics. The global character of Pentecostalism is central to this, as are the ways in which it can paradoxically be made very local (see Robbins 2004b). This larger argument is encapsulated in a striking image, one which many Africanists will be able to picture for themselves, even if they do not work on Christianity:

> Nothing can better evoke what is at stake than the salience of the contrast between the familiar image of African prophets from Zionist, Nazarite, or Aladura churches, dressed in white gowns, carrying crosses, and going to pray in the bush, and the flamboyant leaders of the new mega-churches,

[1] In many different ways, of course, and not all addressing the same problematics. Although there is not space here to engage this broader literature, at the very least it is important to note that my focus on Meyer is not meant to suggest a homogeneity in Africanist Pentecostal studies.

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> who dress in the latest (African) fashion, drive nothing less than a Mercedes-Benz, participate in the global Pentecostal jet set, broadcast the message through flashy TV and radio programs, and preach the Prosperity gospel to their deprived and hitherto hopeless born-again followers at home and in the diaspora. Although it would be too simple to assume the latter simply replaced the former, the emergence of these new figures suggests that the appropriation of Christianity in Africa has entered a new phase. (Meyer 2004: 448)

I want to use this passage to make two points in relation to the questions posed above.

The first point is that the close association that is made in Pentecostal studies between breaking with the past and the embracement of modernity is problematic. I do not want to deny this association *per se*; in fact, I think it is often justifiable, and has been well substantiated in a range of works (see, for example, Meyer 1998, 1999; Maxwell 1998, 2006a; van Dijk 1998, 2001). The problem is that I think this association has produced a certain myopia when it comes to analysing how Pentecostals – and many other Christians – understand what we might call *the realignments of rupture*. The kinds of conversion that emphasize a break with the past are not only about a renunciation of one's standing culture or tradition (as discursively defined). They are also often about aligning one's self in relation to an extant and imagined Christian history. In other words, breaking with the past is not only the erasure of a tradition but the inscription of another. This is a point that, while not absent from some of the best work on Pentecostalism in Africa (for example, Meyer 1999: 139–40; Maxwell 2006a: 166–8), tends to receive less attention than it deserves. Moreover, the ways in which such realignments are understood and substantiated in practice tend to be eclipsed by a focus on their discursive formations. What people say is often striking, but it needs to be accompanied by a focus on what they do. Issues that come up in everyday life matter.

The second point is more tenuous but ought to be raised. This is that, in the broader context of the study of Christianity in Africa, the scholarship on Pentecostalism can sometimes come across like Pentecostalism itself: loud and, dare I say, domineering. This is partly a result of numbers. The fact is that a good deal of the work on Christianity over the past two decades has been on Pentecostalism if for no other reason than that Pentecostalism has itself exploded onto the scene and so captured the attention of researchers. This is one way Meyer can justify her emphasis on Pentecostalism in the *ARA*, over and above the theological and sociological similarities between AICs and PCCs. In his capacity as executive editor of the *Journal of Religion in Africa*, David Maxwell has also commented on the proliferation of Pentecostal studies; over the course of his tenure he came to know of many researchers who '[found] themselves writing about [Pentecostalism] even if they had never intended to' (2006b: 389). With its ubiquity as the justification for so much work on Pentecostalism, there is no bone to pick. There is a bone to pick, however, when it

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comes to the ways in which Pentecostalism can get situated within more analytical registers.

Meyer's *ARA* article is my case in point. It is driven by a metonymic logic in which Pentecostal Christianity serves as the part representing the whole.[2] The core of this logic is encapsulated in the relationship between the title and the subtitle. For the article is not, as the title alone suggests, about 'Christianity in Africa'; rather, as the subtitle explains, it is about a certain shift from AICs to PCCs. There is, moreover, in both the subtitle – 'From African Independent to Pentecostal-charismatic churches' – and the actual text, a teleology at work, with white-robed prophets being sublated by sharply dressed preachers. In each of the article's three main sections (which address the topics of tradition, trans-nationalism and politics, respectively), Meyer refers to older work on AICs to introduce what she wants to consider, summarizes what this older work did and did not accomplish, and then moves on to show how more recent Pentecostal studies push the topics further. Work on AICs that was being published in the 1990s and early 2000s, alongside what she cites on PCCs, is never really engaged, even when – as I explain in one case below – it has a direct relation to Meyer's interests. Work on the historical, main-line mission churches receives even less attention. The result is that we miss out on important ways in which to understand such key problematics as rupture.

In making these points I am motivated by the fact that my research in Zimbabwe has focused on the kind of AIC that Meyer uses as a contrast to PCCs – albeit one that falls to the more charismatic end of the spectrum, and could, without too much trouble, be included under the widely used PCC label. As in many Pentecostal churches, for example, this church stresses egalitarianism, being filled with the Holy Spirit, faith healing, and other such charismatic indices. Even for those AICs that have strong family resemblances with PCCs, however, there are good reasons to recognize them as distinct – just as Meyer's image suggests. As I hope will be clear, however, my case is not one of sour grapes, and still less the call for a turf war. Paradoxically such boundary drawing can facilitate a more detailed picture of Christians in Africa and the issues it raises for those who study them.

The Masowe *weChishanu* ('Friday') Church was inspired in the early 1930s by a young man from Makoni District, in what was then Southern Rhodesia, who understood himself to be 'Africa's John the Baptist'. Johane, as he came to be known as, had been influenced by Anglicans, the American Methodists, a Roman Catholic priest, and even an influential preacher for the Apostolic Faith Mission. He nevertheless declared himself different and distinct – 'independent', in the academic parlance (see Engelke 2007: 79–108). Just as in the image Meyer provides, even today the church's members wear white robes

[2] Meyer has been criticized in a similar manner before, for circulating as the standard not just Pentecostalism but the particular brand of Pentecostalism she found amongst the Ewe (Englund and Leach 2000: 234; see Meyer 2000: 241–2 for a reply).

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and follow African prophets off into the bush. The Masowe Church is an apostolic church, so-called because members aim to reproduce a faith as vibrant and immediate as when Jesus walked the earth. The Friday apostolics (as members are known as) do not meet in imposing and grand mega-churches, wear the latest fashions, broadcast flashy messages over television or the radio, or participate in any jet set circles. More than this, when it comes to their faith, certainly, they explicitly reject many of the trappings and tools of modernity so central to (Prosperity Gospel) Pentecostals. Most notably, and in marked contrast not only to Pentecostals but also other Christians, they do not use the Bible, claiming that it is an unnecessary and even dangerous medium through which to apprehend the divine. As I have explained elsewhere (Engelke 2007), the Friday apostolics are committed to what they recognize as an immaterial faith – one in which things play no role. Theirs is an extreme form of Protestantism that seeks a 'live and direct' relationship with God, as expressed in large part through the workings of the Holy Spirit.

Similar to the suggestions in Meyer's imagery, in Zimbabwe a common perception of churches such as the Masowe Church is that they are anything but modern. Many Zimbabweans think of Christians in these churches as decidedly backward, and assume them to be illiterate, poor and simple-minded. The Friday apostolics, however, are not anti-modern. Indeed, they prize what have come to be some of the most iconic markers of an at least generic post-colonial African modernity: education and professional success; the virtues of science and biomedicine; mass media (even though they are not used within the church); even cosmopolitanism. What they have a problem with is the materiality of religion and any assertion that things (whether Bibles or German cars) are signs of divine presence or favour. In a sense one could even say they are thus very modern, if, as suggested in many theories of modernity, religion is understood to be an 'immaterial' affair.

While they differ from Pentecostals in the outward expressions of their faith (especially those who follow a Prosperity Gospel), Friday apostolics nevertheless share many of the same inward struggles over the provenance of African culture. They also want to break with the past. They can be just as vehement in their denunciations of the ancestors, members of their extended families, the 'African' penchant for jealousy and envy, and the like. I have explored this similarity in an earlier article on the conversion narrative of one of my closest friends in the church, a man called Gaylord Mujuru (Engelke 2004). For apostolics such as Gaylord, breaking with the past is a long-term project in which certain aspects of what get defined as African culture and an African world-view are purged from one's life, chief among them the sentiments of envy that are said to structure traditional modes of sociality. In line with their distrust of religious media, the apostolics also express their desire to break with the past through an iconoclastic attitude toward the spiritual *materiel* and tools of mediums, traditional healers, and witches.

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It was in large part the literature on Pentecostalism (Maxwell 1998; Meyer 1998; see also Robbins 2003) that helped me understand how the discourses of discontinuity in apostolic conversion narratives play a vital role in their articulations of Christianity. Indeed, on this issue one does not find much discussion in the most immediately relevant literature on Independent churches (but see Kiernan 1992a). While most of the founding figures in the study of Christian independency eventually recognized how such churches wanted to break away from the traditional world (Hastings 1976: 53; Sundkler 1976: 305), the dominant trend was often toward what Rijk van Dijk has called 'nostalgic theorizing' (1998: 159) – toward showing how independency was continuous with traditional religion (see also Meyer 2004: 449).

I would not disagree with the charge that some of the most influential earlier work on Christianity in Africa is romantic in its leanings, searching for 'authentic' religious expressions. James Fernandez, for example, whom Meyer acknowledges as a key interlocutor, sometimes used language that reinforces this perception in his work on African religious movements. He concludes his own, earlier *ARA* piece by saying 'there is African creativity and African insight in African religious movements' (1978: 230). Fernandez's point, however, has to be understood against the backdrop of an argument within the Africanist literature at the time which dismissed the AICs in particular as inauthentic and derivative of (so-called real) mission Christianity (Oosthuizen 1968). Part of what Fernandez was pushing against was the bankruptcy of the argument about inauthenticity. The problem, of course, is that any appeal to authenticity inevitably raises challenges of its own, chief of them the charge of essentialism.

Even more than nostalgic theorizing within African religious studies, the concerns with nostalgia (perhaps romanticism is a better word) can be used to support Joel Robbins's (2003, 2007) argument that anthropology, at least, is predominantly a science of continuity, and that cultural anthropologists 'have for the most part either argued or implied that the things they study – symbols, meanings, logics, structures, power dynamics, etc. – have an enduring quality and are not readily subject to change' (2007: 9).[3] In the case of AICs, we have sometimes heard more about what makes them African than what makes them Christian – and very little in either case about how these discursive formations take shape and unfold in relation to one another over time. In my view, then, the Pentecostal insistence on breaking with the past has been good to think, and there is truth in Meyer's claim that the study of Pentecostalism has 'considerably reconfigured' (2004: 448) how we can, and should, understand Christianity in Africa.

If we return to the imagery that Meyer uses to frame this considerable reconfiguring, however, it becomes clear how the transition she charts

[3] In his commentary on Robbins's piece, Maxwell argues that continuity thinking has never taken hold among African historians (2007: 25–6).

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from AICs to PCCs is problematic. In terms of empirical research, as I have noted, there has no doubt been a shift in focus from independency to Pentecostalism, a shift which mirrors the remarkable growth of the latter over the past few decades. But more than this, as I have also stressed, Meyer's analyses make the implicit suggestion that if one is looking to do state-of-the-art theorizing one needs to look to Pentecostalism. And so, while there is a lot to be said for focusing on Pentecostalism, we also need to look past it. AICs may not be as predominant as PCCs, but they are still a vibrant force in Christianity in Africa. Why then, should independency (or, indeed, other traditions of Christianity) not figure in the conversations as coeval?[4]

BEING COEVAL

To redress the imbalance, I want to begin by suggesting how a more recent study of an AIC can shed light on one of the topics that Meyer raises as part of Pentecostal studies. This will allow me to highlight the dangers of Pentecostal prejudice, but also, and more importantly, segue to a consideration of how rupture comes to be recognized in everyday life.

According to Meyer, something that scholars of Pentecostalism in Africa have been relatively neglectful of is gender, and, in particular, how Pentecostalism figures the relationship between gender and the ethics of self-formation.[5] This remark is situated within her broader discussion of how Prosperity Gospel churches try to 'present themselves as ultimate embodiments of modernity' (2004: 459). This is difficult because prosperity and wealth are both divine blessings and diabolic temptations: 'crude consumptive behaviour' has to be guarded against by seeking the 'moral self' through deliverance (2004: 460). In addition to abstaining from alcohol, and not consulting with traditional healers or participating in 'heathen' practices, the moral self is fostered and shaped through marriage. Pentecostals are often presented with models of nuptial partnership. Many preachers offer extensive advice and lessons on marriage, while churches give marriage counselling. It is here that Meyer refers to the pertinence of gender, noting that 'little research has been conducted' on these kinds of self-formation, before citing an article by Rekopantswe Mate (2002) as an exception.

[4] Lack of space prevents me from considering how main-line post-colonial and African orthodox Christianities figure in any depth, although it is worth highlighting that, for one thing, orthodox Christianities cannot be folded into the discussions simply, since their long-standing presence raises a very different set of questions about the character of 'African culture' and, thus, the relevance of rupture as a framing device. I have benefited from discussions with Anthony Shenoda on this point.

[5] This is not the case for Latin America: see Gill 1990 as an early example, and Martin 2000 for a more wide-ranging consideration based in part on Latin American case materials. Since Meyer has published her review, further work on Pentecostalism and gender in Africa has appeared (see, for example, Pfeiffer *et al.* 2007).

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Like Meyer, Mate emphasizes the stress on a proper marriage in the process of deliverance, something she observed while attending the meetings of women's organizations in two churches in Zimbabwe: Zimbabwe Assemblies of God Africa (ZAOGA) and the Family of God (FOG). In both of the organizations women are presented with idealized versions of marriage and their roles as wives, which are justified through the group leaders' interpretations of Scripture. A born-again emphasis on breaking with the past is important in these processes of self-formation, and there are many ways in which the modernity of Pentecostal womanhood is marked: from the fashions one should wear, to the value of succeeding professionally, to the renunciation of ancestral spirits. According to Mate, however, the ideologies of these women's groups rest on a strong public/private split, such that women can (in their faith) be equal at work but not necessarily at home, where 'traditional' patriarchal values would hold. In the domestic context, she reports, women are encouraged to subordinate themselves to their husbands and are subjected to a discourse of faith that 'romanticises female subordination to men' (Mate 2002: 557). Mate's argument is that 'these organisations focus on domesticity as a way of setting born-again women apart from other women, as a sign of their modernity and faith . . . [and yet] the teachings simultaneously tighten the patriarchal grip on women' (Mate 2002: 449). There are, in other words, elements of 'tradition' that Pentecostal churches want to reinforce, at least as Mate sees it: for ZAOGA and FOG, African culture may have got it wrong on the divine, but not, it seems, some key aspects of the domestic.

Mate's analysis of gender relations in Zimbabwean Pentecostalism reinforces the central point that any desire to break with the past has to be understood as both discursive and strategic. It is discursive in the sense that it is never fully realized. What it provides is a way in which to make sense of modernity and its contradictions as perceived and acted upon in particular places and times (Maxwell 2006a; Meyer 1998, 1999). It is strategic in the sense that, inevitably, one person's modern Christian is another person's traditional African. As played out through the process of self-fashioning, breaking with the past is an exercise in boundary drawing – in being able to say what counts as Christian or traditional and on what grounds. Mate's argument helps us make sense of how rupture and realignment go together. In Pentecostal discourse and practice continuity with certain aspects of 'African' sociality are necessary to set the terms of what is otherwise considered a break (*cf.* Meyer 1999: 139). Patriarchy, as Mate sees it, is not broken with but realigned into a certain Christian version of gender relations.

It is here that the literature on Independent churches is relevant and can add to the discussions. For while there may be little written on the specific aspects of gender dynamics in Africanist Pentecostal studies, there is material on the Independent churches which touches on the issues raised by Meyer about morality, marriage and self-formation as tied up with discursive formations of the past. Much of this, moreover,

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appeared alongside the efflorescence of Africanist Pentecostal studies in the 1990s and early 2000s.[6]

Carol Ann Muller's *Rituals of Fertility and the Sacrifice of Desire* (1999) is a study of the Nazarite Baptist Church in KwaZulu-Natal, one of the largest and longest-standing Independent churches in South Africa, and dominated still by the family of its founder Isaiah Shembe.[7] Shembe was initially inspired by what he saw as the degradation of women brought about by the turbulent confluence of the migrant labour economy, missionary prohibitions against polygamy, and the pre-colonial Nguni social order. According to Muller, many of the women drawn to him had been betrayed or abandoned in the course of these new social configurations being worked out. Shembe was able to offer them a compelling mix of old and new, drawing on certain aspects of Nguni sociality and cosmology and making them coherent within a biblical Christian frame. He thus aimed to trump both the chiefs and the missionaries in the politics of authenticity and, as Maxwell (2006a) calls it in his study of ZAOGA, 'the politics of social reproduction'. As Muller puts it: 'Combining his deep knowledge of the mission Bible with his respect for Nguni traditional ways, and with some knowledge of commodity capitalism, he constituted a new and hybrid regime of religious truth in competition with the ideologies of the state and the Christian mission' (1999: 19). The power of Shembe's religious organization came from his ability to convince his followers that their lives were being played out according to a biblical script in which they had a central role, and in which their marginalization and impurity could be reconfigured as legitimate.

Muller's work reinforces many of the key arguments in earlier studies of Christian independency. Chief of these is that Shembe's church provided an alternative community – a 'parallel social structure' (Muller 1999: 29) – through which members could find meaning and security in a fast-changing world. It is clear from the ethnography Muller presents that this was not framed by the Nazarite Church as breaking with the past. There is, then, a difference here with what one finds in Pentecostal circles. It is equally clear, however, that despite Shembe's 'respect for Nguni traditional ways' the so-called traditionalists who would have been seen as following such ways did not find Shembe's respect very comforting; indeed, fathers and chiefs in particular were opposed to Shembe's parallel world. From their perspective his church was both a break with the past and a threat to that past's reproduction in the future. It signalled the existence of what Muller recognizes as one of

[6] In addition to the presently featured example, there have been important studies of gender in AICs by, for example, Cynthia Hoehler-Fatton 1996 and Isabel Mukonyora 2000; see also Mukonyora 2007.

[7] There is a very large literature on Shembe and the Nazarite Baptist Chruch, which touches on a host of themes and issues, including gender. Space prevents me from considering this literature more systematically, but interested readers may want to consult Joel Cabrita 2008; James Kiernan 1992a, 1992b; Edley Moodley 2008; and, especially, Elizabeth Gunner 1988, 2002.

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the church's main constituencies: women who 'did not want to stay within the confines of precolonial traditional life' (1999: 44).

Here we see how the 'nostalgia' or romanticism of independency raises questions about the value of the past as played out through gender (and generational) relations. We also have a hint that the nostalgic theorizing of an earlier generation of scholars was not without justification: there is a nostalgia here that needs to be theorized. It is precisely because it looks so nativist in so many ways that the Nazarite Baptist Church, and other Independent churches, can enrich the ways in which we understand the notion of a 'break'. If tradition and modernity are difficult to separate out, they are also not necessarily pertinent as analytical concepts for understanding what breaking with the past is all about. Shembe's goal was to situate Nguni tradition within an overarching biblical narrative. This brought with it a new history and an historical imagination animated by key figures and events discussed in the Old and New Testaments. For the chiefs and headmen this was a destructive act; for Shembe it was a redemptive destruction. Inasmuch as he was breaking with the past it was to reveal the true provenance of Nguni lifeways as in line with the Word of God. In terms of their approaches to the past, the Nazarite Baptist Church helps reinforce the point that every rupture is always also a realignment.

At this point I want to return to a discussion of the Friday apostolics in an effort to further explore the dynamics of rupture and realignment. Unlike Shembe, of course, the apostolics have not appealed directly to the Bible as the key to unlocking the gate to their proper path in history. There are, nevertheless, several expressions of nostalgia within their disciplined repudiation of tradition. Many of these are linked to an imagining of their place in a Judaeo-Christian history.

The most visible sign of this alternative and self-consciously constructed nostalgia are the white robes that apostolics wear, which have already featured in our discussion, as in Meyer's imagery. For the Masowe apostolics, these robes are, at one level, a repudiation of materiality – a kind of anti-fashion to the Pentecostals' latest fashion (with Prosperity Gospel Pentecostals coming in for a fair amount of actual criticism). Masowe robes are made from inexpensive white cloth, and direct attention away from an individual's status and professional standing (or the lack thereof), since everyone is equal before God, and toward their commitment to this principle of equality, as well as one to purity (white, of course, being a key symbol). But more than all of this, the robes – which for the men are often accompanied by walking sticks and well-kept beards – pay homage to representations of biblical figures in twentieth-century Christian popular culture. For one apostolic family I knew, a favourite pastime was watching their pirated copy of Cecil B. DeMille's *The Ten Commandments*, with Charlton Heston as the paradigmatic robed-and-bearded man of God. This is embodiment through fashion, as presented in popular culture, pointing to a very specific imagination of the past.

As a community of practice the apostolics have also developed particular ways of speaking (and other communicative registers)

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that construct and convey 'nostalgic' messages.[8] For example, when prophets in the church are filled with the Holy Spirit, they sometimes use words that apostolics call 'ancient Hebrew'. Similar to glossolalia or the tongues of fire described in Acts, ancient Hebrew is understood to be a sign of divine presence – of the Holy Spirit working live and direct in a congregation. In the specific recognition of this speech as 'Hebrew', however, the apostolics are making an assertion about their connection to another past. The realignment here is motivated by history and its transcendence, for while the designation of this speech as Hebrew constructs clear biblical indices, the apostolics say that *this* Hebrew is not what any human has ever spoken; its provenance is divine.

More quizzical in this regard is the apostolics' appreciation for what they call 'deep Shona'. Simply put, deep Shona is considered 'old-fashioned' language that is more formal than everyday Shona. It is common to hear apostolics using this more old-fashioned language when they are at their meeting sites, especially when greeting one another. This old-fashioned formality, and the politeness it signifies, often leads to talk about the 'old days', when people are said to have showed each other greater respect. Indeed, within the Masowe Church it is common to hear narratives of social decline which are explained as a result of modernization and urbanization, and which are not linked to Christianity *per se*.[9] There are, in other words, some imaginings of a more local African past that the apostolics want to preserve. This is all the more interesting when one considers that other characterizations of 'deep' language in the Africanist literature link it to the kind of traditionalist rituals that apostolics oppose (Ashforth 2000: 59, 88; Bastian 1993: 59). Deep Shona has an important metadiscursive function, allowing for the realignment of what are understood to be 'African' patterns of sociality. This is similar to what Mate's work suggests about the valuing of gender roles in Pentecostal churches.

DEMANDS OF THE BREAK

Alongside these examples of alternative visions of the past, it is important to consider how the apostolics deal with the demands of breaking with what they understand to be African culture in their day-to-day lives. Discontinuity is one thing as presented in a self-consciously constructed story, and another in how it is enacted.[10] In what follows I provide some examples from my research on the Friday apostolics.

[8] I discuss these apostolic ways of speaking in more depth in Engelke 2007: 171–99.

[9] This is an interesting contrast to the emphasis one often finds in Pentecostal churches that rural areas or villages are associated with evil (Maxwell 2006a: 204).

[10] For a thorough, ethnographically grounded account of how breaking with the past is enacted see Joel Robbins, *Becoming Sinners: Christianity and moral torment in a Papua New Guinea society* (2004a).

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What always stood out in my conversations with Gaylord were his harsh characterizations of 'African culture' (see Engelke 2004: 89). In Gaylord's view, which is shared widely amongst apostolics, African culture breeds jealousy among people and prevents them from getting anywhere in their lives. By African culture he generally meant a world-view organized in a significant way by a respect for and concern with one's ancestors. As he often put it, the African way of looking at things was 'backward'. Like most other apostolics, Gaylord was remarkably frank about the difficulties this could land people in – prompting them to stew over disagreements with kin, to get caught up in a vicious cycle of their jealous concerns, and, generally, to act like frightened horses in blinkers. Gaylord found that apostolic Christianity allowed him to break with all of this – to look 'forward', without reservations and without restricted vision.

As mentioned at the outset of this article, one of the common demands of breaking with the past is a renunciation of one's ancestral spirits. For the Friday apostolics, one way this break is symbolized is in refusing to use surnames in the context of church life. Gaylord is not known as Gaylord Mujuru, then, but *madzibaba* Gaylord.[11] This is important because one's surname is the primary index of one's ancestral relations (see Pongweni 1983). Also notable is the fact that children and young people are addressed using the same terms; in this the church is rejecting generational distinctions that are otherwise often important in social relations in Zimbabwe.

Amongst Shona-speakers in Zimbabwe, ancestors are often understood to be of central importance in one's day-to-day life. But these spirits are fickle. They tend to cause trouble when they feel they are not shown due respect; ancestral spirits can also cause trouble because social entanglements and disagreements they had in their own lives carry over into the lives of descendants. Within the Mujuru family there is one troublesome ancestor of the latter kind, a man called Chiwara. He has caused serious difficulties within the Mujuru family – not only because of his ill-tempered disposition but because spirits within other lineages who suffered at his hands seek retribution through the Mujurus of today. Gaylord told me Chiwara was such an evil man that he once killed a pregnant woman just to see what a foetus looked like.

It has been easy for Gaylord to denounce Chiwara. Nothing in his character lends itself to reverence from his descendants. But the general practice of denunciation raises a question: for Africans in churches which emphasize rupture, what is this denunciation supposed to mean? Is Gaylord, for example, supposed to disavow, or even actively disparage, all of his ancestors? Is there a difference between the recently departed and those who lived in pre-colonial times (and so never heard the Word of God)? Even more, is Gaylord never to speak to

[11] *Madzibaba* is a generic term in Shona for a male 'elder'; *madzimai* is the equivalent for women.

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anyone within his living family who has not committed to the apostolic path?[12]

The answer to these questions is a complicated one. It is complicated because the denunciation of family and uptake of a new politics of social reproduction are shaped by a number of factors. The first is that, at least for the Friday apostolics, it has to do with the gravity of one's problems, and the potential of their recurrence over time as judged by the Holy Spirit and transmitted via the guidance of a prophet. The second is that, as I have emphasized elsewhere, the break is always as much of a project as a pronouncement. It happens over time through a process (similar to Pentecostal deliverance) of what the apostolics call following *mutemo*, the law/knowledge of faith (see Engelke 2004, 2007: 139–52). The third is that in thinking through these issues the apostolics often make a distinction between ancestors/kin and the un-Christian things they do (or represent). Finally, and perhaps most importantly, apostolics appeal to a Christian ordering of time in their effort to situate ancestors, working under the assumption that their fate will be decided by God on Judgement Day.

The Mujurus

The situation in Gaylord's family helps clarify the importance and possible configurations of these factors. Gaylord's wife and children, for instance, are not apostolics (although they have gone to church with him on several occasions over the years). His wife is an active Anglican. Although Gaylord would prefer to have his immediate family with him, he recognizes them as devout Christians, and the prophet of the congregation he has been attending for over twenty years does not ask for their loyalty. What Gaylord would never like is his wife or their children consulting a traditional healer or spirit medium – but this is an aspect of breaking with the past that she has taken on herself within the context of her Anglicanism. Moreover, Gaylord has not broken off relations with his non-apostolic kin: neither of his parents were apostolics. Gaylord's relationship with his father, Daniel, provides some particularly helpful insights into how this worked in practice.

Daniel Mujuru had recurring problems with a leg infection throughout the early months of 1999. A small, warm man with a gravelly voice, Daniel often stayed with Gaylord for long stretches at a time, coming in to Harare, where Gaylord lives, to attend medical appointments. Alongside these medical appointments, though, Gaylord encouraged his father to see apostolic prophets. Gaylord was

[12]Not so long ago, in the pages of this journal, Jennifer Cole and Karen Middleton (2001) commented upon what they perceived as the slow disappearance of ancestors from the Africanist literature on religion and ritual, and a concomitant shift to such related topics as witchcraft and 'Pentecostalist cults' (their term). In my view ancestors have not so much disappeared as appeared elsewhere; indeed, as I hope this article makes clear, and as the wider literature on Pentecostal and charismatic Christianities would support, the ancestors are an omnipresent backdrop in religious and ritual life. These kinds of Christianity do not make sense without them.

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concerned, as is typical within apostolic (and indeed Pentecostal) communities that the underlying problem with his father's health had a spiritual dimension; medical doctors could fix the leg, but the infection was only symptomatic of a spiritually induced infliction. Daniel, who belonged to a main-line church, was not convinced his son was right. But he was not convinced he was wrong, either. So he went with Gaylord to consult prophets, and I often went with them.

The difference in the level of their convictions created the space for some interesting discussions and debates, debates that often took place as we were driving to and from a particular prophet's house or church site. Daniel was ambivalent toward the church and he always reserved the right to be critical of the apostolic take on the Bible in particular. He also did not recognize what happened in healing sessions as particularly 'Christian', marked, as these sessions often are, by possession and other (as main-line Christianities might insist) 'heathen' practices. Gaylord's understanding of how the church encouraged a break with the past just did not make sense to Daniel. What Daniel saw in the church was a deeply traditional African spirituality and sensibility.[13] Gaylord always duly explained the apostolic position on the difference between what prophets did and what traditional healers did, the key to which is the source of the spiritual power. (Apostolics do not deny that traditional healers can heal; the problem is that their spiritual powers are considered non-Christian.) But these debates were always left somewhat academic; they never left the space of the car. At bottom Gaylord certainly recognized his father as a true Christian and that was what mattered to him. Even in the face of quite clear disagreement as to what Gaylord was actually doing in following the apostolic path, then, breaking with the past did not encroach as much into the present as it could have in terms of his family life.

This was not the case for Gaylord's 'brother' (father's father's brother's son), Lazarus Mujuru, who attended the congregation with which I worked most closely in the townships of Chitungwiza. In this congregation, the prophet made much more serious demands about family alignments – insisting that one could not associate closely with kin who were not also members of the church. While there was some leeway in interpreting this demand, for Lazarus it was often a source of real anxiety and torment.[14] His own wife and children were apostolics, too, but he often felt awkward about moving away from members of his extended family who were not. It is not that he would have condoned, or even actively participated in, any traditional religious activities

[13] Sasha Newell has written at greater length on the question of perspective in understanding rupture; in his Côte d'Ivoire research, many people he knew understood Pentecostal preachers to be witches, and he, himself, concludes by arguing that, at least for the church he studied, 'Pentecostalism is another form of witchcraft discourse, one homologously structured with the local cosmology of witchcraft and yet oriented in direct opposition to it' (2007: 487). Similarly, Marleen de Witte (2008) considers what we might call the politics of perception among traditionalists and charismatics in Ghana.

[14] Lazarus was not forbidden from interacting with kin on a casual basis, although what constitutes 'casual' relations can sometimes be difficult to determine.

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in which they engaged. But putting the principle of the break into practice – moving from the abstract to actually existing relations – was difficult for Lazarus. On one occasion, for example, toward the end of August 1999, he was supposed to attend a family funeral in the rural areas, and felt a mix of both personal desire and familial duty to do so. The prophet in Chitungwiza forbade Lazarus from going (in part because of an important set of upcoming church services) and it really tested him. Lazarus followed the prophet's order but did not rest easy with the decision.

According to Gaylord and Lazarus the difference in the attitudes of their respective prophets to non-apostolic associations has to do with the relative 'condition' of each man, and the specific strategies of engagement with and denunciations of tradition that characterize their congregations. Each apostolic congregation has a slightly different emphasis and constituency. Gaylord has been seen to follow and live *mutemo* well; accordingly, the dangers posed to him by spirits have been relatively slight. While he has faced troubles of various sorts over the years, he has, by his own admission, led a relatively blessed life – notwithstanding the current crisis in Zimbabwe. At the congregation he attends, the dominant message is on how to cultivate *mutemo* within oneself, and the prophet there tends not to attract large numbers of non-members in search of healing. In contrast, Lazarus's congregation has been a major centre of spiritual healing; it has a large membership but is frequented by many non-apostolics looking for healing. In Lazarus's congregation the dominant theme of services throughout the 1990s was the spiritual war with the ancestors, and the concomitant rejection of African culture. The prophet in Chitungwiza regularly derided the 'traditional African', even putting on humorous acts as *maboyi* (a 'boy', as African men were often called in the colonial era by white Rhodesians, or 'Rhodies'). During healing sessions, the prophet would occasionally hold his staff as if it were a machine gun and 'mow down' the many spirits in attendance. Lazarus first went to his prophet with serious troubles – so serious that the prophet made him an elder in the church. This was quite common in Chitungwiza, on the assumption that those with the greatest difficulties had to be kept closest to the prophet and integrated into the daily rhythms of religious practice. While Lazarus has managed to stay 'on track,' as the apostolics say, following and living *mutemo*, his case was considered more fragile by the prophet, and has required strict regimens for and divisions within his social life. More generally, as an elder in Chitungwiza it is incumbent upon Lazarus to adopt the strategy of engagement as set down by the Holy Spirit in and for that place. He has to set an example. What these differences within the Mujuru family point to, then, are the different ways in which rupture gets configured at the micro-level as something to be enacted. Rupture is relative to person and place.

The Mujuru brothers were never willing to say their ancestors were demonic and thus excluded from the possibility of salvation. The root of evil, as it were – or perhaps the root of envy, since that is the domineering sentiment in these discourses – is not something they

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were confident pronouncing upon. In determining the cause of any suffering or misfortune, there is rarely a clear line between aggressor and victim: one needs to consider not only why someone suffers, but what drives someone else to want them to suffer in the first place. In this, the Mujurus and many other apostolics I knew would acknowledge the possibility of endless refractions and deferrals of cause and responsibility. For example, if there was revelation in Chitungwiza about a student being hampered in her exams by a relative envious of the student's educational achievements, the immediate focus would be on protecting the student and might involve a break in family relations. There was concern, as well, however, with what had allowed the relative to succumb to envy and hamper the student in the first place. My point here is that a differentiation is made between ancestors or kin as 'agents', as it were, and how the character of African culture 'drives' people more generally. Ultimately, for the apostolics breaking with the past is not primarily about severing family ties. Family ties are only the medium through which the 'demonic' aspects of culture such as jealousy get articulated. Moreover, one way in which apostolics justify the difference between a person and his or her culture is by highlighting that only God can judge people. While there is not a strong emphasis on eschatology within the church, one way in which such things are recognized and reflected upon is through situating the ancestors as, like current-day apostolics, awaiting Judgement. In this, there is an implicit space for the recognition of God's presence within tradition and the African past from which the apostolics nevertheless turn away – and with conviction.

These vignettes of different members of the Mujuru family give us a good sense of some ways in which breaking with the past are perceived and acted upon within the context of independency. To round out this section I want to present two further cases.

Two cans of beer; a mother lost

One friend in the church (who in this instance would like to remain anonymous) has recently undergone a particularly challenging personal situation, one in which he initially felt he needed to choose between his faith and his marriage. In terms of his background and faith, his situation is very similar indeed to Gaylord's. This man attends a small congregation where the prophet emphasizes *mutemo*, and there is no great spectacle of spiritual healing or battle on a regular basis. This man has led a relatively pious life, and his situation has not required the kind of strict regimen we saw in the case of Lazarus. Like Gaylord, this man attends Masowe on his own; his wife and children are members of a main-line church. Until the middle of 2008 this hardly seemed to matter. That time period, as many readers will know, was a notable low point in Zimbabwe's ongoing political, economic, and humanitarian crises; Robert Mugabe had been unable to engineer an outright majority in the March 2008 presidential elections and started a brutal campaign of violence and intimidation against the rival Movement for Democratic

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Change (MDC), a campaign that came to include severe harassment of any and every Zimbabwean who did not express loyalty to the governing party. One effect of this post-election crackdown, which extended well beyond the run-off vote and right through the signing of a Unity Accord with the MDC in September, was an exacerbation of the already dire shortage of food and other necessities. It was in this period that the optimism and forbearance that many of my apostolic friends in Zimbabwe managed to maintain throughout the preceding years finally gave way.

E-mail correspondence from the friend in question was particularly downbeat in the (northern) summer of 2008, and it was clear that one way the Zimbabwe situation was taking a toll was on his marriage. By September, even as things were beginning to look up with the signing of a Unity Accord, his own situation was getting worse. After a string of short e-mails in August and early September, and after having asked after his wife, I received the following reply:

> Now that you wrote about [her], I should tell you what happened between us. . . . On friday [sic] night, [my wife] prepared dinner for my family and as she served us, she brought to the table, two cans of beer. These I know she had brought from her mother's house when there was an unveiling of her tombstone.
>
> As we started eating our food, [she] opened one can of beer and she started drinking it. I said to her that I didn't like it so she put the beer down. After a little while later, she picked up the can and she started drinking from it again. I got up and took the can away and threw it outside (I was now angry because of this). I phoned her brother who could not believe what she was trying to do. I then phoned her elder sister and she said to me that I should not worry about that because this was not the first time that [she] had drunk beer at our house and we had to settle the matter between ourselves. This really gave me a fright because as you know, I do not drink beer and there is no way I could let my wife do that. I started to think about many things that I have seen drunken women doing including PROSTITUTION. To this day, I am waiting for a distant uncle of [hers], so that he can talk a bit of sense into her. We are not getting along at all because she insists that she wants to do what she wants regardless of how I feel. This is the reason why I started thinking about divorce. Truthfully speaking, I do not know how long our marriage is going to last. It is painful because I loved her a lot and she is the only woman that I have known in the past twenty-two years. What's your comment? Am I over reacting? What do you think I should do? I am putting all my hope in prayer and am visiting a number of prophets at the moment.

Having known this man for over 15 years, I knew how much he loves his wife, and indeed what an unusually healthy and dynamic relationship they have had. Being in London, it was difficult for me to give any good advice, but I did point out that his wife's mother's recent death, coupled with the stress of life in Zimbabwe in general, was surely more than enough to challenge any relationship.

While the fact that his wife was not an apostolic never caused problems in itself, for my friend her turn to alcohol obviously was deeply

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upsetting – so upsetting that he felt he might have to divorce. Alcohol is strictly forbidden according to *mutemo*, and this was an aspect of the apostolic faith that he felt had to pertain to all those in his family – the moral self, as discussed above in relation to Mate and Meyer, as formed in relation to others. It is not only, then, as he makes clear, that his wife's move represented a threat to his perceived patriarchal authority within the house, but also, as he explained it in another e-mail, his concern with the 'loose morals' of those who drink (and for women how this leads to 'PROSTITUTION').[15] Beer is especially problematic for apostolics because locally brewed beers are used in rituals to thank and propitiate the ancestors. (My friend's mention of his mother-in-law's tombstone is thus not incidental.)

Things remained difficult for several weeks after the dinner in question, but according to my friend the relationship was getting better by New Year. Without having been in Zimbabwe it is difficult for me to know exactly how and why the situation improved, still less what my friend's wife's perspective had been. The point I want to make here is how particular events, at particular moments in time, can occasionally challenge the ways in which apostolics are able to justify their personal relationships *vis-à-vis* their differing commitments to breaking with non-apostolic norms of sociality. Even in cases where apostolics are able to cultivate relatively 'open' social relationships we find straws that threaten to break the camel's back.

It is important to note that for some apostolics the severing of family ties contains a much greater element of relief than the previous examples suggest.[16] Some apostolics I knew wanted to break off ties with their parents, their siblings, their spouses. For example, another friend in Chitungwiza, whom I call Sirus, found refuge in the church from what he understood to be the nefarious workings of his mother. When we sat down to conduct an interview about his family history in 1999, he had not spoken to his mother for over seven years; she had never met her grandchildren, and he had no intention of introducing them to her. As I was led to understand, Sirus had long had a troubled relationship with his mother, which was only exacerbated by his turn to the apostolic faith. Shortly after he joined the church, he told me, his mother sent *tokoloshis* (small, goblin-like creatures) to kill him. When I asked him why she would want to kill him, he said because the Holy Spirit was protecting him and might drive vengeful spirits onto her. 'My mother!' he exclaimed. 'My actual mother. My actual mother, who carried me nine months in her womb. She gave me all my problems.' If this was not enough to force an irreconcilable break between mother and son, Sirus also became a particularly strict interpreter of the apostolic injunction to look forward, not back. Sirus went so far as never to tell people where he came from (Shona: *kubva*) – that is, he never told

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[15] See Engelke (2007: 165–9) and Mukonyora (2000) for a fuller account of the ways in which the Masowe Church fosters patriarchal relations.

[16] This is one area that studies of Pentecostalism have addressed in some depth.

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people where his rural ('ancestral') home was. This is something that would strike most Zimbabweans as quite odd, even many apostolics.

Sirus's disparaging comments about his mother in the interview we conducted were echoed in several more informal conversations we had over the course of my fieldwork. Sometimes the remarks were brief and in passing, and sometimes they were not remarks at all, but just a scoff or a look when we got on to the topic of family life. Like many other apostolics, Sirus was often insistent that African families were tragically flawed arrangements, at least in their 'traditional' forms. Yet one of the things that struck me in the interview, and particularly the exclamatory points I have just cited, was the mix of anger and sadness. Sirus held his mother in contempt, to be sure. But he was clearly also in disbelief that his mother – his 'actual mother', as he put it – might be so wicked. It was not just talk, of course; Sirus had not seen his mother for many years, and he refused to do so. This was putting the principles of the break into practice. Alongside this refusal, however, I learned that Sirus had sent some money to his mother to help support her in her old age (and not long before we did our interview). Sirus's sister's son had come to stay with him in Chitungwiza, where he was attending the church and trying to make some money. When this nephew went back to the rural areas for a visit, Sirus used him as a conduit for the gift, on the strict condition that his mother be told the money was coming from him (that is, Sirus's nephew). Sirus wanted to help his mother, but he also wanted to avoid entering into the channels of a normative social exchange.

CONCLUSION

I have acknowledged that there are many ways in which the Masowe Church can be recognized as charismatic – within the orbit of 'Pentecostal-charismatic churches' (Robbins 2004b). Nevertheless I have also tried to show it can be productive to recognize the Masowe Church as something else, too: part of a long-standing literature on AICs which, in an important intervention, Meyer (2004) seems to suggest has run its course.[17] What I have stressed with the examples of Shembe and Masowe is that Independent churches provide other ways of seeing how the past gets multiply configured in Christianities which emphasize ruptures – and, as we need to address, realignments. For Nazarite Baptists and Friday apostolics the Bible has been a resource for articulating a place in Christian history. I hope these examples might also serve as a reminder of how Pentecostal commitments to breaking

[17] In fact this suggestion is evident elsewhere in Meyer's work. At the end of one chapter in *Translating the Devil*, she rightly calls for a consideration of the ways in which AICs have, like PCCs, taken 'a critical stance toward so-called "tradition"'. In the same discussion, however, she temporalizes AICs and PCCs into two seemingly distinct moments, referring to the 'independent "syncretistic" movements of the 1960s and 1970s' and 'Pentecostal churches of the 1980s and 1990s' (1999: 174). The danger is that this gets read as suggesting Independent movements ended in 1979 and Pentecostal churches began in 1980.

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with the past are complemented by their own realignments. After all, the very designation 'Pentecostal' is an index not of breaking with the past but the desire for a certain continuance and continuity, grounded as it is in relation to an event in the Christian imaginary that serves as a model for contemporary religious experience.

Alongside the point about realignments, this article has explored the ways in which rupture gets limned through actually existing social relationships. The discourse of discontinuity (Engelke 2004) is a powerful and often arresting form of talk within Pentecostal and charismatic Christianities. But our attention to language has to be complemented by an attention to lived experiences. In turning to the examples of the Mujuru family, Sirus, and my anonymous friend, I hope to have shown how it is in what people do and with whom they relate that rupture gains much of its force and meaning.

In this article I have restricted my focus to a discussion of African Independent Churches *vis-à-vis* some of the key issues in recent Pentecostal studies. This leaves out a good deal of other work on Christianity in Africa, such as that on the main-line churches, which are without doubt central to the religious fabric of the continent. In leaving these churches out of the picture my intention is not to suggest their irrelevance – and even less to produce a prejudice of my own. My point is to pick up on the specific contrast set out by Meyer in an effort to enrich our understandings of how ruptures are also realignments – and how observations on everyday life give them form and content. But this particular focus is only one of many possibilities; other Africanists may want to offer alternatives. Indeed, it will be fitting to end by acknowledging that these dynamics are confined neither to charismatic forms of Christianity nor to Africa. Some of the most important work on the temporalities and enactments of rupture has been conducted on Seventh-Day Adventists in Madagascar (Keller 2005), Catholics in Bolivia (Harris 2006) and Dutch Calvinists in Indonesia (Keane 2007). In keeping this all in mind, I hope to have shown how there is much to be gained in understanding Pentecostalism by looking past it.

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ABSTRACT

Pentecostal studies has been one of the most vibrant areas of research in Africa for over twenty years, but is it time we started to look past Pentecostalism? Using some of the most important work in this tradition as a point of departure, this article offers both a critique of and supplement to the Pentecostal literature. It focuses in particular on how we should understand the relationship between Pentecostalism and African Independency by pushing the debates on how to frame their oft-shared desire to 'break with the past'. Every rupture is also a realignment and how each is conceptualized and understood is a matter not only of discourse but decisions and dilemmas faced in everyday life.

RÉSUMÉ

L'étude du pentecôtisme est l'un des domaines de recherche les plus dynamiques en Afrique depuis plus de vingt ans, mais n'est-il pas temps de commencer à regarder au-delà du pentecôtisme? À partir de travaux comptant parmi les plus importants dans ce domaine, cet article propose à la fois une critique de la littérature pentecôtiste et un complément à celle-ci. Il s'intéresse notamment à la manière dont nous devrions comprendre la relation entre pentecôtisme et indépendance africaine en encourageant le débat sur la manière de concevoir leur désir souvent partagé de « rompre avec le passé ». Chaque rupture est également un réalignement et la façon de conceptualiser et de comprendre chacune d'elles est une question non seulement de discours, mais également de décisions et de dilemmes rencontrés dans la vie quotidienne.

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